

Dress to impress

By Rick Moorman

After all the good news we've been hearing from the government about the European economy, and the Dutch economy in particular, I am hoping to see the businessmen profiting from the upswing do some investing in personal affairs, like their attitude, presentation and sense of style. With the beautiful results reported at the start of the political year, I don't see any excuses anymore for why business Netherlands should not be looking tip top this fall, especially when measured internationally.

To help out up and coming managers, I will lay out guidelines to help you invest in your new wardrobe this fall, so you can look polished.

The suit will remain the basis of proper business communication. Make sure that your new suits are well knit around the middle, so that a tailored line is visible when you look in the mirror. The shoulders should be a little smaller, too. The age of the 'power shoulders' look is over. Slowly, we are, thankfully, shifting back from a single row of three buttons, to the more traditional row of two. If you are a bit more fashionable, you are allowed to wear a suit with overlap again, but it is still important to check the tailoring and shoulder lines. With all suits, the trousers are getting narrower, so away with the baggy pants. One pleat is permissible, but it is preferable to simply have a flat front. It is up to you whether you want cuffs or not, but my advice is to do away with cuffs on trousers, it will give you a slimmer silhouette.

The materials used should be supple and give the appearance of comfort, and naturally, they should feel that way too.

From a business perspective, the colours anthracite grey and marine blue are pretty important, and black is making a fast comeback. For those who dare to do more, brown is still an acceptable alternative, unless you are doing business in England, where you ought not to wear it. The fabric designs are going to be less heavily accentuated, and the more relaxed, fine stripes, sometimes in two colours, are coming in and for those who want it, plaid is a good alternative.

Shirts and ties to go with your suit are up to you to choose, but please hold to the rules: never combine more than three colours.

This fall, the fashion world has been overtaken by the revival of the blazer. You will know yourself if this fits in your business network, but make sure you choose a blazer in a rich and comfortable fabric like cashmere, soft cotton or velour. Luxury and comfort also apply to the pullovers that can be worn together with a blazer. You are allowed again to show people that it is going well with you and that you only want the best for yourself, just like your clients and contacts. You will see that this is appreciated by your counterparts at meetings.

This is the motto: Style meets comfort.

This might be too much at one time, but it is still my mission: If you want to stay up to date, go ahead and invest a little in a decent winter jacket or an overcoat, and leave your sailing jacket on the boat.

Rick Moorman operates clothing stores in Holland and Belgium, and gives advice and readings on the importance of clothing in the business world.