



JON MICHAEL
THE IMAGE MAKER

ACCESSORISE YOUR IMAGE

SALESPeOPLE often have an instinctive understanding of image. They are used to presenting themselves in order to make the best impression. They are often careful to match the dress of client or customer - suits in the city and Akubras in the bush.

But it can be an expensive business trying to keep up with fashions in stylish outfits (women) or suits and ties (men).

One of the best ways to dress for success is through the artful use of accessories. What's the one thing almost every saleswoman owns that regrettably goes unworn? It's the scarf you bought, but always forgot to wear - or those earrings or shoes you never wear because your style has changed.

For salesmen it's usually the tie or cufflinks. Fashions may change, but one thing remains constant - our love for that accessory and the over-all importance of it to craft a sharper image. So why must our accessories immediately seem outdated? Why should they unnecessarily hide in the drawer? It almost seems like accessories should come with a set of instructions. Now they do.

Accessories are often accumulated differently from the rest of the wardrobe. We rarely set out to buy a specific piece such as a cameo, choker or antique cufflinks. Some pieces are inherited and others received as gifts - or are impulse buys on a holiday. A few items are bought to go with specific outfits. This random acquisition can create drawers full of lovely but seemingly unrelated pieces.

To choose and use the right accessories, it is helpful to divide them into two broad groups - "stars" and "supporting players".

» Stars

Stars such as the designer handbag or a pair of over-sized jewelled earrings will always take centre stage. They will be the first things people see and the last thing they forget. By virtue of their size, shape, colour, or texture, accessory stars make a memorable impact. Your clothing becomes the background canvas for these "accessories with attitude".

» Supporting players

Subtle, but never boring, supporting players provide balance and finish. Sometimes they reinforce a star, such as a pair of small silver hoop earrings to balance an over-sized silver and jewelled bracelet. In other situations, supporting accessories are all that's needed with a spectacularly cut or boldly patterned fabric. A good example is those small diamond stud earrings with a simple black slip dress such as that worn by Audrey Hepburn in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*.

Here are three simple tips to consider before you buy your next accessories:

- They should be flattering to your age and body/face shape
- They need to be classic, contemporary and timeless
- They need to fit within your budget and are appropriate for the intended outcomes - personal (creative, free spirit) and business (influence, professionalism). Stockist: Harrolds - 1300 883 828

The real trick is to invest wisely in your accessories - smart buying will mean your accessories will add significant value to your total look and create the perception that you are usually worth a lot more (read more attractive, intelligent and confident) than you really are. Look like a million and you'll be treated like a million - or, as Socrates once said, "Act as if" you're there. Or, "fake it till you make it" in today's vernacular.

Always present yourself with one foot in today and one foot in tomorrow's success. You are not misleading anyone by doing this - just telling them the truth in advance.

» Ties

The necktie has always been a purely decorative piece of clothing. Despite its lack of function, it has been one of the enduring masculine symbols, and can send a powerful message by the wearer. The beautiful colours, patterns and fabrics (mostly silk) contemporary ties have, add a shot of bright movement to business dressing and non-verbally communicate messages before you may have the opportunity to speak. As Oscar Wilde said, "A well-tied tie is the first serious step in life."

» Cufflinks

Men have worn cufflinks for more than 300 years, in styles that have ranged from utilitarian to fabulous. Women first snapped on a pair of cufflinks at the turn of the century when they traded in elaborate dresses for simple shirt waists and long slim skirts. The "career woman" look has been with us ever since.

Cufflinks today are a subtle way of adding sparkle and expressing personality. People have to get close to catch a glimpse of a cuff as it peeks out of a jacket. There is a dazzling assortment of both vintage and contemporary cufflinks available at prices to suit any budget. You will find them in gold, silver, enamel, or studded with jewels in styles that range from sporty to formal. ■

