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## Cincinnati can look abroad for lessons in business dress

My family and I recently returned from a wonderful weeklong trip over the holidays to London. Although we were visiting family, anytime I travel I like to refer to it as "industry research," because traveling, especially to a large city like London, is a great opportunity for me to take in the latest in what people are wearing and how they carry and present themselves.

This was my first trip to the U.K., and London is such an exciting city for me because it is so international and diverse - a virtual feast for my image consultant eyes. So much to see and take in.

Cincinnati is an international city, right? With international companies such as Procter & Gamble, General Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Fidelity, and General Cable, there are many people from diverse cultures traveling in and out of Cincinnati, in addition to living here.

Do we have an international look? For the most part I would say no. Why? Is it geographical? The conservative Midwest? I don't know, but I know that with a little thought and planning, we can all have a look that is cultivated, practical and effective.

So here are some of my impressions. To start with, I didn't notice a huge difference in the way people dressed in London compared to big cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, and New York, yet there was something distinctly different. It was as if being fashionable were part of their normal daily routine instead of just special events.

I asked my family to describe their impressions of London's fashion scene. My youngest son said, "They all dressed very nicely. They all wore jeans and nice loafers ... no running shoes." My oldest son said, "They dress better ... no sweat pants unless actually running."

There was a real vibe of "anything goes." People had a unique look, and they seem to put more thought into how they dress. Does this make them vain? Absolutely not. My take was that they took pride in how they dressed. I was surprised at how often they would be so simply yet chicly dressed. For example, men wore dress coats with scarves casually wrapped around their necks. From a fashion standpoint, scarves are very stylish and add a jaunty element. And from a practical standpoint, scarves are warm.

Business dress still means business in London. No sloppy khakis and golf shirts there. Men seem to put even more emphasis on their business attire than they do on their casual attire. They seem to understand the message that a business suit sends. Think Cary Grant in all the movies in which he played the handsome, charming bachelor.

I could go on and on about all the fabulous fashion and trends I saw, but that is just one component of image - image is more about dressing appropriately for the situation and less about fashion.

*Jill Haney is a certified image consultant with the Association of Image Consultants International. Reach her at 513-505-2732, [jill@jhimage.net](mailto:jill@jhimage.net), or [www.jhimage.net](http://www.jhimage.net).*

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