



The Importance of Uniforms for Retail Staff

Many retail businesses undervalue the importance of uniforms for their staff. Not only are uniforms an impressive way to display professionalism, they help to build brand value by showcasing your image or brand in the best possible way. Wearing a set uniform also makes it easier for customers to identify your staff, which has a positive impact on their overall shopping experience.

Why Have a Uniform for Your Business?

The presence of uniformed employees has a great influence on your business and also on the customer experience. Customers can get frustrated with not being able to find or identify an employee because of the way they are dressed. Many retailers today, are making the mistake of allowing their employees to non-conform to a workplace dress code and wear only a name badge. Whilst this may be a good thing for the employee, it can have the opposite effect on the customer's decision to purchase. Generally speaking, customers are more likely to trust and buy from an employee in uniform (provided that it's neat, clean and tidy).

The Benefits of Employees Wearing Uniforms

When customers are navigating your retail store and need assistance, they will look for clear signs that distinguish employees from other customers. They will look for colours that match your branding or specific items of clothing to identify staff (aprons, shirts, polo tops, vests, caps etc.) With so many types of uniforms available, retail owners have the freedom to create brand value with the right uniform. Your aim is to create a positive shopping experience for customers and the best way to begin this process is with your staff. Stylish and functional retail uniforms convey a message of professionalism, trust and refinement, setting your brand apart from that of your competitors.

Advantages of Uniforms for Your Retail Business:

- **Consistent Appearance** - when all employees wear a uniform it creates a unified image.
- **Staff are Easily Identifiable** - important for customers when they need assistance.
- **Professional Appearance** - sets a standard that customers and clients expect.
- **Brand Reinforcement** - greater exposure for a business, especially if there is a logo on the shirt.
- **Increased Team Spirit** - employees share a desire to work toward common goals.
- **Company Morale** - creates a sense of belonging and pride in the job and business.
- **Convenience for Employees** - no need to focus on what to wear for work each day.
- **Better Employee Safety** - a uniform adds an element of safety in a variety of settings.
- **Protection** - uniforms protect employees' own clothing from getting dirty or damaged.
- **Prevents Intruders** - persons who don't belong in the workplace are easily distinguished.
- **Avoid Inappropriate Dress** - stops employees from wearing clothing that is not acceptable.
- **Create a Uniform Policy** - easier to enforce a standard of dress in the workplace for all employees.
- **Heightens Trust** - employees in uniform convey an image that earns consumers' trust.
- **Provides Comfort** - wearing a comfortable uniform can increase productivity and performance.

The Disadvantages

Whilst there are many more positives in favour of employees wearing uniforms, it is also worth noting some of the negatives associated with uniforms in the workplace:

- **Negative Reception** - Many employees don't like the idea of having to wear a uniform, especially if they dislike the style or colour. They may not like how the uniform looks on them or the fact that it may restrict or hinder their work if it's not designed properly.
- **Prevents Uniqueness** - Wearing a uniform means that everyone looks the same which isn't welcomed by many. Some employees get bored wearing the same thing every day and like to express their individuality by wearing something that stands out from the crowd.
- **Increased Business Costs** - Small business owners are generally required to provide their employees with a uniform allowance to purchase the uniform, or provide them with a uniform free of charge. It is therefore essential to add this projected cost into their budgets.
- **Religious Beliefs** - Some types of uniforms may not reflect the values or beliefs of certain religions and may be troublesome for some employees. For example, head coverings are an important part of some religions and the uniform design must allow for and reflect this and any other beliefs.

Key Points to Remember

- If the wearing of uniforms is to have any impact, they must be neat, clean and ironed.
- They must be consistent and a dress code needs to be outlined clearly and specifically.
- Uniforms must be both comfortable to wear and work in.
- The style of uniform needs to fit and look good on different body shapes and sizes.
- Create fashionable uniforms that employees will be proud to wear, rather than feel embarrassed.
- Ensure that they are unisex and work well for both men and women.
- Accommodate legitimate religious needs and disability or medical conditions of employees.
- Consider grooming as part of the uniform (shoes, hair, makeup, tattoos, piercings, etc).
- Specify care and maintenance of uniforms if the business is supplying them for employees.
- Outline the procedure for returning uniforms when an employee leaves.

Customers are the main focus in the competitive retail market. Uniforms can set apart your business, as they are a great way to showcase your class, professionalism and brand value. Customers prefer employees in uniform as it makes their shopping experience more positive and much easier. It also has a major impact on their purchasing decisions, as they are more likely to trust and buy from an employee in proper uniform and continue to do so, time and time again.



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