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Editorial Director

Cara Griffin

Editor-in-Chief

Jennifer Ernst Beaudry

Senior Editor

Bob McGee

Contributors

Nancy Ruhling

Suzanne Blecher

Publisher

Jeff Nott
jnott@formula4media.com
516-305-4711

Advertising

Katie O'Donohue
kodonohue@formula4media.com
828-244-3043

Sam Selvaggio
sselvaggio@formula4media.com
212-398-5021

Ron Stern
rstern@formula4media.com
201-774-2432

Art Director

Francis Klaess

Production / Digital

Brandon Christie
516-305-4710
bchristie@formula4media.com

Formula4Media®

PO Box 23-1318,
Great Neck , NY 11023
Phone: 516-305-4709
Fax: 516-305-4712
www.formula4media.com

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Above: Nothing says workplace like loafers and lace-ups, but these fall looks aren't just all business. Clockwise from top: **Patrizia's** loafer with chunky outsole and hardware detailing; **Propet's** floral embossed leather laceup; **Naot's** suede-and-leather slip-on style.

On the cover: Ankle-height boots make the grade. From top: **Propet's** cap-toe boot; **Dunham's** chukka style; **Rieker's** mixed-material look with athletic-inspired outsole.

Cover photo and photo right by Frank James

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Strange Days

It's been a chaotic and unnerving time for everyone, and I know a lot of us are worried — about our health, about our businesses, about our customers. The speed at which the COVID-19 crisis has unfolded has seemed to accelerate daily, and I know a lot of you have revised your plans on an hourly basis.

We still don't know what the longer-term impacts of this crisis will be, and I know from the last few

days that I don't know enough to guess. So in the meantime, I want to send a bit of a love letter to all the shops I've been talking to, following on social media and observing as they rise to this challenge.

I've been inspired by the innovative things I've seen independents around the country doing — deliveries, drop-in, adapting their store hours, working with staff, rescheduling their events, reaching out to those in need — to keep serving their customers while protecting their

employees and community.

And that's good, because we need your stores.

I've had retail on the mind more so than usual lately. And one of the reasons why was brought home the other day when I was trying to solve a personal dilemma. My daughter is 4, and has strong opinions about what clothes she wears and what footwear she wants for the day. And as it may not surprise any of you familiar with 4-year-olds to learn, her opinions and my own don't always align as to what's weather-appropriate

or activity-appropriate. Selecting clothes for the day has become the flashpoint for more than one pitched battle, so you can imagine the dread I was feeling when I realized a few weeks ago that she had outgrown most of her clothes and shoes, and I would have to present her with replacements just ripe for being rejected.

Until I had a brainstorm. I pulled a bunch of hangers and our coat rack into the living room, carried my full-length mirror down from my room and set up shop. I hung dresses on the coat rack, folded sweaters and skirts on the piano bench, and used the turntable to set up a shop-in-shop with some of my old jewelry, a plant, and a pair of novelty sunglasses. I took the shoes and the sandals and merchandised them with looks. Then I took the old toddler shopping cart and play cash register out of the basement and opened my store.

And it worked. It worked! Getting to “shop” for her own things thrilled her to no end, and she piled her cart high with her new stuff. (Her mother's daughter, I was pleased to see she started with shoes and built her outfits around them.) It was such a lovely reminder of how much pleasure there is in shopping in a store — all the surprises, the ideas you get, the things you discover. All it was missing was that one extra element your stores provide: The amazing associates who are there to explain the product, break down the trends, fit the shoes and fill the need. Thank you for working so hard to create those experiences, and thank you for letting me not just play at it for an afternoon, but watch it in action all year round.



My daughter with her “purchases.”

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BUSINESS

Modell's Will Likely Go Dark On NYC Landscape



Gotta Go to Mo's is a phrase that may continue to ring true in New York City, but consumers would have far fewer places to head for their apparel and licensed garb, according to bankruptcy court documents filed in early March.

Six Modell's Sporting Goods stores owned by non-debtor Henry Modell & Co., a spin-off controlled by Modell's CEO Mitchell Modell, are not part of the Chap. 11 bankruptcy filing proceeding and may continue operating in some form. Inquiries on their status to the Long Island real estate firm handling the marketing of 137 Modell's store leases and to the retailer's counsel were unanswered as of press time.

Since April 2011, Henry Modell & Co. (HMC) has operated under a "shared services" agreement with the larger Modell's retail operation for inventory and other services. The 134-door Modell's business that intends to liquidate owed HMC some \$40 million as of the March 11 bankruptcy petition date.

The downfall of the Modell's brick-and-mortar empire, which generated \$490 million in annual sales (46 percent from apparel) in

2019, was caused by a number of factors, including the annual burden of \$95 million in store rent expenses. In early 2019, RBC Capital Markets executed confidentiality agreements with 14 potential buyers and eight management presentations for possible acquirers.

The bankrupt business has \$288 million in liabilities and \$220 million in assets. Modell's owes it top three unsecured creditors — Adidas, Nike and Under Armour — \$21.5 million in aggregate.

Increased competition from big-box and specialty sporting goods retailers, declining participation in team sports among youth and teens and the ongoing consumer migration away from physical retail stores to online shopping were all contributors, according to bankruptcy court documents. In 2019, Modell's was hit with modified terms from key vendors on deliveries due to published reports about the retailer's financial stability. And more recently, Modell's saw its cold weather softgood sales sag in Dec. 2019 and Jan. 2020 due to an unseasonably warm winter.

The bankruptcy filing became necessary when negotiations with potential bidder for the business fell apart and Modell's liquidity continued to tighten. Earlier, CEO Modell took a number of actions aimed at propping up the

fortunes of the family business and generating cash. Several years before pumping \$6.8 million in personal resources into the operation, lobbying landlords for rent concessions and urging key vendors to provide more favorable credit terms, he sold the family-controlled, 336,000-sq. ft. distribution center in the Bronx to an Annapolis, MD-based logistics firm for \$115 million. Terms of that deal require Modell's to vacate the facility before the end of 2020. The anticipated cost for Modell's to equip and lease another distribution center is estimated at \$22 million.

But by mid-February, faced with few other options, Modell's decided to shrink its store portfolio and commenced closures at 19 unprofitable locations. The retailer did not pay February or March rents on most stores and sharply cut back payments to vendors, suppliers and service providers due to reduced liquidity. Some vendors responded by holding back store deliveries. With less than \$10 million available under its credit agreement, Modell's consultants decided the business no longer had enough liquidity to continuing operating normally, prompting the March 11 filing of the bankruptcy petition in New Jersey. — *By Bob McGee*



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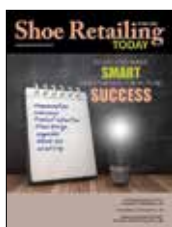
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5 Questions

Belinda Pina

Head of Footwear Sales, MICAM Americas

“We’re looking at the big picture: The amenities people want, programs to help retailers and take care of them and understanding their concerns and needs.”

On the heels of February’s announcement that Informa Markets’ FN Platform show would be rebranded MICAM Americas under a new partnership with Milan’s longtime MICAM show, the show announced the departure of longtime head Leslie Gallin. Now with new leadership under president Kelly Helfman, MICAM Americas is planning ahead for the August show, set to once again take place under one roof at the Las Vegas Convention Center. (The show has an agreement that will see the show staying put, through the Convention Center’s renovation, for the next five years.) *Footwear Insight* caught up with Belinda Pina, Head of Footwear Sales, MICAM Americas, to talk about the show’s new identity and what retailers and brands can expect.

It’s only been a few weeks since the show’s new identity was announced. What should attendees expect?

“The fun and exciting part is that this is a launch of a new show — this is not just a rebrand. We’re looking at the big picture: The amenities people want, programs to help retailers and take care of them and understanding their concerns and needs. It’s a time of construction, and we’re reaching out to everyone to see what they need to strengthen our partnership and take them to the next level. We’re not just approaching things as doing them the way we’ve always done it. This is a blank canvas and a fresh start for everybody.”

What direction have you been getting from MICAM?

“MICAM wants to have a higher profile for the event on a global scale. Their plain priority is that they have a brand identity that they’ve created — a strong one — and a reputation in

the industry with a lot of credibility. Moving forward, the way we brand the event will be MICAM Americas alongside MAGIC and Project. It’s not a neighborhood, it’s not the shoe show at MAGIC, it’s a standalone.”

What will that look like for August?

“MICAM has an Alice in Wonderland annual theme for the shows in 2020 — it’s a fun one. And the great part of working with them has been finding out that they’re flexible. They give us the theme, but they say, what’s best for your business, what’s best for your customer? We can take a lot of those creative elements and we get to envision them and roll them out on our floor. We work in tandem, but we’re going to run and operate as our own business.”

What plans have been set for the show?

“We’ll be working with MAGIC and getting that crossover so our brands can have exposure to ready-to-wear retailers in a new way. We’re creating a women’s campus between the North and Central Halls, with all women’s footwear, clothing and accessories. In the South Hall on the Lower Level will be all men’s clothing and footwear. Ultimately, it all comes down to attendees, and bringing opportunities for new business and major retailers to the fold.”

