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STYLE

## For interns, looking good is part of job

By **John Hendrickson**  
*The Denver Post*

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As if landing that summer internship wasn't hard enough.

In a job market that has turned from competitive to cutthroat, job seekers need every advantage they can get. Maybe Woody Allen was mistaken when he said, "Ninety percent of success is showing up." No, 90 percent of success is showing up — and looking good.

"Dressing to impress is very important to me," said Alfred Wasikye, enterprise marketing intern at Qwest Communications. "I would hate to do anything to jeopardize the internship." In creased khakis, shined shoes and a crisp black oxford shirt, Wasikye looks ready for his day of market research.

Qwest corporate headquarters is a towering skyscraper at the corner of 18th and California streets. You need to make



Alfred Wasikye, a marketing intern at Qwest Communications this summer, says his normal attire consists of a long-sleeve button-up dress shirt, slacks, a belt and dress shoes. He participates in casual Fridays by wearing jeans and a polo. (Aaron Montoya, The Denver Post )

specialist and corporate lecturer.

"Eighteen months ago, senior managers might look at an intern who had dressed in an overly casual manner and chalk it up to a youthful indiscretion. This year, those same managers are more likely to look at the same intern and think, 'This young person just doesn't get it.' "



Jen Murray didn't wear the same outfit twice in her first three weeks as an intern at the Karsh/Hagan ad agency. (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post )

it through security and an ear-popping elevator ride before reaching the main office on the 50th floor. It's an environment that breeds serious behavior and serious attitudes, to say the least. Johnna Hoff, Qwest media relations manager, said the fact that the company's interns are paid through the Inroads program may affect both behavior and dress. Inroads, a national nonprofit organization aimed at providing minority college students with the tools needed to be successful in the workplace, provides training and orientation to its interns before they go to work for companies.

"We think this positively impacts how they view what's appropriate to wear to the office," Hoff said. "The goal of our program is to turn internships into full-time job opportunities, and that can impact how people dress as well. With a career on the line, we find that interns often want to look their best."

For interns or new hires, dress is a major factor in general office perception, particularly at large organizations like Qwest where rookies work alongside veterans on company projects.

"Given the state of the economy, this is the year to opt for more conservative attire when dressing for work," said Mary Crane, a Denver-based workplace

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It's a slightly different story at the advertising agency Karsh\Hagan. Located in a former warehouse just down the street from Coors Field, Karsh\Hagan fosters a creative atmosphere, and employees are encouraged to take a break for Ping-Pong, billiards or indoor bocce. There's a receptionist instead of a security guard, no elevator passes and, by and large, no collared shirts.

"My dad was always telling me, 'You're going to have to get a haircut and a suit if you want a job,' " said Taylor Marsh, a senior at the University of Colorado at Boulder and Karsh\Hagan copywriting intern.

"But I pretty much wear the same things here that I wear to class."

While Marsh sits behind a stylish desk, clacking away on his Apple laptop, he couldn't look more at home in a T-shirt, hoodie and jeans. As casual as this atmosphere may be, there are still unspoken standards, though they fall more within the realm of creative self-expression.

Jen Murray, 20, a new business and public relations intern, hasn't repeated an outfit in the three weeks since she started at Karsh\Hagan. Today, she's wearing a sleeveless pink cotton dress from J. Crew that could easily pass for

something in the office of another ad agency — the fictional Sterling Cooper from AMC's "Mad Men," set in the early 1960s. "New hires must understand that, at each and every business and business-social function they attend, the intern is being observed," said Crane. "Consciously or not, senior managers and clients watch them. New hires and veteran employees alike should seek to consistently communicate through their attire that they are serious and successful professionals."

It can be challenging to find that middle ground between conservative, casual and comfortable, particularly when every office has its own unique culture. For every "standard," there seems to be an exception. When in doubt, interns and new hires can follow



"I pretty much wear the same things here that I wear to class," says Taylor Marsh, CU-Boulder senior on a copywriting internship at the Karsh\Hagan advertising agency. (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post )

two simple words of advice: "Blend in."

"Right now, appearance is especially important," said Crane. "In really tough economic times, employers seek out employees who fit in. Even more important, they seek out employees who will position their organizations well in the eyes of clients and prospective clients."

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### Business-apparel survival advice

Mary Crane knows a thing or two about success in the workplace. She travels the country delivering her trademark "edutainment" interactive lectures to corporations. Here are a few of her tips.

#### When business casual is the dress code

Men should wear khaki or light-gray slacks, an oxford-cloth button-down shirt and a blue blazer. In a portfolio or computer bag, they should carry a "just in case" tie. Women should wear slacks or a skirt, blouse and jacket.

#### If attire isn't specified in advance

Err on the safe side. Men and women alike should wear suits, and men should wear a tie. It's always OK to ask about the company's dress code when you are setting up an initial meeting.

#### Quality matters

All items of clothing should be of quality fabric, clean and neatly pressed. Shoes should be shined. Heels should not be worn down.

#### Grooming for success

Interns should wear their hair neatly styled.



Intern Keegan Borgias from the ad agency Karsh & Hagan talks about fashion (The Denver Post | CYRUS MCCRIMMON)



At Karsh\Hagan, photography intern Jordan Holloway can fit right in wearing jeans and a T-shirt. In other fields, though, more conservative clothing is often the rule. (Cyrus McCrimmon, The Denver Post )

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**Hosiery**

If they don't wear hosiery, women should make sure their legs are well-maintained. They should also plan to wear professional shoes in the office. Save the strappy sandals for weekend get-togethers with friends.

**Have an outfit "B"**

For new and established professionals alike, it's a good idea to have a backup business outfit in the office. "Every professional I know has at least one story of the business lunch gone bad: A member of the restaurant's wait staff managed to spill a course, leaving the professional's outfit badly stained," Crane says. Back at the office, the employee can change and avoid embarrassment.

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I worked at ad agencies for over ten years. There is a big double-standard with men and women's clothing. Women need to look very attractive and stylish while men can look like they just rolled out of bed. Maybe an ad agency wasn't the best company to profile.



**Karen H** | 5:32 PM on Tuesday Jul 14

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Hooray for this article ! I always encouraged my sons to remember that what they wear reflected not only their personal pride but also influenced their mindset for whatever they were about to tackle. My sons attended private schools where a dress code was enforced. Putting on that "uniform" everyday, I believe, helped them focus on the fact that they were headed to school, where they were expected to focus, think, and learn. Ditto for the importance of looking sharp at work. Parents, don't give up on bringing home this important message. If we don't do it, who will ?(besides the Denver POST?)



**ceil m** | 4:18 PM on Tuesday Jul 14

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While I appreciate Mr. Hendrickson's perspective and Crane's survival advice I do not think it is as cut and dry as that. It comes down to common sense and corporate culture. To accurately assess the dress code of a given company you must have a basic understanding of that company's corporate culture. For example, take two financial firms typically you would expect formal business attire, but what if one was internet based and

*about this situation is "that congress...*

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examining which individuals fit that company's unique culture. Fashion and attire is a direct expression of a person's culture and values. Dress for the part and you will be dressed for success. My advice, check out the company's website closely examine the photographs of individuals. Do they have any pictures from inside the work place, can that provide any insight?

And if at the very least just dress like you were going to meet your boyfriend's or girlfriend's parents for the first time and pretend you want to impress them.

If you need anymore help finding a job check out <http://www.JobMedian.com>

DRS

 **David Sutton** | 9:43 AM on Tuesday Jul 14  
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