

T-SHIRTS ARE NOT ENOUGH: APPROPRIATE PROJECT ATTIRE

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Selecting a project T-shirt printed with just the right slogan is one of the first and most critical decisions your project makes. I would never question what is such a sacred project ritual in some companies. My intention, however, is to add to this tradition in a way that may help your project succeed even more.

Generally, the T-shirt ritual seems to have developed as a way to celebrate the beginning of a new project. T-shirts seem to have clear value as a motivator to energize the new project team. I suspect it also makes it easier to recognize who is working on this new project, versus the project they just left. Watching the Olympic teams in their brightly colored uniforms recently reminded me of the emotional value of recognizing and connecting with your team (commercial value aside). T-shirts, like uniforms, make a statement.

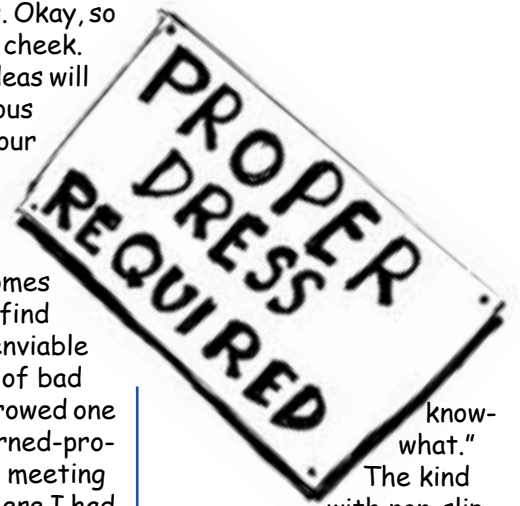
But what we wear often serves purpose beyond the statement it makes. Many professionals wear attire as protection. Hard hats, lab coats, and orange vests all protect professionals from the perils of their trades. So, in our project profession, I'm not sure where we got the idea that T-shirts were enough. Is it that we are still young as a profession and don't yet know what might protect us? Are we too arrogant to admit we need any protection? Let me

suggest some ideas. Okay, so my tongue is in my cheek. But maybe these ideas will provoke some serious thought between your chuckles.

Topping the list for protection, a **bulletproof vest** comes in handy when you find yourself in the unenviable position of bearer of bad news. I myself borrowed one from an ex-cop-turned-programmer for a key meeting with sales staff where I had to explain why their system had lousy response time. It worked very effectively at disarming them long enough to explain the dilemma in lay terms. For best result, just wear the vest under your suit jacket (oh, does anyone wear these anymore? Okay, under a sports jacket.) and remove your jacket at the appropriate moment. You don't even have to say anything. I haven't tried it yet at a quarterly meeting with investors. If you try it, let me know how it goes.

Latex gloves are a must when de-bugging software and hardware. And please throw those gloves away when you're finished so you don't infect any other parts of the project (I'm sure they sell these in bulk). In a pinch, the popular anti-bacterial hand sanitizers will do if you don't have gloves. Of course, preventing insect infestations is even more effective but harder to sell to free-range developers used to dealing with natural pests.

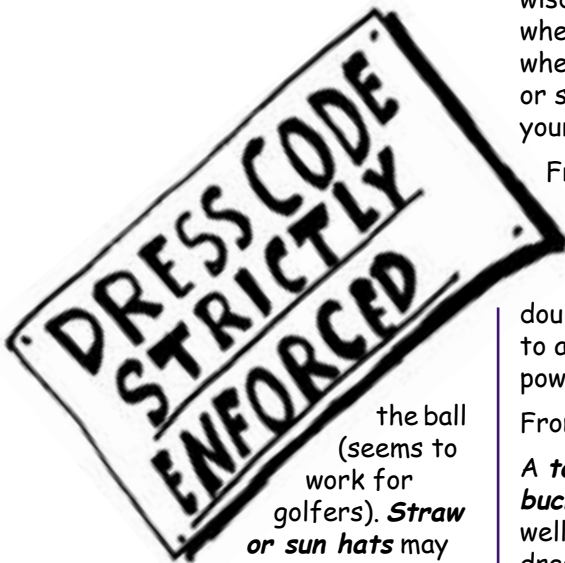
Waders, preferably the style with boots built into them, are very useful when wading through project status reports full of "you-



soles really help you maintain your balance and let you focus on catching what's important. They also let you go places in your project where you might otherwise fear to tread.

Your eyes are very important tools for seeing where your project really stands. As such, **protective glasses** may be necessary when reviewing project schedules and issue logs. They are even better if they magnify things like time-to-complete figures and issues you're watching for "go-live" impact. However, heavily tinted sunglasses are more stylish these days. Their primary purpose is to keep others from seeing the look in your eyes.

And of course, you may need a hat. You will have to decide which kind of hat is useful on your project. **Hard hats** protect you from things falling on your head and--since most of us think our brain is our most valuable project asset--this is good insurance if you are likely to be bombarded with mandates from above. **Baseball caps** are very "in" these days. They keep the sun out of your eyes so you can keep them on



the ball (seems to work for golfers). **Straw or sun hats** may be all you need-just to protect you from the spot light that may be shining on your project. And of course, there are always **helmets**, which may save you from head injury if and when your project takes a serious spill. There are some countries and states, which don't require helmets, citing they would interfere with personal freedom.

So now let your imagination run wild. What type of attire does your team require? Selecting your team's wardrobe for your next project is no small task. You may even want to review those previous project retrospectives lying around on the shelves to give you some ideas.

PSL Faculty Contributions of Their Favorite Project Attire:

From **Naomi Karten:**

Shoulder pads. Often when you carry out a project, you feel like you have the weight of the world on your shoulders. Shoulder pads distribute the weight, making the world just a bit easier to bear. They also make you look tougher so the client is less likely to pick a fight (and it hurts less if they do).

From **Dani Weinberg:**

I am a big fan of the good witch Glenda, her **ruby slippers** and her

wisdom. Just click your heels whenever you need to go home, whether that is a welcoming house or simply someplace deep inside yourself.

From **David Schmaltz:**

I have a **straight jacket** worn to remind me and everyone else on my project about the double meaning of commitment and to acknowledge just how powerful powerlessness can be.

From **Patricia Snipp:**

A **tool belt with a large silver buckle** is my contribution to the well dressed project manager's dress for success outfit. The buckle will proclaim the wearer as a "champion bull-thrower" and the tools attached would be chosen for the job at hand. The self-esteem tool kit items would be a valuable set to start with. Other tool ideas could come later -- possibly from other fashion mavens.

From **Jerry Weinberg:**

A **pair of high-fashion rose-colored glasses**, so I can put the most generous interpretation on behaviors I don't understand.



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- *Keeping projects on track*
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The conference is for technical managers, team leaders, senior engineers, and project managers - to improve skill and ability as problem solvers.

This is a conference that involves the attendees in learning through participation and experience in workshop/tutorial sessions, not just sitting and listening.

The creators of this conference are all consultants who solve problems in technical environments, such as, software development, product development, and IT organizations. They are all PSL and Change Shop graduates. PSL and Change Shop faculty members Jean McLendon, Dani and Jerry Weinberg, Naomi Karten, Patricia Snipp, Eileen Strider, and Karen Straka will be among the presenters - so it will be a chance to renew great friendships.

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