Are you anticipating any changes to show planning due to the COVID-19 outbreak?

“We’re planning for [the show to go on] — the hope being that whatever business opportunities some of us may miss in the more immediate two to three months, this will be the perfect time to bring everyone together so we can ensure all of our businesses go forward. Right now, August looks like good timing.” ●

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OPPORTUNITY

Spanish espadrille brand sees opportunity in brick-and-mortar channels

Viscata Targets the U.S. Market

Spanish espadrille brand Viscata has grown its business by marrying traditional manufacturing techniques with forward-looking e-tailing and data analysis. But to unlock the next step of development, it's looking at brick-and-mortar.

Thomas Morris, co-founder of the Barcelona-based brand, said that Viscata has been selling 80,000 pairs a year through their e-commerce operation. (The company has a U.S. base in San Diego that includes distribution, as well as a DC in New Jersey.) Those sales have given the brand both the base from which to grow, and a wealth of consumer data it has used to expand the spring line with new styles and colors that meet what shoppers are looking for.

"Now that we're really getting into fashion, we want to plant a seeds in the U.S.



and get people to know about the brand," Morris said.

Morris founded the brand in 2009 as a hobby, he said, and while sales grew consistently, it wasn't until 2016 that he quit his day job for a final time to focus on the line. He was inspired, he said, by the style of his adopted home city.

"Espadrilles are the shoes that everybody wears here," he said. "The ones people wear in the States are a little fancier, more embellished. I thought, why

couldn't there be the traditional, casual style everyone wears here?"

In that spirit, Morris contracted with local manufacturers to create the hand-sewn line.

"We wanted to keep that tradition of Spanish design and techniques," he said.

For spring, the line will include classic looks in flats, wedges of varying heights and ankle-tie styles in canvas, leather and suede, but will also include white-soled bottoms with a more modern athletic look, as well as tie-dye upper prints and multicolored jute bottoms. Prices for the line range from \$90 to \$165, with the majority between \$100 and \$130.

Morris said he's excited to show new accounts the line — as well as the consumer feedback that accompanies it.

"We think this is the right story: It's made in Spain, it's a premium product but it's not luxury pricing," he said.

— By Jennifer Ernst Beaudry

SOURCING

Three Questions with... Elias Gröndal

Elias Gröndal is the founder and CEO of Findsourcing.com, an online B2B platform for footwear sourcing. An industry veteran — he spent eight years with the H&M Group on the sourcing side — here Gröndal sounds off on where he sees the supply chain evolving and COVID-19.

What is Findsourcing.com? Why did you decide to create it?

"It is an online platform for finding footwear suppliers: We have more than 1,700 for footwear. The whole ambition is for buyers to make educated decisions in the sourcing process. Production partners are crucial to the success of any brand. But it's extremely random today how brands connect with their production partners — contacts through their network or at a trade fair going booth to booth, happy to find someone who seems

reasonable and a good match. This is basically the same as it's been done for 2,000 years. Our ambition is to introduce a more fact-driven sourcing process with bigger transparency."

Do you see the site having an educational or open-source approach to the industry?

"We have a Knowledge Bank [section on the site] introducing basic concepts in the industry. Personally, I've been inspired by the open source movement in the [footwear] industry. Open collaboration is the foundation, the belief that sharing will further develop great new possibilities. This is exactly what we're doing with Findsourcing.com."

How do you see the COVID-19 global pandemic impacting the global supply chain?

"I see a massive impact in a multitude of ways. For production in China, a lot of factories closed there or delayed opening after the Chinese New Year, delaying production



resumption. With that delay comes a backlog where suppliers can only focus on orders, samples and future orders, and newer clients are put on lower priority. Also, the fact that China is a major source component

hub will cause a ripple effect in other parts of the world with delays across Europe, for instance, where manufacturers are importing. Also, sales, of course. There will be pretty big consequences from this." —By Bob McGee



For more, listen to the **Footwear Insight Extra** podcast with Elias Gröndal on FootwearInsightExtra.com

BRAND LAUNCH

Spring Launch Pad: Halsa



The
\$139.95
Aloe and
\$159.95
Melania
will deliver
this fall.

Born out of the professional market and designed for the independent channel, Halsa Footwear is betting that it offers something better for both consumers and retailers this spring.

The women's fashion comfort brand is a creation of parent company Suecos, a Spanish brand with deep expertise in the work and nursing business who wanted to bring that focus on fit and support to the

broader consumer. A tight line of sandals, Maryjanes and boots that all feature deep heel cups, classic shapes and leather uppers debuted this February at more than 100 accounts, including The Walking Co. and Kenosha, WI's Chiapetta Shoes. Prices for the line run from \$119 to \$139 for sandals and Maryjanes, with boots retailing from \$160 to \$180, and all styles are built with the brand's ergonomic removable footbed, which weds carbon fiber construction for stability and proper position with silver and copper elements that offer antimicro-

bial protection. (Halsa is so bullish on the insole that they're offering it as a stand-alone aftermarket insole as well at \$69.)

And under VP of sales, footwear veteran Tony Adams, who is heading up the U.S. sales effort from the brand's San Diego headquarters, Halsa is focusing all its energies on brick-and-mortar independents. To stand out in a crowded field, the brand is priced with margins of 57.5 to 60 percent, has a robust in-stock program and offers drop-ship to its independent customers.

See more from Halsa on page 21. ●

MADE IN AMERICA

Reinventing Made In America

With Clover & Cobbler, Jaclyn Jones is making the factory she couldn't find.



Clover & Cobbler's artisans work out of the brand's reimagined Los Angeles factory.

When Jaclyn Jones wanted to launch her namesake brand in 2015, finding a factory in the U.S. who would take her on was no easy feat. Five years later, not only does she manufacture Jaclyn Jones USA domestically, she owns the factory that makes it. And at Clover & Cobbler, she's determined to make American manufacturing simpler, more sustainable and more accessible to designers and retailers than ever.

Located in the Van Nuys neighborhood in Los Angeles, today Clover & Cobbler makes

three in-house lines — Jaclyn Jones USA, Salpy, and Californians, which launched this spring — and produces product for 10 to 15 private label lines at any given time in the 20,000-square-foot factory space it opened in 2018. A showroom on the factory floor is set up for meetings, line reviews and conferences, and features swatch wall and samples from local resources the factory uses and recommends. And Jones and chief production officer Kim Thomas keep it in use: Jones said she company fields so many calls and messages from aspiring designers, manufacturers and stores looking to create in-house brands that they've set up a formal interview process to triage potential clients, as well as to connect

designers who aren't at the manufacturing stage yet with local consultants.

Jones said it's a direct response to her own experience.

"I had made all the designs, but there was no information about how to take the next step. I looked heavily for six months — I had quit my job, and this was 100 percent my day job and my night job," she said.

While L.A. has a number of operating footwear factories ranging from small garage factories to big European-style operations, she said, "the factories I did find mostly made their own brand and didn't do private label, or they had big minimums." Eventually she connected with Thomas, who at the time

THE FOOTWEAR EYE

was a consultant specializing in Made in the USA product. Even still, Jones said, she had work with two smaller factories — one that did pattern-making and another specialized in making hand-carved wooden heels and could do outselling and assembly — to create her shoes.

It was the second factory — International Last, owned by Salpy and Kevork Kaladjian — that would eventually change her plans. After working closely together on Jaclyn Jones USA and on Salpy Kaladjian's namesake line, the Kaladjians asked Jones if she'd be willing to buy both the factory and the line. They were looking to step back, and while they'd been approached by bigger labels and Chinese factories, they wanted the factory and what they considered a family of workers to be in the hands of someone who wanted to run it, not just acquire its assets and contacts. But after initially saying no, Jones said, she started to see the potential.

"I was saying, 'I don't know how to run a factory!' But then I thought, I'm in here every day, and I do know how — and on top of that, I see all the things that could be done better," she said.

Enticed by the rare chance to pair a fresh start with the benefits of an existing business, Jones began the transition leading up to the October 2018 purchase, leasing a new factory space 15 minutes from the old location and stripping down all the old equipment to be cleaned and tuned up. (Having the factory floor be an inspiring, creative, feminine place was important to her, Jones said: when the time came to re-enamel the machines, she had it done in teal.)

The new space allowed for changes that better fit her vision of what a modern, forward-looking American Made production facility could be. She transitioned all product to use water-based adhesives to improve both sustainability and workers' health, and installed \$50,000 worth of dust collection and air filtration systems for the same reasons. She also reset the layout, creating true production lines that product could flow through with carts that could follow any given collection through the whole process.

Today at Clover & Cobbler — she changed the name when she acquired the business — Jones and Thomas, as well as Salpy Kaladjian and marketing and sales people, work out of the office, with 23 workers on the floor — half of whom, including the three floor supervisors, are women. "They're artisans doing their craft," Jones said. They offer full-service line development, lasting and production. And,



Owner Jaclyn Jones, left, in the showroom.

Jones said, operations are geared to give new brands the services they need.

"We have zero minimums so new brands can start out," she said. "We keep the pricing in short breaks so they can decide what they want to do."

