

# Copier Careers®

## From Casual to Contextual: How Dealers and OEMs Are Rethinking Dress Codes

By Scott Cullen

**As dress codes continue to relax, dealers and OEMs are redefining professionalism across sales, service, and corporate teams.**

I vividly remember my introduction to business casual. More than two decades ago, I attended a Xerox press event and realized something felt off: the executives on stage weren't wearing ties.

From the moment I joined the office technology industry as a journalist in 1986, a suit, or at least a jacket and tie, had been standard at industry events. That day, sitting there in more formal attire than the presenters, I knew something had changed. I couldn't tell you what Xerox was announcing that day, but I'll never forget that the ties were gone. Once Xerox made that move, it was inevitable that others would follow.

They did. Slowly at first, but eventually most OEMs embraced the change. It took me a while to give up my tie, but over time, I watched business casual evolve into something even more relaxed—button-down shirts, jeans, and casual shoes became commonplace at dealer meetings. COVID-19 accelerated the trend, especially as remote work blurred the lines of professionalism (Zoom made it easy to look polished above the waist while keeping things far more casual below). Even now, despite all that change, one thing remains consistent: business attire is still fairly common for sales reps in the field, especially when customer-facing credibility matters most.

For sales professionals, credibility varies by environment. "I have one dealer who requires suits and another who is happy with polos and khakis," said Jennifer Fitzke, regional recruiter at Copier Careers. "It's a great question to bring up before the interview, honestly. Don't assume, ask."

That variability is a recurring theme. As several Copier Careers recruiters noted, when it comes to office technology industry dress codes, the most accurate answer is often "it depends," depending on the role, the product, the customer, and the company culture.

### **Dress Codes Today: Less Formal, But More Nuanced**

Across workplaces, casual and business-casual attire remain dominant. A 2025 Monster.com poll found that 43% of workers reported having no formal dress code at work. Among those with dress expectations, most prefer business-casual over strict formality. Only a small share said formal suits are expected in everyday work settings.

Gallup data shows that traditional professional dress, such as suits, has become rare, with only a small fraction of workers reporting wearing it regularly, compared with past years.

What's changed isn't whether people dress casually; it's how companies define casual and how clearly they communicate expectations.

---

**Copier Careers** is a recruiting firm dedicated exclusively to helping copier channel employers find experienced service techs, copier sales reps, managers, controllers, back office staff, and MPS/MNS experts. Learn more about our commitment to the industry at [www.CopierCareers.com](http://www.CopierCareers.com).

# Copier Careers®

Copier Careers recruiters note they rarely hear about dress codes unless there's friction. Sometimes, a candidate mentions a policy or dress code they dislike when explaining why they're looking for a new job. Other times, an employer will stress the importance of finding candidates who will meet their standards or expectations.

In those cases, recruiters typically recommend clearer, documented communication between the employer and employee to salvage the relationship. Ultimately, though, day-to-day enforcement is less a recruiting issue and more an HR responsibility.

"Every employer is different," said Eli Powell, regional recruiter for Copier Careers. "If one of my candidates tells me they don't want to follow certain dress codes, I know not to send them to some of my clients."

## **Dress Expectations: Dealers vs. OEMs**

For office technology dealers, dress codes often reflect operational realities and the need for in-person customer interaction.

Service and installation teams typically prioritize comfort and safety, wearing functional attire such as polos and practical footwear, while more polished looks are reserved for scheduled client meetings.

Sales and showroom teams often aim for smart-casual or polished business-casual attire. However, as Jessica Crowley, managing director at Copier Careers, explains, expectations can vary widely depending on what's being sold. "For sales reps, it really depends on what you're selling and to whom," she said. "If your clients are mom-and-pop shops, business casual is probably more appropriate. If you're selling \$100k solutions, our clients probably want to see you in a suit."

Standards may also rise with seniority. "Standards are obviously higher for leadership positions," Crowley added. "But you should also be more experienced at navigating dress codes."

