How the Summer Heat May Affect Your Professional Attire

The 21st of this month officially marks the first day of summer. For anywhere other than the office, the start of summer may mean packing away all the winter coats and parkas, and saying hello to wearing bright-colored dresses, flip flops, and comfy shorts.

For the office, however, the conversion of winter-to-summer wardrobe may be a little tricky, even if office protocols only require us to follow a business-casual dress guidelines.
Typically, the hot-til-weather makes it tempting to dress less and even make us want to wear our vacation outfits (i.e. Hawaiian shirts, beach sandals etc.). This means more skin-bearing or lightweight clothing. But let’s keep in mind that “skin-bearing” and “lightweight” don’t necessarily have to result to short shorts, and fabrics so lightweight, they’re almost see-through.

At professional meetings, the set idea for professional attire consists of long-sleeves and button up jackets made of heavy fabrics like tweed or wool/polyester combinations, with slacks or skirts to match. And let’s face it—these fabrics, formally labeled as “warm fabrics” in the textile market, are just not the ideal materials to wear on humid summer days.

The easiest way to make seasonal fabric choices for professional attire is to remember to dress according to your comfort level while still presenting yourself in a sophisticated manner. And a major part of that relies on choosing the right seasonal fabric to wear.

During summer, the best textures are cotton and linen according to an Indobase.com fashion article. Suits, blouses and other clothing made of these fabrics are great for summer because of their cool, breathable quality. They also have a comfortable feel and soak up sweat easily, according to the site. Try to avoid wool, tweed and pure polyester clothing in the summer because of their heavy textures, which tend to trap body heat if worn for long periods of time.

One of the tips on another site, professionalattire.net, mentions that colors are another thing to consider for seasonal fabric choices. This is a great point because we sometimes tend to care more about coordinating our outfits regardless of how uncomfortable it is for the weather outside. In the summer, always remember to go for lighter colors. Save your black or navy-colored slacks for the winter, as well as other dark colors like deep browns, evergreens and maroons. Khakis, for example, are a great alternative for your dark-colored trousers.

Lastly, when talking about work attire the issue of dressing less in summer weather is bound to come up. But as much as we associate the thought of dressing less with appropriately tight shirts and rule-breaking hemlines, many don’t realize that dressing less in the summer can be approached in a positive way. We can still associate presentable professional attire with wearing less layers. For women, skirts and summer dresses are prevalent in the summer and knowing the appropriate lengths for hemlines and necklines are critical. Sweaters or cardigans are great to wear over a nice blouse because if it gets too hot, they can easily be removed.

Similarly, men can wear a lightweight jacket over a light-colored polo or golf shirt. Men can easily remove the jacket and roll up the sleeves to handle the humidity.

Professional dress during summer is attainable. Making a few considerations to your summer wardrobe can still be comfortable, appropriate and suitable for the summer weather. And it could also make finding your car in the parking lot or walking to a restaurant during your lunch break in sweltering temperatures not too dreadful.
Email is one of our top ways to share messages at the Staff Development office. Whether we are sending a brief reminder, a quick question about something or a general FYI, it seems like nothing beats the speed and convenience of email. With email, we could fully express ourselves without worrying about the character limit, and could relay messages to people with a single click of the Send button.

Unlike the abbreviated lingo used in text messages (i.e. Talk 2U L8ER, CU 2morrow, etc.) the emails we use at work should always be professionally constructed. Misspellings, typos, and wrong word usage can not only drive away your credibility, but it can also lead to miscommunication and confusion.

Of course, properly constructed language should go for all documents, not just for emails. The Thesaurus and Grammar Check functions are just some of the great aids that computers have to offer. But one of the most widely used aids for typing up documents is without a doubt, Spell Check.

In our last issue of The Extension Exchange, we talked about how lack of time can sometimes be a problem. For instance after writing up a memorandum or a statement to be sent out to multiple individuals, the last thing your tired eyes may want to do is to read the whole thing over. You can’t bare gazing at the eye-crossing jumble of words. It only sounds right to hit that Spell Check button without bothering to look it over yourself.