Jones said part of the job is walking prospective clients through what the pricing means.

"A lot of people come to us and expect to make shoes that retail for \$30, and that's not realistic," she said. It's not apples-to-apples with overseas costs, she said: "With the [lower] price per shoe, you'll also have to pay shipping and customs, and [account] for the time you're losing on your timelines."

The offering has clearly struck a nerve. Jones said business has grown steadily, with increases in people looking for vegan and sustainable options especially. And Jones said she sees further growth opportunities for boutiques.

Some of the business coming her way is the fact that she — unlike the factories she once tried to find — is active online, she said. She thinks there's a cultural shift that's driving people to seek her out online.

"We're in a certain economy where everyone wants to be an entrepreneur and can be an entrepreneur," she said. "That movement within the younger generation empowers a lot of people to try it out." ●



 **PowerStep**

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Both Sides Now

Savvy kids shoe retailers know how to make **kids** and **parents** both smile.

By Suzanne Blecher

Serving the kids market can be tough.

And it's not just that the stock demands are high (all those sizes!), margins thin and the market competitive — although all those things can be true. Kids stores have two different sets of customers to impress: Style-conscious kids, and their features (and price) obsessed parents. Kids want glitter and lights; parents want quality leathers, podiatrist approval, spot-on style and fantastic fit — all in one shoe. **So what does it take to make everybody happy with shoes that kids actually want to wear, day after day?** We asked three children's footwear shops to give us the inside scoop on what kids and their grown-ups are asking for. Here's how they put together a winning package.

Michelson's Shoes

Eric Michelson, Owner
Lexington, MA

Michelson's Shoes is a fourth-generation family-owned firm with two locations. *[Ed Note: For more on Michaelson's, see our profile on page 36.]* Kids offerings include Stride Rite, Merrell, Sperry, Nina, Plae, Saucony, New Balance, Under Armour, Adidas, Pediped, Teva, Keen, Crocs, Native and Kamik. "We have a great reputation on parent forums and many come here for their first walkers," owner Eric Michelson said.

What are parents looking for? "Customers come to us for a proper fit and the expectation of quality products. The starting point to every sale is measuring both feet," Michelson said. Is there a magic price point? "Most [parents] will pay a little more for quality features. Our merchandise mix is primarily moderate price points. Parents expect our products to last — and will complain if they didn't get the expected time out of their shoes," he said.

How many pairs do most parents buy at a time? "Most will buy one pair per child at a time because feet grow," he said. "Today, they'll buy sneakers for everyday use, later get a pair for a special event, then once the warm weather hits, get sandals. When we sell multiple pairs, it tends to be an everyday pair plus a special event pair or seasonal item."

What style elements are hot? It all depends on age, Michelson said. "The most sought-after feature is the BOA crank closure for boys and girls ages 7 years and up. It's easier to use than laces and not as youthful as Velcro. Lights are still popular. Girls 4 to 7 years old like shimmer and glitter. Boys like a touch of pop color — lime, red, orange — with navy, black, or grey. Girls go for pinks



Michelson's Shoes

and purples, but we also do a lot with sneakers that are blue or purple and specifically don't have any pink."

Which features resonate most with parents? "Parents want the shoes to do as much as possible. Waterproof is a requirement for hiking and winter boots," he said. "Parents appreciate that we carry extended widths so that their children get a proper fit."

Fit To Be Tied

Lori Martin, Owner
West Des Moines, Iowa

Lori Martin opened Fit To Be Tied in the Valley West Mall almost seven years ago, initially as an exclusive Stride Rite retailer. While she still carries the brand, nowadays New Balance, Asics, Saucony, Chaco, Keen, Native, See Kai Run, Toms and Merrell also fill shoe walls. "We are the only 'just kids' shoe store in Iowa, and we carry all widths, so we get customers from Omaha, Kansas City and other surrounding areas," Martin said. The store, she added, also gets referrals from local podiatrists, since they can fit kids with braces. "Parents come in because they know they won't have to do a thing on their own," she said. "We handle it."

What are parents looking for? "Parents want a good fit for their kids. They want growing room in a good quality shoe," Martin said. "Their kids have to like the shoe when it's on."

Is there a magic price point? "I'd say our average price is \$50, [but] if the shoe fits very well, at \$75, the parent won't say no," she said — parents know the increase in price will give them a shoe that isn't going to wear out. That being said, a bargain is attractive. "We do have parents that will just shop our sale tables because they know that we have good quality shoes on sale," says Martin.

How many pairs do most parents buy at a time? "Most buy one shoe. We are not in a high-end mall."

What style elements are hot? "Girls want glitter. Boys like lights. Girls like rainbows. Boys are simple: On Saturdays, our store is like a racetrack with kids running around with shoes that are 'fast.'"

Which features resonate most with parents? "Especially in the winter, parents want waterproof shoes. A lot of boy moms want a more durable shoe where they won't blow out the toes. Every once in a



while, they want something machine washable or with a more flexible sole. Parents are very trusting of us and just want a good quality shoe," she said.

The Perfect Fit

Lindsay Miller, Owner
Parker, Colorado

In the two-and-a-half years that the store has been open, owner Lindsay Miller has seen parents drawn to her shop for its expertise in fitting kids. "It also helps that we price match every day in store from the major brand websites," she added. The Perfect Fit carries brands including Stride Rite, See Kai Run, New Balance, Skechers, Keds, Keen, Merrell, Pediped, Bobux, Tsukihoshi, Saucony, Billy Footwear, Plae and Under Armour, as well as about 20 brands that are seasonal options.

What are parents looking for? "Price and sustainability would be the biggest elements that we are seeing a trend in, however, our customers look for a little bit of everything. We stand behind our products knowing that kids are hard on shoes. We look for shoes that offer a variety of elements so that when they come into the store, we can offer them exactly what they are looking for," Miller said.

Is there a magic price point? "There is not," she said. "We trust the brands that we carry for what they set the price at for the value of the shoe."

How many pairs do most parents buy at a

time? "Most people buy two pairs at a time, typically a day-to-day sneaker and then in the fall, a boot. In the spring, it's a sandal with the sneaker."

What style elements are hot? "For younger girls, light up with an underlying theme of unicorns or mermaids is popular. For younger boys, it is light up with fun colors. Older boys gravitate more towards a clean-cut, versatile sneaker. Older girls tend to go for whatever the current trends are, such as shimmer and glitter, while still maintaining a clean and classic look."

Which features resonate most with parents?

"Waterproof, memory foam, reinforced toes, and flexibility of the shoe are always the go-to things for parents," she said. "Again, it goes back to something that is comfortable and durable." ●



The Perfect Fit

123 EASY AS WORK

By Cara Griffin

THREE TRENDS TO WATCH IN “ON THE JOB” STYLE.

1. MADE IN THE USA



Thorogood American Heritage 6” Black Moc Toe Maxwear Wedge

2. Wolverine-owned brand Hytest has designed a collection of work boots around the concept of comfort on the job, and the line has a name that reflects that aim. The Hytest FootRests collection of industrial boots are designed to deliver grip protection, enhanced breathability, support and comfort. The Mission Nano Toe 6” Zipper Boot and the Tread Nano Toe 6” Hiker feature lightweight Xergy anti-fatigue foam midsoles to absorb shock and return energy, as well as rubber outsoles that are oil-and slip-resistant for safety.

The FootRests 2.0 Tread Hiker also features abrasion resistant TecTuff material and a nano, non-metallic safety toe, while the FootRests 2.0 Mission Zipper Boot is an athletic-inspired duty boot that’s uniform-ready and features lightweight and breathable fabric with minimal seams.

Karry Johnson, VP and GM of Hytest, says the brand is dedicated to equipping workers with “the resources they need to get the job done — from the boots on their feet to the expert safety knowledge and service we deliver.” ●

Hytest Tread Nano
Toe 6” Hiker



2. COMFORT ON THE JOB

1. Demand for Thorogood’s Made in USA product has been a “huge part of the brand’s business for quite some time with union tradespeople,” according to Bianca Boettcher, marketing manager for Thorogood. She notes that Thorogood is seeing enough demand for its USA-made products that the brand has invested in an additional factory (in Maine) to increase production of its domestic product while still keeping its two Wisconsin factories at full capacity.

About 80 percent of the brand’s products are made domestically, while its imported product is “designed to meet certain pricepoints, and allows us to work with factories on more technical designs and constructions,” says Boettcher.

Styles in the brand’s American Heritage line, such as its Moc Toe leather boots, not only boast USA-made cred, but also combine style with performance and safety benefits. Made to be worn on-the-clock or off, Thorogood’s American Heritage 6” Black Moc Toe Maxwear Wedge boots, made in Wisconsin, feature a removable shock-absorbing footbed, a fiberglass shank, a slip-resistant outsole and Goodyear storm welt construction. ●



Red Wing Zero-G Lite Chukka

3. LIGHTWEIGHT STYLE

3. Red Wing Shoe Co. has launched what it says is its lightest work collection yet, the Zero-G Lite family of “next-gen work shoes.”

