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## [Perspectives: Three Women in Finance on Presenting Oneself Professionally](#)

filed under [Expert Answers](#), [Passions](#)*By Savita Iyer-Ahrestani (New York City)*

While finance is still a male-dominated industry, these days, women's style needn't be crafted to blend in. For example, stylists like Ella Goldin, founder of New York-based styling and personal shopping firm Chic Inspiration, believe that the no-frills look women in the financial world embraced for so long is no longer necessary. Women who want to succeed in finance today, she says, have a better chance of climbing the ranks if they celebrate their womanhood rather than trying to hide it.

“In the past, women in finance and other male-dominated fields wanted to be just like men so that they could climb the work ladder, and they stuck strictly to dark suits in order to better blend in,” Goldin says. “Now, things have changed and I find that those women who really achieve professional success and are at the top as

decision makers are the ones who stand out and don't mind having a unique, beautiful and sophisticated look."

Goldin believes that women in finance have a greater chance of succeeding professionally if their style represents who they are. "Confidence comes from feeling comfortable in your own skin," she says, particularly in today's highly competitive world, where so many talented people are out of work. Women who have a personal style and work with it rather than trying to hide it are those that are going to go the farthest, she says, "because as a woman, you have to have something that differentiates you from the next person."

Here, three successful professionals who work in the world of finance, each with a unique sense of fashion, share advice on personal style for the next generation of industry leaders.

### **Lydia De Miguel, Assistant Vice President at Banco Santander in Geneva, Switzerland**

"To be fashionable in the financial services world, proportion is key. You also need the right attitude – you need to feel comfortable with yourself in the clothes that you wear, and above all, you have to get the mix right. You can't wear anything too short or too tight, but you also have to make sure that you're not too corporate.

I love well-cut trousers, skirts and dresses, and I like to dress them up with high-heeled shoes and boots. I also love pantyhose in great colors and different designs and ethnic jewelry.

I love to pair basics like classic black trousers and pencil skirts with colorful tops and fashion belts, and big earrings. I believe that handbags are important and I have colorful, eye-catching bags I like to mix and match with different outfits.

Mixing and matching is key: Wearing everything at the same time can go horribly wrong.

There are times, of course, when you do have to do the whole black suit. That's when I like to break it up just a bit with a pair of fashionable pantyhose, or a unique pair of shoes.

My go-to item would definitely be a cardigan. It's so much less boring than a suit jacket, you can wear it open or slightly unbuttoned, and it's great to have around in case you have a spot on your shirt after lunch. You can play with cardigans in so many ways, you can have them in different colors, shapes and styles, and they go with trousers, skirts and dresses.

I also favor a good pair of comfortable and elegant black high heels. Every woman needs at least one pair of those."

### **Jennifer Connelly, CEO of JCPR, a Public Relations Company Specializing in Financial Services**

"Style is a very personal thing for me as it is for most women, and my advice is to find your style so you can be comfortable no matter where you are or who you are doing business with.

To be successful, you must be aware and anticipate your environment. I am blessed with a friend who happens to be a stylist, and I really relied on her to give me the right pieces in my wardrobe every season to give my closet an update but still maintain my overall look.

As far as I am concerned, the key to proper dressing is knowing how to wear your clothes to ensure they are appropriate for every situation. Worn incorrectly, a great top that may be very appropriate with a belt and a jacket over it can look too casual and unprofessional, for example.

I have a conservative yet modern style. It's that mix, I believe, that allows me to be both fashionable and professional. I have pretty much had the same style for as long as I can remember — it's now just more sophisticated.

I would tell a younger woman coming into the financial services world to be herself, be appropriate, find what makes her comfortable and embrace it. When you feel good about you, you feel better about everything in your life.

I honestly don't believe that trendy equates to fashionable. In fact, I stay away from becoming too focused on trend — it just doesn't work for me. I think a classic and tasteful style is the most appropriate and desirable. At least for me it is. When it comes to accessories and make-up, I believe that less is so much more. I go for a simple classic watch, earrings, tinted moisturizer, mascara, bronzer and gloss. A great scarf is also a perfect accessory."

### **Katherine Cooper, VP, Regional Strategy and Business Management for CEO, BNP Paribas North America**

"In any field, it helps to have a strong sense of personal style. In financial services, my wardrobe is classic but chic. My strength is great tailoring and my weakness is a love of great shoes. Looking back, my first suit for my first job in San Francisco was awful! It was big and boxy.

To be taken seriously as a woman in this field, you need to be confident in both your appearance and your demeanor. Keep it chic. Build a classic wardrobe. Speak articulately and be well read.

I'd describe my taste as classic chic. I prefer tailored pants and pencil skirts. I add a pop of color with cashmere cardigans and silk tie neck blouses. The key is great tailoring.

Suits are great for interviews and important meetings, but my wardrobe is built on separates that can go easily from the office to dinner. I would tell a younger woman entering the financial milieu to focus on finding brands that fit her and colors that flatter her.

If you are a slave to trends, consider a different industry. I'm more interested in building a timeless wardrobe and updating it with current colors and accessories."

*Readers: Do you agree? What's your go-to office clothing item? What's your "dress for success" advice to young women beginning a career in the financial services industry?*



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1. *Honor* Oct 7, 2011 at 12:13 pm

definitely agree with Katherine.. keep it chic!

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