This simplicity can easily drive a person to become addicted to using Spell Check. At our office, we have occasionally battled with typical (and random) technological malfunctions that we’re sure is pretty common for people to run into at some point. Not that we’re saying Spell Check is apt to malfunctioning.

We even had one of our computer screens completely black out without ever really finding out what could have caused it (even after getting help from our gracious IT staff). One of our computers has even been infected with malicious Spyware that had somehow weaved its way through email attachments, causing all the functions of the computer to go haywire.

To think that having experienced all these mishaps, leaving any normal person feeling technologically challenged, people wouldn’t rely on technology so much. But it happens, the way many people are totally reliant on Spell Check.

Do realize that Spell Check is a tool used to check spelling and spelling only. Just like any other computer application, it has its flaws.

If you completely rely on Spell Check, it can’t always detect the correct meaning of the word. It could be the exact reason why a pleasant word like laughter can turn into an opposite word like slaughter.

Typos are common, but what about words that we constantly misuse? Check out the list below.

What is probably best is to train yourself to know the words you use regularly but are still having trouble remembering the way they’re used. Learn to distinguish which word is right to use in similar words. Whether you like it or not, proofread documents before sending them out. If you’re not a big fan of this, maybe print it out and ask someone else to proofread it for you—even several times.

Don’t gamble your intelligence away by relying on technology.

**COMMON MISUSED WORDS**

1. **to / two / too**
   (ex.) “I am going to the park.” “I have two children.” “I am too tired.”

2. **then / than**
   (ex.) “Back then I was skinny.” “I am happier now than before.”

3. **there / their**
   (ex.) “What will you do over there?” “I have to feed their dog.”

4. **effect / affect**
   (ex.) “Their divorce had a negative effect on the children.” “The rain affected her hairdo.”

5. **except / accept**
   (ex.) “Everyone was going except for Suzy.” “Suzy had to learn how to accept her punishment.”
Our friends from **Epsilon Sigma Phi** sent us an email about their upcoming conference in September! We would like anyone interested in attending to please check out the information on *The ESP Connection*, the fraternity’s own newsletter. You can visit the PDF link of the newsletter at http://espnational.org/newsltrs/no11609.pdf.

**Epsilon Sigma Phi** members describe themselves as the “Extension Professionals Organization.” Their main mission is to promote professional development, leadership development and personal development.” Members include county professionals and staff, university-based faculty and staff, administration at the county and state level, program assistants and others with Extension programming roles.

The 2009 National ESP Conference will be a great opportunity to learn more about Professional Development opportunities. Attendees can expect to strengthen their professionalism by becoming “engaged” and “enlightened” as they “enjoy” the professional conference, according to the information posted on *The ESP Connection*. Come support them and benefit from learning about ideas that you can take home and put to use!

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**Are you fit to Be a Mentor?**

In our last issue we gave a brief history about how mentoring came about. So now we’re wondering if you think you have what it takes to be a mentor!

There are actually certain characteristics that Oklahoma Extension would prefer in a mentor. Sometimes bad habits can affect one’s chances in attaining the position, that’s why the decision process is structured the way it is.

Mentors are chosen through an application process, in addition to submitting recommendations from the appropriate supervisors. According to the Mentoring Administrative Guidelines, commitment to a formal mentoring relationship lasts for one year.

Aside from having the ability to encourage diversity, as well as being trustworthy, ethical, and able to communicate effectively, there are six mentor qualifications listed in the guidelines:

- You must commit to the mission of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.
- You must have effective program development, marketing and interpretation skills of Extension programs to diverse audiences.
- You must have appropriate subject matter expertise.
- You must know the policies and procedures of OCES.
- You extension experience should be at least five years, and should currently serve as an Extension Educator.
- Lastly, you should continue to meet expectations (or above) in their performance appraisal rating.