Red Wing’s Zero-G Lite styles are designed for light-duty industrial jobs such as warehouse, distribution, light manufacturing, service and office-to-floor roles. Modern, casual and super lightweight, styles in the collection are meant to deliver all-day comfort for workers who are on their feet continuously — both on the job and outside of work.

“Our customers expect their workwear to have the same style and comfort as any shoe they would wear off the job site,” says Kristin Hamilton, senior product merchandising manager at Red Wing. “Red Wing designed the Zero-G Lite collection to perform like a work shoe while offering modern style and all-day comfort. This allows our customers to seamlessly transition between work, home and anything in-between.”

Zero-G Lite styles range in weight from a low 11.7 ounces to 14.2 ounces for a single shoe. Other key features include: outsoles that offer slip resistance as well as oil, gas and chemical resistance; EVA footbeds; premium full-grain leather uppers; and safety protection in select styles with low-profile aluminum safety toes. ●



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Keeping it Real

Mike DeBonis, 37
Congressional Reporter for the
Washington Post, Washington, D.C.

What is the dress code in your workplace?

I work in one of the most conservative fashion environments that still exists outside of maybe a law firm. So if I'm at the Capitol, I'm in a suit and tie and dress shoes pretty much every day I'm there. I'm also an observer of members of Congress' footwear, and in the last year to two years, there's been a lot more men wearing nice-looking sneakers with suits — they can get away with it, but we can't. People might wear disgusting, beat-to-hell shoes, but they're dressy beat-to-hell shoes.

What is a typical work day like for you?
 Sheer steps are an issue. You're walking a lot, and 10,000 step days are not unusual. And there are hard floors everywhere — marble, tile. There's some carpet in the building, but it's not ever where I stand. When I first came here, I was in a carpeted office or covering city hall, and at the time I had a pair of nice leather-soled Johnston and Murphy oxfords. But when I started covering the Capitol, leather soles were out of the picture.

How many different pairs of shoes do you have in rotation to wear for work



We asked three consumers with very different 9-to-5 jobs to give us insight on the shoes they wear for work and why they wear what they do.

“My general philosophy is buy good shoes and take care of them.”

Mike DeBonis

and what are the top shoes in your work rotation?

I have two pairs of good shoes, one brown and one black to go with my suits. My brown pair is a Johnston and Murphy cap-toe. I've had these for three years, and they have this nice, fairly durable rubber sole. And I found this very nice black Oxford by Ecco — it's all business shoe from the top but it has a very nice cushiony rubber sole. And if I'm in the newsroom where nobody cares, I have any number of trashy sneakers that I will wear with anything.

How much do you spend on work shoes?

I'll spend \$100 to \$200 — I'm not in Allen Edmonds or Ferragamo territory, although I should think about making my next purchase a nice one. My general philosophy is buy good shoes and take care of them: I use shoe trees religiously, I shine my own shoes, I use this moisturizing cream a couple times a year, and every month or so give it the old once-over with the old Lincoln Wax. I have to get new heels put on my shoes every 9 months or so, and I've changed insoles on both of my shoes multiple times.

Where do you buy your shoes for work?

I'm always looking around for a quality pair of shoes at a good price at a Nordstrom Rack or Johnston and Murphy store or similar.

When you buy work shoes, are you buying them for work only, or do you buy them planning to wear them for outside of work occasions as well?

The shoes I wear to work I also tend to wear to nicer social occasions.

What could brands do better when designing the type of shoes you need for work?

Sometimes it can be hard to find a dressy, suit-appropriate shoe with a comfortable sole that isn't too chunky, but feel like that has gotten easier over the past 5 years or so.

How do you describe your personal style — and how important are your shoes to that look?

American Professional Guy: neat suits in basic colors, fairly conservative shirts

and ties, nothing too trendy or cut too trimly. Hill reporters are not known for their fashion forwardness, and I am not breaking the mold.

Denine M. Pezone, 55
Business Strategist, Self-Employed,
Charlotte, NC

What is the dress code in your workplace?

Business casual.

What is a typical work day like for you?

I work from a home office, but frequently meet clients and customers during the day. I usually will take a break at some point during the day to take a walk and get lunch or just get some fresh air. I travel a good deal so, I am in and out of airports a lot.

Describe the footwear you wear for work.

I wear heels or boots for “work” and dress. When I need to walk to a meeting, I may wear a pair of casual shoes to the meeting and then change into business appropriate shoes before I meet with clients or customers. For work shoes, the most important attributes are fit and style. For casual work shoes, fit and style are the priorities.

How many different pairs of shoes do you have in rotation to wear for work and what are the top shoes in your work rotation?

I have roughly 20 to 30 pairs of shoes that I rotate for work. The style I wear will depend on the meetings or events that I attend. If the meeting requires heels, I have a range of pumps from Kate Spade, Prada and Jimmy Choo. For a more casual environment, I will wear Stuart Weitzman or Sam Edelman. The top three work shoes in my current rotation are Cole Hahn boots, Rag & Bone booties and Donald Pliner wedges. Boots are my favorite work style. They are usually most comfortable and I can wear them from work to evening. They are stylish and easy to travel in.

How much do you spend on work shoes?
 Between \$100 to \$600 per pair.

Where do you buy your shoes for work?



For work shoes, the most important attributes are fit and style. For casual shoes that I would wear between meetings, conferences or travel — comfort, fit and style are the priorities.

Denine M. Pezone

Department or specialty stores: I like to try on my shoes. However, I have also made some purchases online.

When you buy work shoes, are you buying them for work only, or do you buy them planning to wear them for outside of work occasions as well?

I buy shoes because I love shoes. Then I figure out where I will wear them!

What could brands do better when designing the type of shoes you need for work?

Footwear could better reflect trends that we see today in athleisure and be more varied and appropriate for multiple uses such as going from the gym to casual to dress.

How do you describe your personal style — and how important are your shoes to that look?

Shoes are one of the most important aspects of my wardrobe! My style tends to be more fashion-forward. I follow runway trends and launches of the luxury brands and often buy what is currently being shown in that season. I still like to dress up to go to work. I love a great pair of wool pants, a cashmere sweater and a pair of boots. These are staples in my wardrobe.

Will Stitilis, 26

Assistant Director Marketing & Community Relations, Princeton University Athletics, Princeton, NJ

What is the dress code in your workplace?

There is no official dress code, but business casual is generally accepted. A polo and khakis is fine, or khakis and

Comfort is a high priority, because we are fairly active during our workday and I want my feet comfortable. A more comfortable shoe makes for a better work experience.

Will Stitilis

button-down shirt. I can even get away with a [university-branded] sweatshirt. In terms of footwear, any closed toe shoe is OK. No flip-flops. No work boots.

What is a typical work day like for you?

The workday depends on whether I have a game, which sport it is and whether it's taking place inside or outside. For example, this Friday I'll wear sneakers to the office to start the day and I'll bring a change of clothes and shoes for the basketball game I'm working in the evening. If there's no athletic event that day, there's a decent amount of physical tasks and activity — setting up for games or stuff to do around the facilities. There's not a lot of sitting still.

Describe the footwear you wear for work.

About 60 percent of the time I'm in sneakers. Otherwise, I wear a boat shoe or a desert boot and sometimes a dress shoe for meetings or for when I'm working a game inside. Comfort is a high priority, because we are fairly active during our workday and I want my feet comfortable. A more comfortable shoe makes for a better work experience. Waterproofing is fine for outside but I'll wear a better sock underneath to help keep my feet dry.

How many different pairs of shoes do you have in rotation to wear for work and what are the top shoes in your work rotation?

I have seven or eight shoes in rotation. My top three types of shoes are basketball or running sneakers, business casual styles and a typical dress shoe. Right now I'm wearing a grey Nike Air Zoom Pegasus 36 sneaker. I also have a couple pair of Clarks desert boots in rotation — one is blue suede and the other is brown suede. They stand out a little bit but they're not as flashy. And I have a Calvin Klein dress shoe that is a black leather laceup.

How much do you spend on work shoes?

If I'm spending on a nicer, dressier business-type shoe, I'll spend \$150 tops — and less is better. I don't want to break the bank.

Where do you buy your shoes for work?

I don't have to buy my Nike sneakers, which is a very nice perk of my job. [Ed. Note: Princeton's Athletic Department is sponsored by Nike.] But for my other shoes, most often I look online first to see what I like and then I'll go to a store to buy the footwear. I like to

try on the shoe in person. I live near a couple malls, so I'll find a Clarks store or go to a Macy's, and I'll shop in a Foot Locker or a Champs. I don't buy online. I don't want to deal with having to return something if the footwear doesn't fit.

What could brands do better when designing the type of shoes you need for work?

So much about shoes these days has become a fashion element. Companies are now giving lots of options with colors and styles. Our job is not about being fashion-forward. As long as it's a comfortable shoe, I'm fine with it.

How do you describe your personal style — and how important are your shoes to that look?

