English 312 Audience Statement and Enthymeme Cover Sheet

Audience Statement
Our audience is CON a professional dress code in the workplace.

Who is your audience? Why do they find your claim initially unacceptable?
The Management Team - They don't want to alienate workers who can't afford nicer clothes.
They want to create a comfortable work environment where employees can enjoy their jobs and
they don't want to inconvenience employees by forcing them to comply with a dress code.

What does your audience value the most?
Equality, fairness, comfort, worker satisfaction, productivity, success, money, positive work
environment, consistency, structure, practicality, variety

What does your audience fear the most?
Costs associated with employee turnover, employee dissatisfaction and subsequent loss of
workers, lack of unity, having to enforce a dress code, losing money, how others will perceive
them, backlash

Audience Counterarguments:
　　　But… employees will feel less comfortable in professional dress clothes.
　　　But… a professional dress code could increase inequality.
　　　But… a professional dress code is unnecessary for productivity.
　　　But… some employees cannot afford nicer clothes.
_____

Enthymeme
What are the consequences of a professional dress code on employee satisfaction?

Claim: A professional dress code enhances employee satisfaction.
Because sophisticated dress in the workplace increases employee pride in their work.

Implicit Assumption (Whatever V2 C also V1 B): Whatever increases employee pride in their
work also enhances employee satisfaction.

Contract Question: How would implementing a professional dress code affect employee
satisfaction?

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<div align="center">What We Wear</div>

For the average mid-sized business, expenses of employee turnover can cost up to $7.5 million dollars per year. This averages 150% of each lost employee's salary (Bliss 1). In order to reduce costs associated with employee turnover, workers need to be satisfied in the workplace. Some people feel the best way to do this is to create a casual environment in which workers feel comfortable. Others feel it is best to implement a professional dress code that increases employee unity. Some worry that the cost of professional dress will turn employees away. Others feel a dress code will increase professionalism and improve work atmosphere. Our call center wants to be someplace people feel comfortable and confident at work. Because employee dissatisfaction leads to increased turnover, it is important to ask, how would implementing a professional dress code affect employee satisfaction?

Comfort is one of the key factors contributing to employee satisfaction and retention. With a casual dress policy, employees can freely choose attire that is most comfortable to wear. Some may think that employees will not feel comfortable in professional dress; therefore, employees should be allowed to wear what they want. However, what is done to create a comfortable work environment is more important than employee attire. A study of over 500 office workers showed that workplace environment is "very important" in determining job satisfaction and turnover intent (Lambert). If a workplace has uncomfortable environmental conditions, this will restrict worker productivity and lead to lower job satisfaction. Temperature,

lighting, and work space are all important elements to consider in creating a physically comfortable work environment (Lambert).

The other major factor in employee comfort is the relationship with supervisors and management (Heathfield). Establishing a positive relationship requires effort in various areas. Workers need acknowledgment, encouragement, and feedback promptly. This feedback should be positive and also constructive to inspire improvement (Martin). In addition, employers should develop a relationship so employees feel comfortable to discuss rising challenges (Martin). If management creates a comfortable professional environment, workers will feel more at ease in professional dress at the office than casual attire. In matching this management team's professionalism in dress, workers will have a greater sense of pride and productivity, as well as equality. However, some are concerned about how a professional dress code can potentially affect diversity in the workplace. Appearance and dress are forms of self-expression and give opportunities for employees to distinguish themselves and make a statement. To put restrictions on one's behavior can curtail creativity and individuality. Because of this, some believe that dress codes increase inequality in the workplace, as self-expression through appearance is moderated. However, research has proven dress codes promote equality and create a level playing field.

Business and Professional Communication Quarterly found that "41 percent of employers stated that employees who dressed more professionally were more likely to be promoted" (Cardon and Okoro 355). Without a professional dress code, those who choose to dress formally are more likely to be considered for a raise than those who dress casually. In order to avoid bias based on appearance, a dress code would help to equalize the candidates and allow promotion decisions to be made based on more important factors such as work ethic and

performance. Employee satisfaction increases when workers know that one employee will not be more highly considered for a raise over another based merely on physical appearance.

