



... Where *Style* Meets Purpose

Choosing A Better Business Bag: Women's Edition

Women's bags have long been a source of awe; what do we keep in there, and why? Furthering the intrigue is the number of bags some women carry. According to a 2008 Self Magazine poll, 59 percent of those surveyed brought two or more bags to the office each day. Is more, "better"? Certainly not from an image perspective.

Why do you carry the bag that you do, and what does your bag say about you - particularly in the workplace? Since your bag represents you, your attention to detail, and your judgment of quality, choose it as carefully as you would the words in a resume. Take into account how you intend to use the bag: how much do you need to carry? Are you commuting? What colors do you wear most in wardrobe? Here are some critical considerations for a bag that says "professional":



Neatness counts

Whichever bag you choose, it's important that it be polished, neat and presentable. Some things to keep in mind:

- Brand and special-cause logos are not appropriate in a professional work environment. They can alienate or cause

offense if superiors or coworkers don't share your point of view. These items take the spotlight off your professionalism and place it onto personal issues. Often times, these bags are perceived as "cheap freebies" and of lower quality (bearing on the perception of your quality of judgment in areas of work).

- Choose a color that is easily maintained. Lighter colored leather and materials show more dirt, wear and tear. This is important for the train/bus commuter who is subject to the conditions of their transportation options. Try to be as consistent as possible. If you wear black more often than not, then a black bag is appropriate. If your main coat is brown, a brown bag will be a good option for you. (A clue here: short of a personal color assessment, your hair color can guide you to your own personal "neutral.")
- Compartments are important! If you limit yourself to the ideal of one bag, it helps to have dedicated compartments so that you may easily find what you need. Whatever you carry every day (your laptop, cell phone, keys, pens, folders, wallet and umbrella) should all have their own space.

Less is more

If you find yourself carrying two or more bags, consider how you might consolidate:

- Choose a bag that allows adequate storage for what you carry. Take inventory of your daily needs, then shop for a bag that meets your criteria. By selecting a bag large enough to accommodate a wallet, make-up bag, keys, umbrella and laptop, you will present yourself as more "put together" than if you struggle between several bags.
- If you maintain two bags, say a laptop bag and a purse, keep your selections on the smaller side and complimentary. Opting for pieces from the same designer or from the same color family lends a coordinated look. When possible, select a handbag or clutch small enough to fit inside of your business bag. You can take it out to run short jaunts when the entire bag isn't required, and avoid the "bag lady" look when commuting or calling on clients.

Quality over quantity

A quality purchase lasts longer and projects a more discerning

image to your bosses, peers and interviewers. For high-level professionals, or those with such aspirations, there is no substitute for high quality leather. Whatever your career path, assess your budget to determine what you can afford, then choose accordingly, keeping in mind the message you'd like to project to those with whom you do business -- or those you wish to!

- A good leather bag will last at least ten years if well maintained.
- A neutral color, like cordovan or mahogany, will compliment most outfits.
- A long-lasting bag has a timeless, classic style. If you don't plan to purchase a new bag each season, stay away from trends and opt instead for a more conventional shape and style.

The bag you carry makes a strong statement about you. Assure that your message is flattering and chosen with intention!