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IT'S STILL BUSINESS

By Laura Czekaj

Confusion reigns in offices around Cambridge as employees search for an outfit appropriate for business yet casual, dress codes.

'Business/casual is still business,' said fashion advisor, Kathy Boyce. 'It's difficult to know what route to go.'

Helping people find the right attire is the goal of Boyce's Guelph-based business, Dressings. The key to the semi-causal look is to dress down the business suit she said.

'Suits over do it in today's business world,' she said.

For men, Boyce suggests trading in a shirt and tie for a sweater. 'It's best in a nice fabric,' she said. 'Not something that looks like it can be worn to a hockey rink.'

Another way men can avoid making a fashion fumble is to exchange a suit jacket for a sports jacket.

Golf shirts have a very important place in the business world: the closet. 'It's only acceptable if you work on a golf course,' she said.

When it comes to business clothing for women, Boyce has three words: 'separate the suit.'

Mixing suit pieces with casual pieces women can wear their expensive suits, but avoid looking as if they have tried too hard.

Match blazer with dress pants, Boyce said. Top-quality sweaters make the grade and can be matched with a long print skirt.

'That way you're not wasting those good quality suits,' she said. 'Just don't wear it all at the same time.'

Shoes are the accessory that determines whether the outfit is a success. Boyce suggests a sturdy, comfortable style - the simpler the better. Don't get overly flashy with foot wear. 'The attention should not be on their feet but on their face.'

But the best way to prevent clothing clashes is to invest in a full-length mirror, Boyce said. 'Take that final check and plan outfits out.'

The fine line between making a fashion faux pas and becoming a fashion maven is hard to assess. However, Boyce warns against making office clothing too casual, because clothes do make an impression on customers.

'People see with their eyes and make judgment calls,' she said.