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Millennial attire for the under-30 CEO

Gone are the corporate suits, minimum skirt lengths, and same-same attire for our newest generation of CEOs.

WORDS **KELI LENFIELD**

Style expresses who we are. It forms part of the narrative we tell about ourselves, and in turn, influences the way we are received. We only have to look to the power outfits sported by Margaret Thatcher or the sharply tailored suits worn by Barack Obama, to recognise that the link between fashion and powerful leadership is nothing new; a notion that these CEOs have wholeheartedly embraced.

JANE LU Founder and CEO of Showpo

You would think that a lady who started a multimillion-dollar online fashion store out of frustration would be the ultimate fashionista. Not so. Jane likes to think of herself as a chameleon, and in her words, “fashion is not my passion”. Showpo is all about micro trends, so an eclectic wardrobe goes hand in hand with Jane’s mood where every day is a new day. She admires Lorna Jane, Samantha Wills, and Tony Hsieh for their entrepreneurial skills more than their labels, and admits that fashion does make her feel more confident, but recognises that it can also be the lens through which people are judged and bullied for what they wear. Jane’s generosity also extends to donating proceeds, not profits, to Project Futures, and intends on using her business growth and influence to set the benchmark with an eventual palatial factory of her own. Her brilliance is balanced with her simple accessories of never leaving home without a smile and a phone in her hand.

BEN CARROLL Founder and CEO of Velflex, Vicon Transfers, and NSJ Sportswear

The business of consistently raising the bar within the printing industry, which resulted in world-class clients such as the A-League, the NRL and Twenty20 cricket, had humble beginnings in a basement with nothing but a dream, a dodgy old phone, and a copy of the Yellow Pages. Meet Ben Carroll, an extremely humble and hardworking millennial CEO who chooses comfort over couture. Add to this his high-quality product (he only uses 100-per-cent environmentally friendly water-based printing products) and you have a man who prefers to wear quality, plain t-shirts—with no printing at all! Working in his three companies makes for practical and comfortable attire, so the likes of Ben Sherman and Marcs are the only labels he chooses for their quality, longevity, and simplicity. Where Ben’s three-word description of his style amounted to practical, quality, and comfort, he can’t live without his Havaianas (there was a pair on his wedding cake), his understated but sentimental Tiffany bracelet, and his personalised Tumi laptop bag.

JACK DELOSA Founder and CEO of The Entourage

Jack admits to being brand agnostic and wears pieces that speak to each other, but Scotch & Soda are Jack all over. He resonates with the essence of the label, saying they are a year or two ahead of the trend, being edgy, down to earth, and different. He continues to say that entrepreneurs in 2015 “have moved away from their addiction to professionalism”, referring to the suit brigade of past CEOs. To Jack, a suit denotes a disconnection from ground level with a reluctance to change—something that the millennial CEO embraces and they communicate this through their unique, real, and authentic style. And Jack’s accessories? He is, of course, balanced with the look of earthiness represented by wrist wraps on his right wrist and abundance displayed by way of a beautiful watch on his left.

JESS WILSON Founder and CEO of Stashd

Stashd has been described by *Cosmopolitan* magazine as your new BFF (best fashion friend). Not a bad endorsement, considering Jess’s university careers adviser said an internship in fashion was not possible. She quit the next day, got her internship, and become one of the youngest international runway show producers where she noticed the changes in the industry and Stashd was born. Jess’s mash of fashion and technology projects different silhouettes of tailored blazers, vibrant lipsticks, and leather ankle boots. She says that millennial entrepreneurs are creating their companies, and therefore their style is their personal brand, reflecting who they are as a CEO and a founder, and using this to their advantage by not assimilating or fitting into a box, unless it contains an iPhone—Jess’s ultimate accessory.

STUART COOK Former CEO of Zambrero

As the youngest CEO to ever be appointed within a multinational franchise, it’s no surprise that Tom Ford, Armani, and Calibre are some of Stuart’s favourite labels. But before you judge, be aware there is a practical side to

this millennial CEO’s wardrobe. Stuart understands the importance of a good first impression and started out with a wardrobe that consisted of five Van Heusen shirts, two pairs of high-quality shoes, and two pairs of Levis. He would always dress to impress to establish his credibility within Zambrero’s C-suite until his reasoning and rationale began to carry more weight, consequently setting the standard for his employees. Stuart understands and dresses to suit his body type and pays more attention to the non-verbals of his visual image to earn the respect of his peers. More recently, Stuart was based in Thailand where his favourite tailor (Pinky’s) dressed him to the standard expected of a CEO in Asia, and along with high-quality shoes, it was mentioned that the quality and value of his watch would generate a hundred times in revenue and business opportunities. An IWC Portofino is Stuart’s favourite accessory and with their tag line including ‘clean lines, good engineering, truth and honesty’, it certainly does suit him.

GREG STARK Founder and CEO of Better Being

Greg Stark has one enviable job and he loves it. He gets to personally train business executives and improve the wellbeing of corporates around the globe while running around in the new-season Nike Free Run sneakers and stretching in all-black Lululemon (Greg is an ambassador for Lululemon and is questioned daily on whether he owns anything else!). Greg is all about quality, authenticity, and value. He believes that what you wear changes your mindset, so being comfortable and looking your best are essential in putting forward an exceptional first impression as well as building community, something that Greg feels very strongly about. Greg has learned a lot from Lululemon around not compromising on quality, and building community—values that have helped him give without expectation. His attire when meeting with an HR manager of a global company consists of a personally tailored suit from The Suit Shop that complements his body shape, his phone, and the latest TomTom Sport watch. Greg’s book *Sweat Equity* is due for release early in 2016. ■

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