

style maker

How do busy professional women master the art of effortless style? With the help of an image consultant.

Words: Georgie McCourt



Announcing that a woman can't wear black is like telling her it's a waste of money to buy a pair of Balenciaga boots that cost as much as a plane ticket to Thailand – the colour black, like expensive shoes, is an addiction a lot of us just aren't willing to give up. "While black doesn't flatter a lot of skin tones, I can't tell women not to wear it. Women adore black!" says British image consultant and personal brand coach Nicola Landau, of Sydney's The Imagine Consultancy. "My aim is simply to show them alternatives and what their best colours are."

So if you're an avid *Vogue* reader, you might be wondering why on Earth you need an image consultant? Well, frankly, because times are changing. Whether she's seeking a therapist or a personal trainer, today's woman is employing an army of experts to give new order to her life, and you'd be surprised by just how many are calling upon the help of image consultants. After all, in today's competitive world first impressions are invaluable – and the experts say you don't have much time to make one. Apparently, a first impression is formed

within 30 seconds of first meeting someone: over half of that is based on how you look, more than a third on how you sound and less than 10 per cent on what you actually say. Landau's work is based on the premise

that what you wear gives off information to others about who you are, and what your attributes and values are.

"Anyone can look great; it's not dependent on age, lifestyle, budget or body shape," says Landau. The key to dressing well, she believes, is to understand your colouring and body shape and dress to flatter it.

In each consultation, Landau spends over three hours determining what colours work best for her client, before covering personal style, shopping and wardrobe auditing. She also stresses the importance of investment shopping. "You should be buying key pieces each season. If you have good building blocks, you can get away with murder in between. That way, something that was bought on the high street automatically looks richer."

There's also the topic of wardrobe organisation or, rather, the lack of. "Throw away clothes that you haven't worn for a year," advises Landau. "Also, keep office wear together, sportswear and so on ... and plan outfits in advance."

Take a good look at your wardrobe. "Most women will waste thousands of dollars over a lifetime on clothes that are left unworn in the wardrobe; the majority of my clients only wear 20 per cent of their clothes for 80 per cent of the time," explains Landau. When Landau is working with a client, she'll go through their entire wardrobe and work out what is missing. "The aim is to build up a working capsule wardrobe."

Information overload? Simply employ an image consultant to do the work for you. You'll be left with an organised wardrobe, a new image and be armed with a swatch book of colours that flatter your skin tone. Plus, you're guaranteed the next first impression you make will be a lasting one.



C&C California T-shirts, \$99 each.

Fendi shoes.

Vanessa Bruno tuxedo jacket, \$790, from The Corner Shop.

Yves Saint Laurent Rive Gauche belt, \$850, from Cosmopolitan Shoes.

Marni necklace.

Marni bag.

TOP TIPS

- Make a cost-per-wear calculation. If a pair of jeans costs \$350, ask yourself how often you will wear them. Think quality, not quantity.
- Take good care of your clothes: clean and mend them before you put them back into your wardrobe.
- Underwear comprises the foundation of every wardrobe. Nothing looks cheaper than a woman in the wrong-coloured bra.
- While you should dress with an understanding of current trends, the secret is to apply fashion to your lifestyle, your personal colouring, age and shape, and not to be dictated to by fashion trends.