Wear4Work
Magical Merchandise

Wear4Work Limited

Workwear for women is changing,

its no longer one size fits all.

Functional work and safety wear for female work forces around the world have been a perpetual problem across a wide range of industries. Be that small artisan style businesses such as ceramists, florists or cheese makers, or multi-national companies running large production plants or civil engineering and building companies with female engineers, architects, painters, brickies, carpenters et al.

This disconnect is changing, albeit slowly as manufacturers and retailers realise that providing functional fitted workwear for females in the workforce is no longer just a secondary market.In the past there has been a narrow minded approach to this whole concept but as women take on more and more jobs, that in the past were bastions of male testosterone, that mindset had to change.

Being in the business I can honestly say that it's still not perfect, but has dramatically improved and is definitely moving in the right direction.

A couple of years ago I asked one of our manufacturers if they had a two pocket short sleeve shirt for one of my clients, his immediate comment to me was "Oh he's a pilot then" I laughed and responded "No, she's a theatre stage designer at a city opera house and needs pockets for sketching materials on the move" It took me two weeks to source a women's two pocket short sleeve shirt, and at that time I could only find white.





Today it wouldn't be such a problem, the world is waking up to female theatre designers, furniture makers, car mechanics, artists, etc. who are demanding stylish workwear that is comfortable, durable, functional and looks good on them.

But its not all 'a bowl of cherries', if you look through an average manufacturers stock list there are still 'men-only' sections, or at least man-centric categories. When I last looked there is more hi-vis (PPE) clothing specifically designed for children and dogs than created with women in mind.





In 27 pages of hi-vis clothing in one catalogue I found just two products out of 108 designed specifically for women and 3 women modelling on those pages compared to over 60 men striking the pose.

I had to smile when I saw the strap-line “Suitable for any person working on or near airports, motorways and building sites”, large for the guys and a small for the ladies……Al Murray, eat your heart out!

In the past we have supplied female civil engineers, architects, crane drivers, security operatives, engineers with hi-vis clothing and I have to say in most cases the look and fit were horrible.

This isn't just an aesthetic issue, more importantly it is a health and safety issue, with over-long rolled up pants that can easily become a trip hazard, rolled up over-wide sleeves that can get caught in machinery, and baggy ill-fitting jackets that are cumbersome when involved in physical activity or getting into the driving seat of van, train or boat.

This can still be seen on our streets every day with the emergency services as they try to do a very difficult job in ill-fitting clothes and equipment often designed for men. This was identified in a survey in 2017 for the TUC when only 5% of women in the emergency services said their safety wear (PPE) never hampered their work.

We can now source from various suppliers all categories of hi-vis (PPE) gear designed and manufactured for women and over the last 15 months a range of hi-vis wear for pregnant women has been launched.





This same issue also applies to size differences between men and women with protective equipment such as hard hats, gloves, shoes, knee and ear protection and safety glasses. Once size doesn't and shouldn't fit all. The majority of women have smaller hands, heads and feet than there male counterparts and safety clothing and equipment designed and produced with women in mind should be sourced by their companies to ensure their safety and comfort.

Women in industry have had to put up or shut up over the last three decades, but change is afoot.

Nowadays most office style work shirts and polo shirts can be offered in male and female design and in most cases cost is the same. Yesterday I was trying to put together an office wardrobe for a team of men and women with short and long sleeve shirt options, I had a reasonable choice of manufacturers, but the colour my client wanted was available in the mens' shirts but for some unknown reason not the womens'.

I looked at my options and across a wide range of manufacturers 70% of the womens' shirt lines had at least one less colour-way than the mens' offerings.

Did you know that women don't play rugby, cricket or football, they play a minuscule amount of golf, one or two lift weights and non of them box. That is what an alien visitor would think if he looked in the sports pages of a business clothing catalogue. It will change but it will take time.

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Branded, coloured overalls and coveralls for the emerging all female companies springing up across the UK are not easy to source. The male

preserves of painting and decorating, carpentry, tiling, and delivery driving,are being eroded, but to find lightweight, soft yet hard-wearing overalls for the female shape and form, although very much on trend in the fashion industry, are not easy to find as brand-able workwear garments, although they do exist.

This blog has not been easy to research nor write and to my shame I have found my industry still wanting, so I hope it doesn't come across as too much rant and not enough substance.

Within the office and factory environments there is no doubt, that workwear for women has come a long way (not I am afraid in a short space of time) but there is still much to be done.







In the safety and protective clothing market small steps have been made over the last few years but a lot more has to be done to ensure the female workforce is protected and comfortable when working in difficult environments.

It is up to companies like mine, workwear distributors and the bosses and buyers of companies to put pressure on the manufacturers of work and safety wear to develop, design and produce products specifically for a growing female workforce across all industries.

As a man writing this piece I have been aware of certain nuances and misinterpretation of my words and phrases discussing the female form and to that end it is not my intention to insult or annoy female workers as I struggle with my descriptive text to identify the differences between men and women. This has been read and approved by my wife and my female business partner so if I have erred….blame them.

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