My personal style is relaxed comfort. How my wardrobe comes together is not a big priority. On basketball game days I'll wear something closer to an actual business outfit of a nice buttondown shirt, tie and dress pants, and my dress shoes. But in general, I'm wearing a polo, khaki and sneakers. No one is walking around the athletic department wearing some exotic footwear. Our department is not overly concerned with fashion and trends. Socks are actually an important component that relates to my footwear. For working hockey games, I'll wear a wool sock because I'm in an ice rink, whereas for a football game in the cold weather, I'll put on a thicker sock and a sock with a good cushioning since I'm on my feet for eight hours. For basketball I like my Stance socks: they're fun but not outwardly showy. ●





The New

to

Shoes That Work Around the Clock

By Jennifer Ernst Beaudry / What to wear to the office? Anything you want. When it comes to workday footwear, the only rules are what looks good — and keep you comfortable for a day doing it all. These fall '20 styles run the gamut: sleek boots and booties, animal prints of all species, sneakers, loafers and everything in between. What do they have in common? Dialed-up comfort and sharp looks. Trust them: They're Professionals. / **Photography by Frank James**

Stacked heel booties are a smart choice for office-to-after style. Sleek silhouettes, luxe materials and Western embellishments are at home anywhere you take them. From top: **Blowfish**'s double-zipper boot with ruched vamp; **Halsa**'s mixed-material look with buckle; metallic bootie with back zip from **Chocolat Blu**.





These iconic leather boots for him and her are comfort workhorses that will carry you through the day without breaking a sweat. The fact that they're eye-catching styles in refreshingly just-south-of-expected colors is the icing on the cake. From Left: **Dansko's** clog boot with buckle detail for women; **Timberland's** heritage leather 4-eye boot for men.



Are leopard and tiger the new neutrals?? We say yes. A more casual workplace means a chance to get wild, and these next-level sneakers have animal attraction to spare. From top: Multitextured sneaker with removable insole from **Remonte**; patent and leather throwback running look from **Geox**; **Earth**'s tiger stripe knit slip-on.



For a go-with-it-all look, you can't beat the classic Chelsea boot in two classic twin-gore colorways. Stylish and sophisticated, it's man's best bet Monday through Friday, and Saturday and Sunday too. From left: Burnished leather boot from **Spring**; Waterproof ankle boot in deep brown from **Rieker**.

A high-contrast, artistic photograph of four Vionic boots. Three are black and one is a vibrant red. They are arranged on a dark, wet wooden plank surface, which is scattered with small, clear ice cubes and water droplets. The boots are covered in water droplets, emphasizing their waterproof or weather-resistant nature. The lighting is dramatic, creating strong highlights and shadows.

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autumn-winter
20

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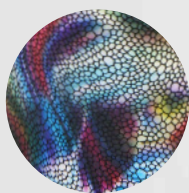


Fresh takes on snakeskin in cool colors elevate any outfit — at any heel height. Pick your poison: These styles are the antidote to boring looks. From top: **Vionic**’s sleek smoking style; **Lifestride**’s round-toe ballet flat; **Fly London**’s chunky-heeled pump.

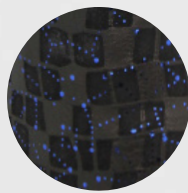
COMFORT AND SAFETY FOR THE WORKPLACE

2020 ANNUAL COLLECTION

A choice of colorful,
stylish patterns | **MANILA**
A PRINTED LEATHER SLIP-ON LOAFER.



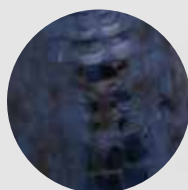
MANILA-BOREAL
Blue Multi



MANILA-VAGOC
Blue Patent



MANILA-CRYSA
Blue Multi



MANILA-CROCO
Blue Patent



MANILA-FLPWR
Black Multi

**BRINGING
VIBRANT COLORS TO
DURABLE LEATHER**

**WALKING ON A
CLOUD OF COMFORT**

Featured Style | **MANILA-BOREAL**


Spring Step[®]
PROFESSIONAL

**OIL & SKID
RESISTANT**

**SUPERIOR ENGINEERED
SLIP & SKID RESISTANT
OUTSOLE**



**SELECT STYLES
AVAILABLE IN MEDIUM
AND WIDE WIDTHS**

Why let your specs have all the fun?
Tortoiseshell shades make a great
footnote to all-black ensembles or add a
grounding element to a riot of color.
From top left: Horsebit loafer by
Aravon; **Revere**'s ankle-strap flat;
Azura's black-and-leopard style.



features.



CUSTOM-LIKE FIT



TARGETED
COMPRESSION



ANATOMICAL
DESIGN



LIFETIME
GUARANTEE



MEET THE FIRST NO SHOW WITH A CUSTOM-LIKE FIT

Bringing running technology into No Show socks.

Both utilitarian and chic,
an all-black, all-straps style
looks (and functions) no
matter what the day brings.
From left: **Geox**'s knit collar
strappy sneaker; lace-up boot
with high collar from **Ecco**.



SENTRY



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- + Passes ASTM F2412-11, I-75, & C-75.
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- + Extended Sizes & Widths.



ASTM INTERNATIONAL

We surveyed 356 consumers. Here is what they told us.

THE SURVEY: WORKPLACE DRAMA



The brief for workwear today: casual, comfortable and stylish.

When it comes to the modern workplace, the data is clear: Workers wear what they want, and they want style and comfort. MESH01 surveyed 356 adults about their work wardrobes and what they're looking for when it comes to adding to the mix. The clear majority of respondents — 72 percent — said there's no formal dress code at their place of business, and the same proportion said they'd describe their office looks as either business casual (35 percent) or casual (37 percent). It could be because of the demands of today's workplaces: 60 percent of those surveyed said they spent "all" or "most" of their time on their feet, with an additional 25 percent saying they were up and going at least some of the time. And that's reflected in their footwear buys: casual shoes were the preferred options on foot for 33 percent of respondents, and 29 percent said athletic styles like sneakers were their go-tos. But don't call the work category a relic: Even in an era of blurred lines and dressed-down casualwear, a full 55 percent of consumers said they own shoes that are primarily meant for work. ■

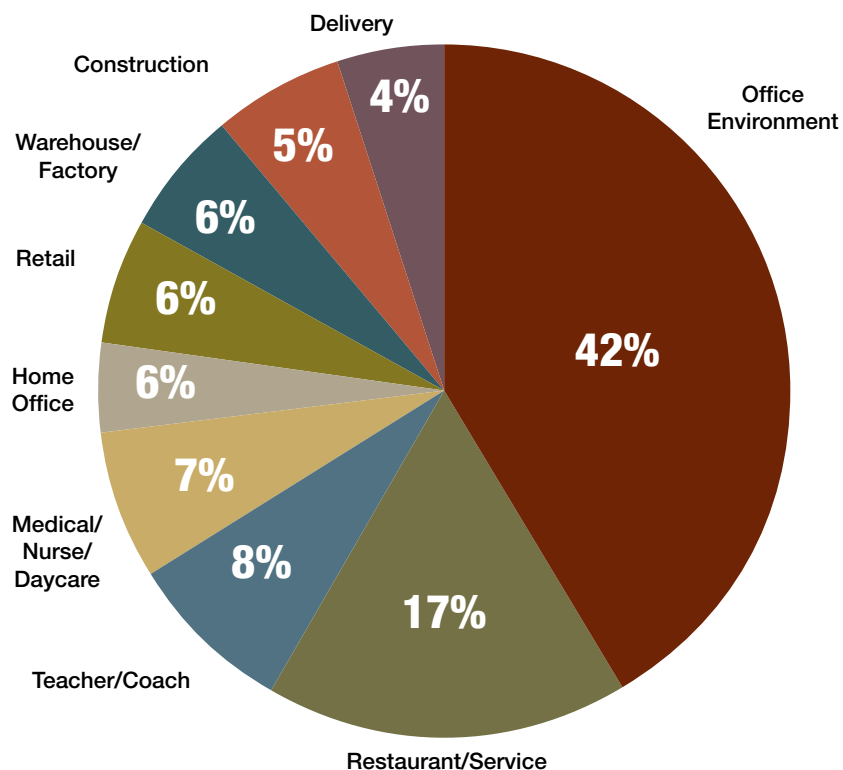
The survey, conducted by MESH01, included 356 respondents, men and women, with an average age of 35 years old.



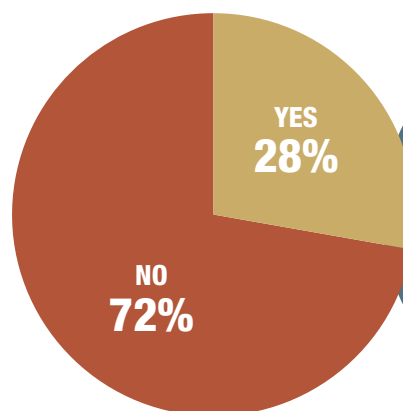
SEIZE THE TREND!

Trend Insight Consumer is a feature within Textile Insight that delivers research conducted on the MESH01 Platform. MESH01 collects data from a select panel of sports enthusiasts. For information on the Mesh1 Platform, contact Brian Bednarek at 603-766-0957 or brian.bednarek@mesh01.com. For more information on Trend Insight Consumer and how your company can participate, contact Jeff Nott at 516-305-4711 or jnott@formula4media.com.

