

Have You Ever Seen a CEO in Sweatpants? Me Neither!

Dear Stephen:

Some background: I have been in sales at the same major manufacturer for eight years, and I think I am doing well at work here. I always get excellent performance reviews, and I have a good relationship with my boss.

There have been a few openings at my current company over the last year, all which would entail taking on more responsibility, managing more people and earning more money. I regularly apply to these internal positions, and I have been interviewed for a number of these roles, but have yet to lock one down. Up until recently, they were filling these roles with more experienced people from outside the company, so I never took it personally. Last month, though, one of my colleagues with the same amount of years of experience as me beat me out for the promotion.

My girlfriend thinks it is because of how I look, by which she means how I dress. I dress casually because that is the vibe

in the office, and I figure since I do a really good job at work, who cares what I wear so long as it isn't inappropriate. My work speaks for itself. What do you think? Could my girlfriend be right? Could my wardrobe be holding me back??

Signed,

Casual Cam

Dear Casual Cam:

I happen to think your girlfriend is right, but I'll grant you that not everyone would agree with me. I think if you want the role of a manager or supervisor, you need to look the part and that is a more formal look. It also isn't just limited to your wardrobe. It could be that you need to change the way you shave (or start shaving, if you don't) and groom your hair, in addition to adjusting what you wear.

I fully appreciate that the corporate work environment has



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

become more casual in the last couple of years. I know that few of the men at A&D firms wear ties anymore, and in general people are a little more relaxed. Not quite Silicon Valley relaxed, but relaxed. A lot of people tell me I am a dinosaur for wearing a tie to work every day, or get this, they tell me it reminds them of how Donald Trump dresses.

Still, in this instance specifically, I think you'd fare better if you dressed up. When you interview internally, it's incredibly important you dress like you are going on an interview somewhere outside your company. I know you're likely talking to Derek, who you've known for half a decade and maybe have even gotten

The way you look is also important when making a sales call and when participating in a video conference with business associates for similar reasons.

drunk with, but that is why it is so essential to present yourself in a different way.

The internal interviewer likely knows you and already thinks of you in a particular way. Dressing more formally than you normally do would be an excellent way to make an impression and prove you're serious about the role. If you can plan it out, I'd even recommend dressing more formally a couple of months before the interview, if possible, so the company begins to think about you in a different position. This, of course, applies to men and women alike.

I get being good at your job turns into a general air of confidence, and that confidence can become comfort. I'm sensitive to these

rhythms, and it's a testament to your workplace. Everyone should feel comfortable in their offices. But when you're interviewing, you have to channel people's mental projection of the ideal person for any given role. Most people think managers and executives dress formally, and most do. When interviewing, impressions are everything, and you want the impression to be: "This person looks like a manager." We call it dressing for success, and it is more than a cliché. This is how hiring managers think.

The way you look is also important when making a sales call and when participating in a video conference with business associates for similar reasons. You want to wear something that fits the

mental image of whoever you're meeting has for you. Wearing nicer clothes affects how others perceive you. If you want to be a leader, you need to dress like one, down to having your shoes polished. I get you are good enough to wear sweatpants at work, I am simply telling you, that it actually is not enough. That's the Viscusi final word.

So that's why I think your girlfriend is right. It's true Mark Zuckerberg has done pretty well wearing hoodies and jeans. Guess what? Zuck never had to interview for a promotion. If you get to start as the CEO, you can wear whatever you want, but you and I need to wear the suit and tie to make an impression.

Stephen