Yael Derickson, regional recruiter for Copier Careers, views attire as part of a sales strategy. "Sales reps are always adjusting to make the best impression," she said. "Clothing is just another element for them to consider when strategizing their pitch."

Among dealers, the goal isn't formality for its own sake; it's alignment, matching attire to the type of customer engagement and the brand impression the organization aims to project.

OEMs, meanwhile, tend to have broader, more standardized cultures that often lead to clearer expectations across corporate teams, field engineers, and leadership roles. While everyday wear may lean toward business casual, events such as trade shows, partner meetings, and executive gatherings still call for polish.

# Copier Careers®

## Ambiguity vs. Communication

One of the biggest challenges employers face today is defining what “casual” means. Recruiters see the downstream effects of ambiguity most clearly in interviews. “One benefit of working with a recruiter is getting the inside scoop on expectations,” said Paul Schwartz, president of Copier Careers. “This might be their first time interviewing with this client, but we’ve worked with them for years and know what they’ve considered disqualifying in the past.”

Derickson emphasizes that preparation matters. “You only get one chance to make a first impression, so you’ve got to make it count,” she said. “I only win if you win. I’m doing everything I can to help you get hired, so when I give advice on what to wear, I need you to trust me because it’s important.”

Interview attire can be particularly tricky for service technicians. “I work extra hard to help techs with interview attire because they have to walk the line between dressing practically and dressing to impress,” noted Derickson. “If they’re working while interviewing, they can’t always control what they’re wearing. In those cases, I try to bridge that gap for my clients.”

Communication is key.

“It’s so important to communicate with us during the interview process so we can advocate on your behalf,” observed Fitzke. “Extenuating circumstances can force you to show up to an interview outside of the expected dress code. That can be alright as long as it isn’t a surprise to the interviewer.”

Crowley emphasizes the broader impression candidates make. “Interviews are just a snapshot of a person,” she said. “Hiring managers won’t have time to really get to know you. Instead, they’ll be looking for shorthand signs that give them an indication of who you are. They’re looking for someone they can rely on, who will represent their company and product line well. If you show up on time, dressed neatly and cleanly, look confident and comfortable, and be friendly and engaging, that all goes a long way.”

Powell agrees.

“You should be trying to look good in an interview,” he said. “If you show up late, cranky, and messy, you’re not making a good impression. You’re showing very poor judgment, and they probably won’t want to work with you. How you’re dressed is only part of it, but if you make other mistakes, it can be a deal breaker.”

## What’s Next?

Dress codes aren’t moving backward, but they are becoming more intentional. “Hiring managers ultimately want someone who will represent their company and product line well,” observed Crowley. “Dress is only one part of that equation, yet it signals awareness, judgment, and alignment with company culture.”

Looking back, that Xerox event wasn’t really about ties. It was about a shift in how this industry defines professionalism. Over the years, the uniform has evolved, from suits to business casual to something more flexible and situational. But the underlying expectation hasn’t. Whether you’re walking into a dealer showroom, a client’s office, or a major OEM event, the goal is the same: show that you understand the room.

In 2026, professionalism isn’t defined by a tie. It’s defined by context.

# Copier Careers®

## Practical Dress Code Takeaways for 2026

### *For Dealers*

- Be explicit in interviews: Clarify expectations for client meetings versus back-office days.
- Support role-based guidelines: Service techs and sales reps have different attire requirements.
- Reinforce brand identity: What your team wears shapes how customers experience your business.

### *For OEMs*

- Consistent messaging matters: Formalized expectations help align distributed teams.
- Events call for polish: Trade shows and partner meetings remain professional settings.
- Encourage versatility: Flexibility should not compromise credibility.

### *For Candidates*

- Ask, don't assume.
- Listen to your recruiter's inside advice.
- Take it seriously / show good judgment.
- Communicate if there's a reason you can't meet the expected dress code.
- Dress for the customer you're meeting.
- When in doubt, err slightly more professional.
- Neat, clean presentation matters as much as the specific outfit.