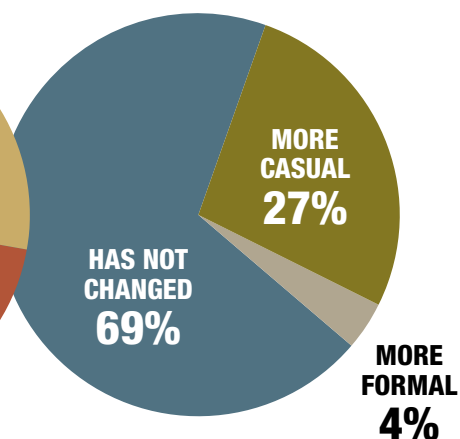
Describe your work environment/occupation



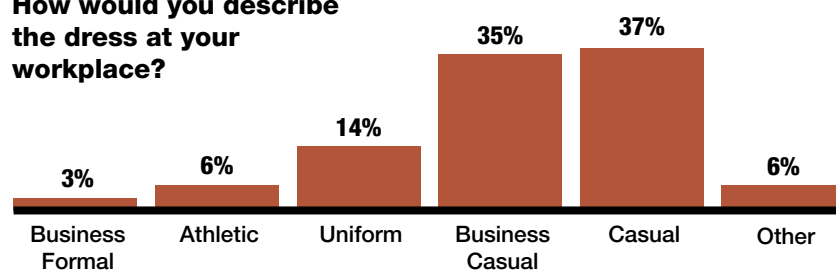
Is there a formal dress code at your office?



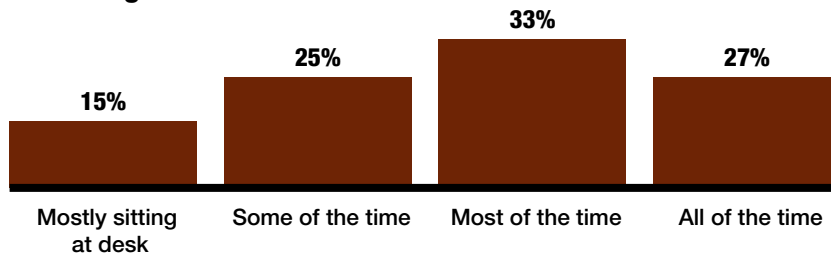
Has your workplace environment changed over the past few years?



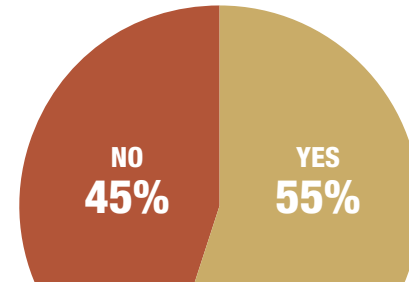
How would you describe the dress at your workplace?



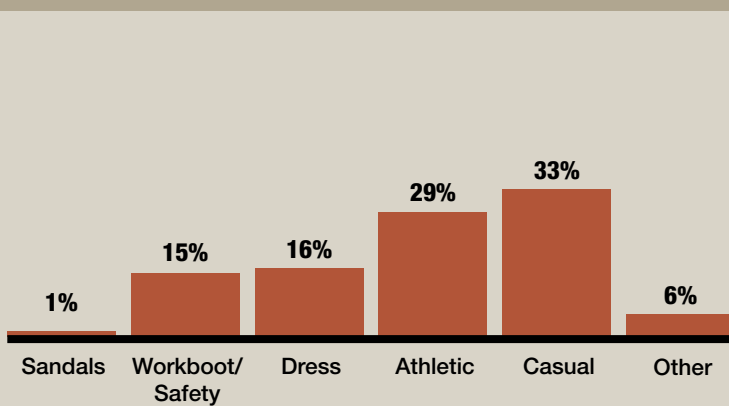
At work, how much time do you spend on your feet vs. sitting at a desk?



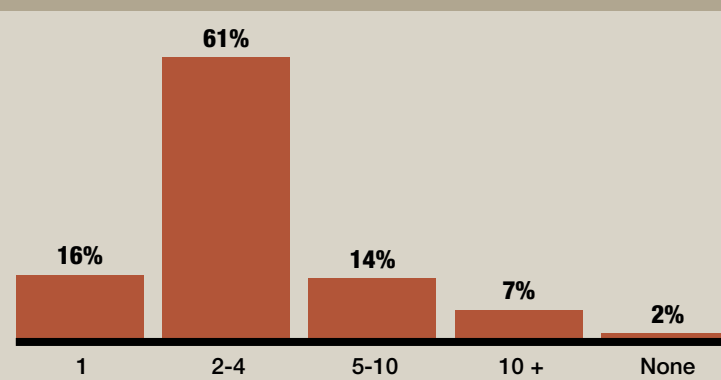
Are your work shoes dedicated to or primarily for wear at work?



What type of footwear do you wear at work the most?

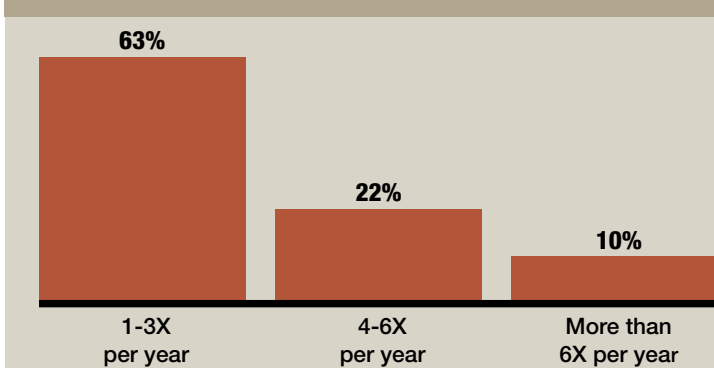


How many pairs of work shoes do you own?

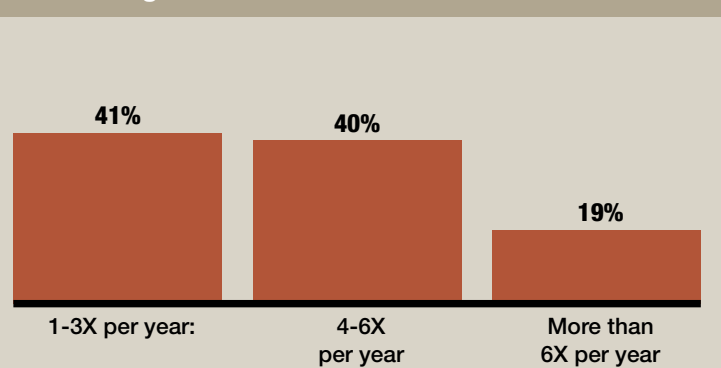


How often do you shop for footwear that you...

...wear to work?

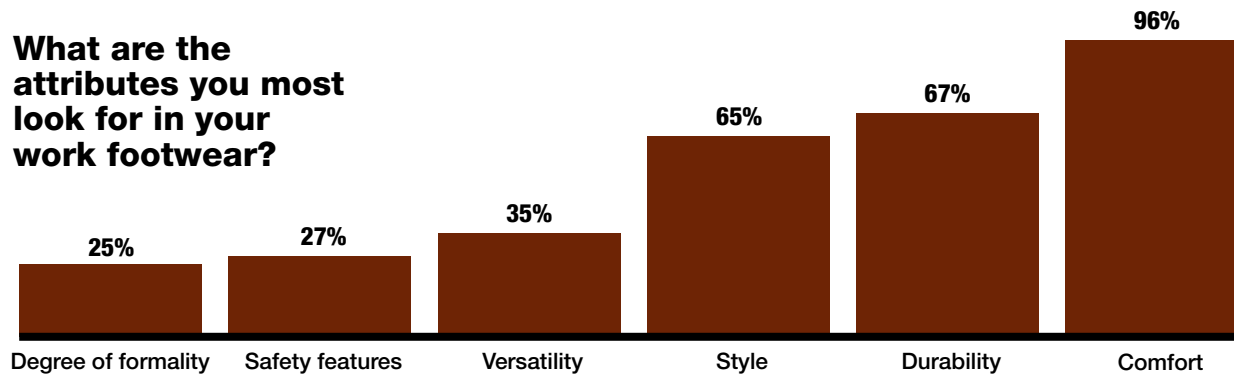


...wear in general?

