

Lawsuit

Our regular look at tribal style and the visual cues in business

• ROBERT ISHAK

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ABOUT ONE quarter of lawyers wear a suit every day, according to a recent survey (conducted by the Remsen Group) of 200 lawyers in the US, with 66 per cent donning business casual most of the time. More than 70 per cent say they dress more casually these days and that dressing down is the norm. Robert Ishak disagrees. He's a sharp dresser and believes looks count. The 32-year-old started a small Sydney-based commercial litigation firm with Bill Petrovski in 2005.

Do you follow a dress code?

Unfortunately yes. I look like a typical lawyer. The practice of law, particularly in the courtroom, is very theatrical, so you've got to dress the part to play the part. When I first started in law, I was sitting at the bar table at the local court and the solicitor next to me had a tie but no suit jacket on. The solicitor said, "Your worship, I appear for the defendant." The magistrate said, "I can't hear you." The solicitor raised his voice, but the magistrate said, "I can hear what you are saying, I can't hear you ... you are not wearing a coat."

What's your visual pitch?

The look that I'm trying to achieve is one of confidence and professionalism. Like it or not, clients form theories about who you are based on how you dress.

Do you have a signature look?

Clean and crisp with a lively tie. I guess it is similar to Danny Crane from one of my favourite TV shows, *Boston Legal*.

Where do you shop?

My favourite suit brands are Zegna and Gieves & Hawkes. My shirts are made from scratch by Ganton. I pick the material, the cut, the collar and cuffs. Shirts off the rack don't fit as well and I like a larger neck size so that I can keep the top button done up and still feel comfortable.

Are details important?

Always have polished shoes and be clean-shaven. A watch and my wedding ring are the only items of jewellery I wear. The sort of watch a person wears, or if they don't wear one, says something about that person. And it has got nothing to do with cost. A lawyer joke would be that we have a built-in alarm that goes off every six minutes.

Robert Ishak spoke to Brad Hatch.



Shirt – Bespoke by Ganton;
Suit by Gieves & Hawkes;
Tie by Rhodes & Beckett.