As far as what mentor candidates would agree to, these are some of what’s expected. However, the personal characteristics one should have in order to maintain a successful mentor-mentee relationship ranges from a variety of different traits. So, it’s always good to analyze your traits to know whether you have the right amount of dedication, reliability and proper traits that will make you the right person to depend on.

Knowing how to advise (continue reading ‘Mentor’ on pg. 5)
without giving off the feeling of “parenting” is critical for mentor-mentee relationships. When paired with a mentor, mentees need to be able to feel comfortable in expressing any information about themselves. A mentor should have the will to listen, be patient, and tolerate the mentee. Remember that a mentor’s job is to help the mentee reach success by advising and guiding them to the right direction.

Ultimately, all the information shared between the pair should be kept confidential at all times, so trust should be a trait that is important to develop and maintain.

The Staff & Program Development team has all the information needed for anyone interested in becoming a mentor, as well as anyone interested in getting paired with one. We even have a check list for mentor candidates contemplating on whether they have the traits to qualify for the position.

Unfortunately, the official guidelines for OCES Mentoring is not posted on the intranet site, which is our next project. Let us know if you would like us to provide you a copy. You can reach us by phone, email, or drop by at our office at 255 Ag Hall.

There are mutual benefits in a mentoring relationship. Its foundation of communication helps both ends to experience personal growth through identifying one’s strengths and weaknesses. According to Dr. Joanna Hayden of Health Promotion Practice, “Mentoring provides a chance to share years of experience, wisdom, skills and insight with those whose careers are just beginning.”

So, are you fit to be a mentor?

(From ‘Mentor’ on pg. 4)

**Reminders**

- The 2nd Quarter Safety Training should be completed this month. If you are looking for OSU online training opportunities, go to:  
  http://www.ehs.okstate.edu

- If you are working on an advanced degree, consider applying for the William F. Taggart Scholarship. Applications are due on June 11, 2009 for both summer and fall terms. For more information about scholarship and forms, go to  
  http://intranet.okstate.edu/staff development/ and look for scholarship information.

- The CSREES Scholarship Awards Program applications should be submitted by June 22nd. The program recognizes outstanding contributions and distinguished service aligned with CSREES goals, in support of the USDA mission. An email was sent on June 2nd with the forms attached. If you have any questions, please contact Joyce Martin at joyce.martin@okstate.edu.

Source: http://cartoonstock.com
Thank you for all your exchanges!!!

Nicely Done! Thanks!
-From Bill Stacey,
NE District Director

Thank you Joyce! All the information was really interesting! Have a great weekend!
-From Diana Romano, Extension Educator

I love it! The newsletter is great!
-From Brenda K.
Miller, NE District FCS Specialist

Joyce, I enjoyed the newsletter and wish it continued success.
-From Bob Klein,
Assistant Vice President for Fiscal Affairs Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

I love my mentor, Mary Rhyne! She’s made me look so competent during my 1st year! She has been a wealth of knowledge and become a great friend! :) Just wanted to share since you have a piece in the mentor program on the newsletter
-From Julie York, FCS/4H Extension Educator

The 2009 County Extension Director Retreat

A special thanks to the committee members who helped plan the County Extension Director Retreat held on Tuesday, May 27, 2009. Your contribution and effort meant a lot to us! And for those of you who attended, we were glad to have you there with us! This recent CED meeting utilized state funds to cover the cost of the registration fees. Therefore, according to OSU Policies & Procedures #1-1204, this session must be referred to as a “professional development/retreat.” In addition to the registration fee, mileage to the conference will be paid by state funds. Please remember to complete a state travel form and leave the account number blank (the extension finance office will assign those). Then, forward the form to your district office. Again, to those who showed up, we appreciate your attendance. See you next time!

Sincerely,
The Staff and Program Development Team

This month’s wise owl words of wisdom

“It is a golden rule not to judge men by their opinions but rather by what their opinions make of them.”
-Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, German Scientist

Until our next exchange!