Although professional dress is valued by employers, like any other policy change, it may initially seem to be unappreciated by employees. Because call centers are typically filled with young people who are beginning their professional career, a dress code may come across as childish, repressive, and alienating towards gender and race. However, a study in the *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly* which used young male, female, African American, and European American subjects found that "business students about to enter the workplace strongly prefer business casual over casual workplace attire. . .younger professionals clearly associate authoritativeness and competence with more formal business attire, productivity and trustworthiness with somewhat formal workplace attire" (Cardon and Okoro 358). Contradictory to the belief that a formal dress code alienates and create a sense of inequality in the workplace, it is agreed by young people of both genders, and different ethnicities, that a formal dress code exudes confidence, which promotes pride in work.

So why is a professional dress code key to pride and productivity in the workplace? Current trends in fashion have led many of us to capitalize on choosing comfort over professionalism at work. Because we have each successfully accomplished tasks while in our favorite "athleisure" attire, it is tempting to argue that specific dress is not necessary for productivity. However, fashion psychologist Dr. Karen Pine states that what we wear makes a big difference in the way we work. "When we put on an item of clothing it is common for the wearer to adopt the characteristics associated with that garment. A lot of clothing has symbolic meaning for us, whether it's 'professional work attire' or 'relaxing weekend wear,' so when we put it on we prime the brain to behave in ways consistent with that meaning," she said (qtd. in

Tulshyan 1). If employees are dressed professionally, their minds will naturally encourage them to perform professionally. This professional performance will increase productivity.

Professional dress codes can also enhance productivity because they improve how others perceive a worker's competence. If a person is perceived as particularly competent, they will behave as such. In an article entitled, "Formal or Informal? The Impact of Style of Dress and Forms of Address on Business Students' Perceptions of Professors," a study was conducted in which 257 business students rated the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and credibility of their professors. The research found that style of dress resulted in significant differences in the ratings of the professors' likeability, trustworthiness, and expertise (Sebastian 196). Though workers at this call center may not be seen by clients, other workers and company management will interact with employees every day. The community appreciation of a worker's skill and credibility will be enhanced by a dress code and will improve worker success. Because professional performance will increase productivity in the workplace, workers will subsequently find more satisfaction in their work. A job well done leads to financial benefits and personal pride that workers can benefit from.

While considering implementation of a new dress policy, many employers worry about the financial burden that a professional dress code could create for employees who do not already own enough business casual clothes to wear throughout the week and have limited financial resources to purchase them. While certainly understandable, this concern is also manageable. The company could look into affordable options for obtaining the necessary clothing and present them to the employees. The employees could also be offered financial support in the form of a modest clothing allowance or reimbursements for clothing purchases up

to a small, predetermined amount. These are a few of the various solutions that could be implemented to minimize the potential financial challenges of a professional dress code.

Having to resolve these concerns is a small price to pay in comparison to the benefits a professional dress code brings. In addition to increased productivity, improved performance, and the subsequent increase in pride and satisfaction that employees feel toward their work, implementing a professional dress code would improve the workplace environment by creating a stronger spirit of teamwork. Business consultant and professional image expert Janice Hurley explains, "[A dress code] builds team spirit and pride in your professionalism" (Hurley 20). Employees enjoy feeling like they are part of a group effort and are more satisfied as they experience stronger connections with their coworkers. These connections cause employees to feel greater pride and joy toward their work.

Implementing the dress code effectively and smoothly will be a key factor in avoiding potential problems. In their research, Timothy Franz and Steven Norton found that the best way to implement a professional dress code was to "carefully define the attire that is acceptable, provide clear examples for employees to follow, and then carefully evaluate the impact of these changes" (92). Carefully defined guidelines and clear examples reduce potential confusion and frustration for employees. Continuing to evaluate the dress code and its impact will help management understand how it is affecting employee satisfaction so they can more effectively respond to issues and challenges that arise.

The financial strains of employee turnover caused by employee dissatisfaction can be detrimental to the success of a company. Though it is reasonable to have concerns about enforcing a professional dress code, the ultimate success of the company will far outweigh any transitional growing pains. Workers will take greater pride in their work as they dress the part of

a professional. A professional dress code enhances employee satisfaction, because sophisticated

dress in the workplace increases employee pride in their work. Because of the many benefits of a

professional dress code, we strongly encourage its implementation in the call center.

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