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Cincinnati.Com » Jill Haney
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Hard to look polished in a short-sleeve shirt

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Question: I hate wearing long-sleeve dress shirts in the summer. I am hoping you can provide me with an alternative to long sleeve dress shirts that will still have a professional look.

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Answer: I wish that I could provide you with an acceptable alternative; however, I cannot. When it comes to professional attire, men have few options. The cut and style of the options vary, but the options are limited. For example, men can choose from pleated and baggy dress pants or khakis, or flat front dress pants and khakis; and, of course, my style of choice is flat front. But the acceptable options are dress pants or khakis.

I am not a fan of the short-sleeved dress shirt, as I do not think it looks as pulled together as a long-sleeved dress shirt. I would rather see a man wearing a long-sleeved shirt with the cuffs rolled up than a short-sleeved style. If you spend the majority of your day outside, then I could understand wanting to wear short sleeves; and if that is the case, then your environment is most likely very casual where a polo style with khaki pants could work well (please no logo golf shirts ... save those for the weekend).

Over the past few weeks I have had many opportunities to work downtown which always offers a great chance to observe how the downtown professionals are dressing. I do think that some of the men and women who work downtown are beginning to "image up," which thrills me to no end. However, many that I see continue to push the business-casual envelope. One of the looks that I find the most incongruous with working downtown is the men who wear the pleated dress pant with golf shirt look. Are they working in the office or are they going to play golf?

When our professional appearance sends mixed messages, we run the risk that people will make negative assumptions that have absolutely nothing to do with our ability. I know that I am guilty of those assumptions when I see men in their dress pants and golf shirts.

When in doubt, look to someone within your organization who is respected, admired and whose job you might like to have someday. Emulate the way they dress. Another option for those of you who travel for business is to observe the way men and women in larger cities are dressing. Cities such as New York, Chicago and Atlanta offer ample opportunities to witness business attire and business casual done well.

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