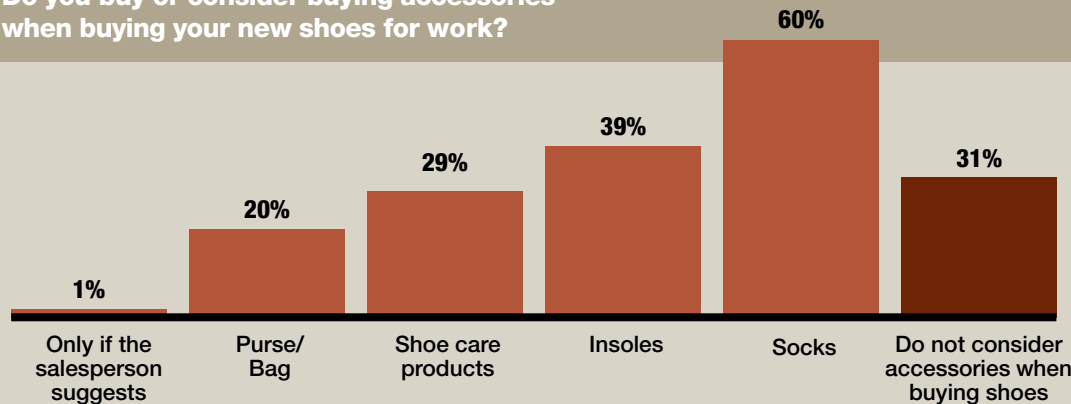


*6% Do not shop for work shoes

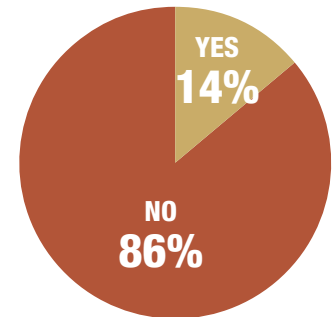
What are the attributes you most look for in your work footwear?



Do you buy or consider buying accessories when buying your new shoes for work?



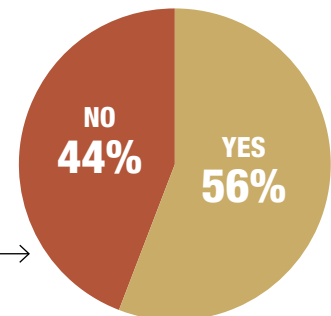
Does the place you primarily buy your work footwear offer the option of a personal shopper to help with styling suggestions?



Where do you primarily shop for your work footwear?



If online, is there a brick-and-mortar store affiliated with the e-commerce site?



SELECTED COMMENTS: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE SHOES.

What do a person's shoes say about them?

"Style — whether they care about how they look." **Male, 29**

"Shoes can show the responsibility level of an individual, how hard one works and even what may be important to the wearer!" **Female, 49**

"Uncomfortable feet set the mood for the day." **Female, 44**

"How professional they are, how well-styled they are and what they can afford." **Female, 25**

"I don't care what they say as long as they are comfortable and somewhat modern." **Female, 37**

"Nothing." **Female, 32**

"Everything." **Female, 40**

"It reflects professionalism in the workplace. Outside of work, a person's footwear reflects their personality. For example, shoes that are scuffed or worn reflect someone who may not care, athletic

shoes suggest an active person, very high heels reflect someone more caught up in appearances versus comfort or practicality." **Female, 51**

"Depends on the dress code. But nice shoes stand out, which in my opinion make people more outgoing and confident." **Female, 34**

"A person's shoes makes a loud statement about who they are and what kind of life they lead." **Female, 39**

"Mine say my feet are comfortable and stylish." **Female, 60**

"It tells others whether or not they are seeking their approval." **Male, 37**

"I'm a strong believer that shoes show a certain character, even in my field of work. Dirty shoes show a strong work character." **Female, 50**

"It shows their personal style even when [their] clothes cannot." **Female, 30**

"I think you can tell how a person approaches life by how they treat their footwear. Those with clean, well-maintained footwear seem to be go-getters and hard workers. Those with run-down,

neglected footwear seem to be the ones who take short cuts and don't care about customer service as much." **Female, 52**

"A person's shoes can tie a whole outfit together. It can make or break a first impression." **Female, 20**

"What they do for work, how hard they work, [and] if they care about their safety or appearance." **Male, 51**

"I don't judge people by their shoes. If it's comfortable to be on your feet all day, wear what you want." **Female, 42**

"Their shoes most often reflect their personality: Someone who wears very expensive dress shoes consistently is not likely to be someone who would [get] their hands dirty at a moment's notice, while someone who wears athletic shoes is seen as more adaptable and up for anything." **Female, 45**

"They have to be clean and shined. It says a lot about how you care about yourself. You cannot have a great outfit and ugly shoes." **Female, 51**

"If the style is a mismatch for the rest of one's attire, it could speak of indifference or over-concern." **Male, 54**

"I think it usually tells you if they prefer comfort over style, if they're a risk-taker or like to stick to the same things." **Female, 40**

"I would say they reflect your overall persona. Being a runner, I like comfort and function since I have a casual dress code. I'm also a more casual personality, and my shoes reflect that." **Male, 38**

"They say EVERYTHING!! Shoes tell someone a lot about your attitude and interests." **Female, 31**

"It describes their personality more than you would expect." **Male, 30**

"Work shoes are for work. Anything else speaks to your style." **Male, 42**

"A person's shoes say a lot about the look they're going for. If you're wearing business casual with sneakers or scuffed-up shoes, it doesn't seem like you're trying to be as polished and it makes the entire aesthetic a lot less formal." **Female, 28**

"Shoes say a lot about a person's style and their personality. I look at people's feet a lot. I always want my shoes to coordinate with the rest of my outfit." **Male, 27**

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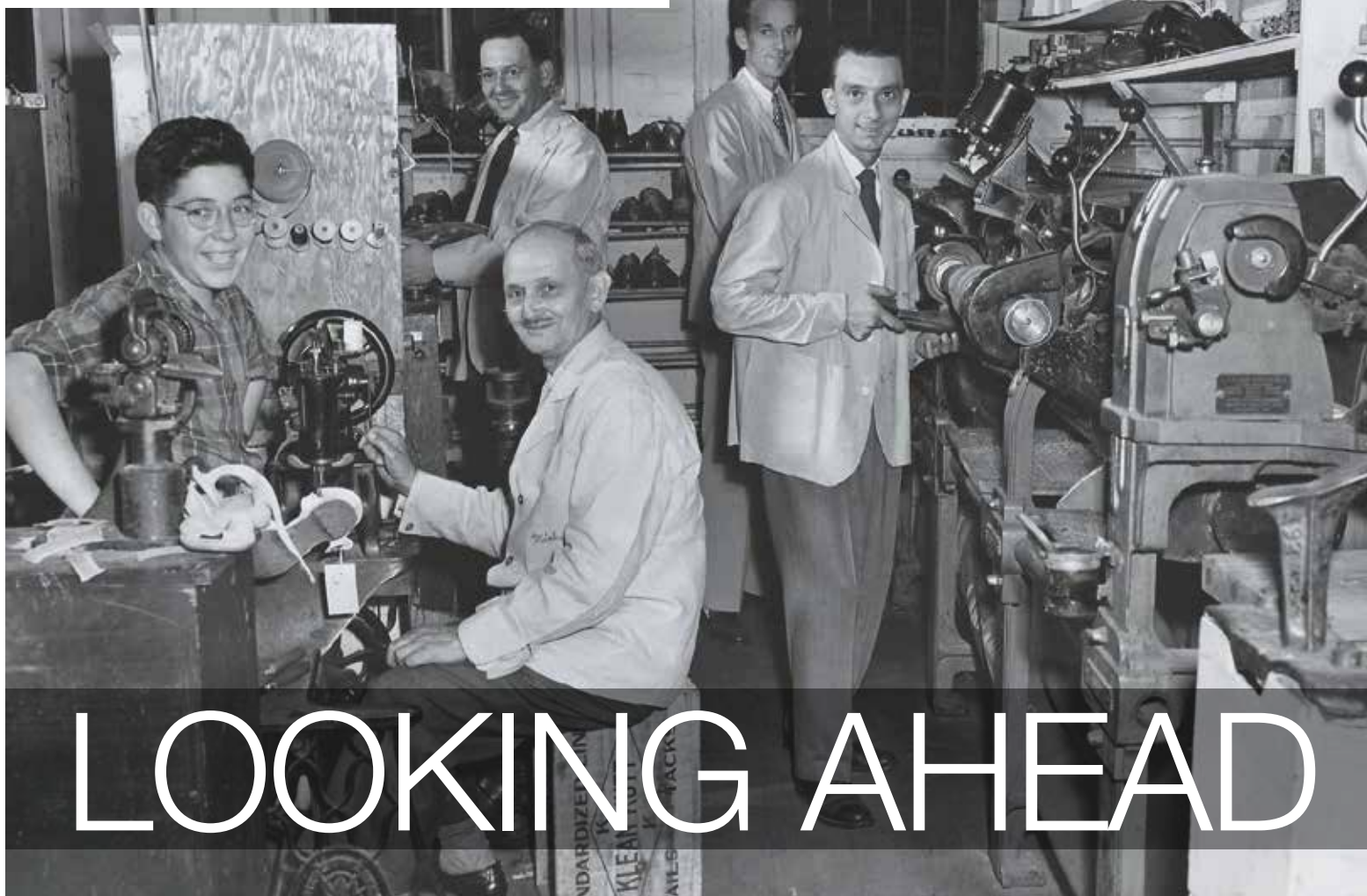
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For More Than a Century, Michelson's Shoes Has Planned For The Future.



LOOKING AHEAD

Above: The repair workshop at Michelson's back in 1947.

