



Career in top gear?

D IDN'T get the pay rise you were hoping for this financial year? Maybe it's time for a good, long look in the mirror.

According to Brisbane image stylist Anne Noonan, workers are jeopardising their career and social success by making critical mistakes with their health, grooming and personal style.

And some companies are serious about correcting it — regularly tapping their staff on the shoulder if they don't scrub up to standards.

Accountancy firm Ernst & Young holds in-house fashion parades as part of staff meetings every 18 months to remind staff of what is appropriate work attire.

Staff development manager Louise Phelan says the company has a "business casual" dress code but has cut Casual Fridays from two of its three divisions because of trouble with staff dressing too casually on that particular day.

"Some of the female issues would be around strappy tops — you've got to be careful about showing too much skin," says Phelan, whose job it is to let staff know when they're dressed inappropriately.

"We have had some midriff looks we've had to have conversations about in the past and shoes are often way too high and open-toed."

For men, jeans and rolled-up sleeves are not permitted.

But Phelan says she has noticed an improvement in staff dressing and the

Wardrobe choices that just don't work

The top five mistakes Brisbane workers make when it comes to appearance in the workforce:

- 1 Choosing fashion fads instead of building a classic foundation wardrobe to last for years
- 2 Opting for styles which don't flatter body shape or colouring
- 3 Not following a good skin care routine and wearing either no make-up or too much
- 4 Not prioritising a healthy eating and exercise routine to keep alert and happy
- 5 Not knowing what's appropriate wear for the office and at social functions

presentation of job applicants in recent years.

"Being one of the Big Four (largest international accountancy firms), the people applying are fairly cluey and have done their research," she says.

"In our corporate environment, I think they've probably got a better handle on dress code than some of their peers might."

According to Noonan, many companies have realised that poorly presented and unhealthy staff not only cost money but give the wrong impression to their customers.

"Someone who feels healthy and looks

stylish makes a good impression on customers, and they perform better too because they feel more self-confident," she says.

Then there's the problem of staff dressing too provocatively for work and job interviews, which could be due in part to the influence of shows such as *Sex and the City*, Noonan says.

"Especially on Casual Fridays, women are dressing too sexy," she says.

"They are getting too distracted by how tight, how short, how full-on their make-up is in order to attract the man, rather than the right client."

"A lot of it you'd think would be common sense but I also think there's a lot of peer pressure as to how they look, and it may not be doing them any favours if they want to be recognised by the decision-makers in their corporations."

Chiu Lee, who until recently was the owner of fashion agency Lee Merchandising, says she too was constantly surprised by the poor standard of grooming in young job applicants.

So what is considered appropriate and inappropriate when it comes to dressing for a job interview or work place?

"You've got to think of the audience you're trying to attract," Noonan says.

"From a traditional law firm to a groovy advertising agency, you have to gauge your look to the client."

Phelan's view is more straightforward.

"I think the rule of the thumb is to dress for the nines on day one and then find out the way of the land," she says.

Makeover to transform your professional image

IF THE thought of your back-to-work, post-baby wardrobe makes you cringe or you have no idea what to wear to that job interview next month, don't despair.

A two-hour workshop teaching how to identify your body shape, choose flattering styles and colours in clothing and build self-esteem will attempt to solve the fashion faux pas infiltrating Brisbane workplaces.

Image stylist Anne Noonan and Australian

fashion designer Liz Davenport will host the style and health workshop, titled *Reset, Reshape, Restyle*, at the Carina Leagues Club on July 9.

Five of the women who attend will receive a makeover by Noonan and Davenport.

Davenport will showcase her range of corporate, casual and evening wear for all sizes, while Noonan will share her transformation secrets.

Fellow presenters will provide insights into healthy eating, exercise, building self-confidence and communication etiquette.

"The purpose of the workshop is to give ladies the knowledge and tools they need to feel good about themselves and make a big impression wherever they go," Noonan says.

Tickets for the workshop are \$25.

Call 0417 761 998 to book or visit www.resetreshaperestyle.com.