By Bob McGee

On Massachusetts Avenue, Lexington, MA's downtown thoroughfare, there are plenty of reminders of the past. The right side of the street is lined with a small deli, a three-screen theater, and the 85-year old Theatre Pharmacy. It's also the home of Michelson's Shoes, a fourth-generation, family-owned shoe store. But according to owners Eric and Jerry Michelson, the 101-year success of the family business is the result of a multi-generation commitment to embracing the future.

Today, the Michelsons operate the 2,000-sq. ft. store in Lexington and another similarly sized location in nearby Needham. Eric Michelson, 59, heads up buying; his brother Jerry, 53, handles day-to-day operations. Together, the stores service locals from first walkers to septuagenarians, as

well as an influx of seasonal Lexington tourists. But the store also pulls clientele from as far away as the New Hampshire and Rhode Island borders, and it has shipped orders to all 48 continental U.S. states.

The brothers credit the banners' appeal to service level, knowledge of staff, selection of sizes and widths and the ability to address unique footwear needs.

"That is something people have a hard time finding near them so they are willing to travel to us," Eric said. "Prior to the Internet, we served customers who had left this area and moved across country by shipping them what they needed."

To serve such a diverse client base, the Michelsons stock a deep catalog of comfort and dress/dress-casual styles for men and women, as well athletic and outdoor looks. And it does a robust kids business as well — in fact, children's represents the largest category by SKU count. *[Editor's Note: For the*

Michelson's perspective on the kids' market, see our story on page 14.] Top-selling brands include Rockport, Minnetonka, Birkenstock, UGG, Dansko, Sorel, SAS, Ecco, Merrell and Acorn Slippers, plus Brooks, Saucony and New Balance comfort styles in the athletic segment.

The brothers, who manage a staff of 16 between both stores, say the key to the business' longevity has been its adaptability over the generations as market trends, consumers and outside challenges regularly shift. Began as a harness and shoe repair business during Prohibition, it was Eric and Jerry's grandfather Harold Michelson who decided to focus more on shoe sales — and their father, Richard Michelson, who decided to shed the operations' shoe repair component entirely. Richard Michelson also was the driving force in 1965 of shifting the focus away from boxes stacked high on the selling floor to in-store shoe display windows in a

park-scene format. He was also responsible for a decision in the 1980s that still benefits the family business to this day: Buying the Lexington property.

“Owning our property was a goal of our father and he finally had the opportunity to purchase the building in the early ‘80s,” remembers Eric Michelson. “It is a tremendous advantage to have the security of controlling your own location and not have to worry about escalating rents.”

Eric and Jerry Michelson have continued the push forward.

Eric joined the business part time in 1975 as a 15-year old high school student. After college, he joined the business full-time and was instrumental in getting Michelson’s first computerized point-of-sale system. A few years later, it was Jerry who acquired the Michelsonshoes.com URL during the dawn of the Internet.

The shared commitment to modernization, they said, has helped keep the family harmony.

“We never got resistance from our grandfather or father when they were in the business,” Eric said. “They always wanted to make the business better, and that has prevented conflicts. Obviously, we discuss what to buy for merchandise and how to handle certain situations, but ultimately, we all come down on the side of growing the business.”

Having spent nearly 45 years of his life working in the family business, Eric Michelson says new challenges are constant. From a consumer perspective, he said, the biggest obstacle today is often a consumer’s attachment to social media influencers and posts — and not the best-fitting product for his or her foot.

“We have people coming in looking at their phone, asking, ‘Do you have this shoe? I only want this shoe.’ They might read reviews, but they have it in their mind that is the only shoe they want,” he said. “They don’t understand that we curate a collection based on what we think is going to work for people. And they won’t even look at it because they’re engaged with social influencers.”

The leading looks of the day have certainly changed over ten decades, from leather sole and upper styles from vendors such as E.T. Wright and Bostonian, Eric Michelson said. Today’s shopper, he said, looks to styles with dress-shoe uppers but rubber outsoles from the likes of Rockport — or even more dressed-down footwear.

“With the change in office wear, it’s getting



Jerry Michelson, left, with his brother Eric Michelson.

“Retailing is problem solving. So whether on the sales floor, in your merchandising, or getting customers to find you relevant, to remain successful you’ve got to solve problems.”

ERIC MICHELSON

even more casual than that,” he said. “We’re seeing a lot of contrasting outsoles and athletic-inspired looks as people seek out versatility.”

The Michelsons advise sales floor staffers not to get angry if a customer takes out their phone during the fitting process to look up product information, including pricing. The common practice is part of changing times, they said, and will likely never go away. Growing vendor DTC efforts and the rising cost and lag time of getting orders shipped to store from U.S. West Coast distribution centers have also been a concern.

How to counter? The brothers are also adding new elements in-store.

While the Brannock device remains the sales staff’s most vital measuring tool, Michelson’s recently installed Stride Rite’s Fit Zone foot scanner made by Volumental.

“We find that the children’s business is still very viable,” Jerry Michelson said. “They need to be fit, and parent care that their children’s feet are appropriately sized. “We’re ready to try this new method to see if it’s going to be worthy of its place in the future,” he said.

Scanners, he added, are a good tool — but they need to fit into the overall sales process.

“Whatever measuring device you have is a guide, not a rule,” he adds. “It comes

down to a guide for staff to make the best footwear shopping experience for the customer. People don’t want to spend their days here. We must bring out the most appropriate product for them in the most efficient manner and get them on their way.”

But no matter how much changes, they say, Michelson’s has remained a family operation.

After raising her three children, Eric and Jerry’s mother Barbara has worked in Michelson’s for nearly 40 years as the handbags and hosiery buyer. All seven Michelson grandchildren, all of whom are college-age and younger, have worked in the store during high school.

And together, the Michelsons are once again confronting a changing landscape.

Beyond the uncertainty surrounding the November presidential election, Eric Michelson thinks the recently emerged coronavirus adds in two new potential pitfalls.

“We have uncertainty on the supply side, not knowing if or when production issues will affect availability of spring or fall shipments. Problems could occur at either the component level or with assembly. But either have the same effect: No available product,” he said. “And if people stop traveling for vacation or don’t send their children to summer camp, that eliminates demand. There are so many ways this could play out that would adversely affect our businesses and we could easily be left in an overstocked or understocked situation.”

Luckily, a long history has given Michelson’s the tools they need.

“Retailing is problem solving,” Eric Michelson said. “So whether on the sales floor, in your merchandising, or getting customers to find you relevant, to remain successful you’ve got to solve problems. We’re up to the future challenges of adapting to both new and different competition and how that changes consumer habits, and to vendors’ practices that demonstrate they understand less and less about the value of the independent retailer distribution channel. It will require being flexible and open to new methods and practices in order to attract customers into our stores and accomplish our primary goal, to have the opportunity to solve their problems.” ●



The Extra Mile

Here are four very different standouts with three things in common — style, comfort and a little something extra.

1

Arcopedico's Alice Nubuck loafer brings a color pop to an old classic. Seen here in lemon, it also comes in red and denim blue. It combines a soft suede upper with moc stitching details. **MSRP \$125.**



2



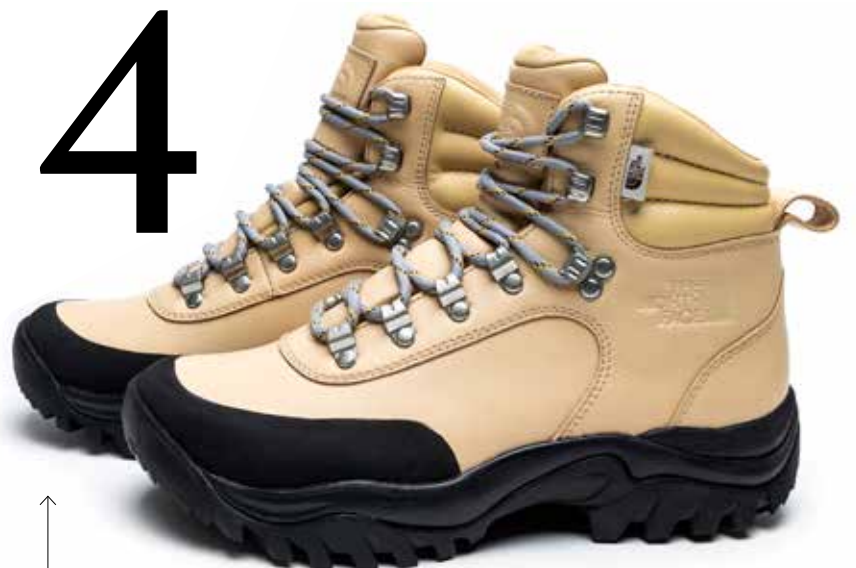
Bearpaw's Skye is a chukka-style bootie that delivers on coziness and everyday style. It's also treated with NeverWet. **MSRP \$69.99.**

3



Olukai's Nana Hele is a sneaker-meets-slipper mid-cut boot with shearling lining in the forefoot, a pebbled waterproof leather upper, and the brand's Wet Grip Rubber outsole.

4



The North Face's Archive Glacier Point is a premium lifestyle boot inspired by the brand's high-performance 2000 Glacier Point mountaineering boot. Details include a sustainable leather upper, recycled nylon laces and temperature-sensitive rubber lugs for increased traction. **MSRP \$200.**

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