English 312 Audience Statement and Enthymeme Cover Sheet

Audience Statement
My audience is PRO a professional dress code at work
Who is your audience? Why do they find your claim initially unacceptable?
The members of the management team who want to implement a workplace dress code.
When people dress more professionally they perform better, they act the part. Casual workplace dress promotes casual work ethic in employees.
What does your audience value the most?
Our audience values professionalism, productivity in the workplace, a serious work environment, established employee-supervisor relationships, employee dependability, the reputation of the company, being taken seriously, success, professionalism, not losing money, and employee satisfaction.
What does your audience fear the most?
Our audience fears missing out on increased productivity and profits. They fear stifling their employees and losing them to competitors. They also fear not being the best call center and dealing with competition for clients, losing money, dealing with enforcing dress codes, disagreement, cost associated with employee turnover, backlash, and people perceiving them poorly

Audience Counterarguments:
    But . . . a professional dress code will encourage productivity.
    But . . . a professional dress code will increase employee unity.
    But… a professional dress code helps you act more professionally and take your work seriously.
    But… Professional dress code that may help the call center have a competitive edge over rival companies.

Enthymeme
What Are the Consequences of a professional dress code on productivity in the work environment?

Claim: A professional dress code stifles productivity in the work environment.
Because: Requiring a professional dress code puts strain on employees.

Implicit Assumption (Whatever V2 C also V1 B): Whatever puts strain on the employee also stifles productivity in the work environment.

Contract Question: How will a professional dress code affect the productivity of the call center?
Student Names

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What Not to Wear

As one of the most successful businesses in the world, Apple, a company that most others would like to emulate, was recently valued at just over $700 billion (Gillespie). It is commonly recognized that management teams of most businesses are constantly attempting to increase productivity and revenue to become as successful as companies such as Apple. Since its inception, Apple has fostered a casual corporate culture following the example of its founder Steve Jobs--a leader who reportedly would walk around the office barefoot (Radwan). Many businesses see employee dress codes as a contributing component to employee satisfaction and overall success of the business. Some believe that formal dress codes increase professionalism and look of the work space, while others see it as something that hinders productivity. With multiple pros and cons for a strict dress code, the question remains: how will a professional dress code affect the productivity of the call center?

There are many workplaces that are currently raising dress code standards, especially business type companies. "Reasons for uniform dress codes vary, but one common thread is employers' preference for a clean, consistent, and professional image among their workers" ("Casual Office"). One of the first things noticed upon entering a workplace is the overall appearance of the area. Therefore it is logical that businesses want that clean and professional look, not only for the workplace, but also for the employees. While it is understandable that there is a need to appear professional, if looking professional prevents workers from being productive,

it is counterproductive. Those who are most productive in the workplace feel comfortable with their appearance and in their workspace, and are free to express themselves. "When you take away people's individuality, you greatly diminish their creativity and ability to think outside of the box. Uniformity in appearance tends to lead to uniformity of thought, which is detrimental to any organization that is trying to expand" ("Casual Office"). A more demanding dress code takes away the individuality of the workers in the call center where the company employees are not seen because they are making calls. In this case it is more important to have employee satisfaction than uniform dress.

  Employees play a crucial role in businesses. Regardless of how well a business, such as the call center, is managed, there is no way that it could succeed without the efforts of those who work there. Because employees are so important to the call center, it is in the center's best interest to help their employees love their jobs. A study performed in 2013 found that "job satisfaction plays an instrumental role in predicting both job performance and TOI [Turnover Interval]" (Bouckenooghe, Dave, et al.). This means that employees are more productive and produce higher quality work if they enjoy their job. This point was further proved by a study performed at Warwick University, which showed that happiness makes people 12% more productive ("New Study"). Subsequently, if an employee feels stifled or unequal to their employer or supervisor, their happiness and therefore productivity will decrease. According to research cited in an article by Jon Walper, the majority of prospective employees prefer to work at a job where there was no dress code. Also, for those at the call center that may have multiple jobs where formal dress is not appropriate for work, it becomes a burden to have to change clothes during a busy day. From these results it is clear that establishing a dress code at the call

center may have a negative effect on their employee productivity rather than the intended positive effect.

Additionally, with a more formal dress code, employees would feel more judged for what clothes they have. There are some who work in the call center who have difficult financial situations and may not be able to purchase top of the line dress clothes, which ultimately would cause them to feel even more uncomfortable because these employees realize that "56 percent [of employees] admitted they make assumptions about people at the office based on how they're dressed" ("Cracking"). These judgements based on financial situations would not only be unfair, but cause a decrease in unity within the workplace. These employees may feel like they are not good enough to work for the company and feel self-conscious during work, thus not focusing on the job at hand. Overall, the change in dress code would cause the efficiency and unity of the call center to decline because of the uncomfortable feeling of having to wear dress clothes.

Many employers feel that establishing a dress code is necessary to encourage professionalism, but unfortunately, along with decreased workplace unity, the consequential financial stress may demoralize employees. Recently, Walmart underwent a dress code change, and now all employees must wear collared shirts with slacks. The response from employees has been negative, mostly because of the burden it places on employees. One person said, "it's a waste of my money to keep changing the dress code and we are not given any clothing allowance or given 2 shirts for free" (Nolan). In a call center where the majority of the employees are college-aged individuals, the implementation of a professional dress code would impose an unnecessary financial burden on employees. Many college students are required to balance multiple jobs to sustain their education and living expenses. Consequently, the majority of their income goes directly to rent, transportation, textbooks, and tuition. What is left over is often

distributed between food and recreation. As a result, many college-aged employees don't have a lot of disposable income to spend on wardrobe items for work.

The Balance website, which is dedicated to making financial understanding accessible to everyone, wrote an article about calculating your "true" pay in a job. To calculate this "true salary rate" one must take into account the cost of being employed, meaning the net income an employee takes home after considering clothing, commuting, and food expenditures (Pant). The financial burden of buying a whole new wardrobe, one that would normally not be needed outside of the workplace, adds to the cost of being employed and is effectively lowering the pay of employees. In the same article it is estimated that a typical employee abiding by a business casual dress code "buys a new item for her work wardrobe once a month…and spends $1,200 a year on work clothes" (Pant). That's hard-earned money from their job essentially gone to waste. For workers at the call center, every penny of pay counts. This lowering of pay will be upsetting to the work force and will add to the turnover rate.

Because of the financial stress, employees may choose or be forced to leave the company. This results in new hires which, in turn, puts more stress on the company management. *Small Business Chronicle* cites that, "Across the entire industry, call centers replace 26 percent of their front-line agents annually..." (Huebsch). It is also noted that call centers have one of the highest turnover rates in business type companies. Turnover is expensive, and creating a dress code that does little to change performance levels and places a large financial burden on workers is one more thing that will cause employees to seek employment elsewhere. *Quality Assurance and Training Connection* cites that the average cost of hiring a new employee to replace another is $6,440 ("Exploring"). The easiest way to avoid that cost is to retain the employees already hired by helping them enjoy their work and relieving them of additional work inflicted expenses.

Having a dress code that's going to cause added financial strain on employees may also hurt a company that is trying to hire. In a survey analyzing dress codes in the work setting it was found that "more than half of those surveyed said a company's dress code is either very important or moderately important when it comes to accepting a job offer" ("Cracking"). Especially among a college-aged population, it was found that "fifteen percent of younger workers between 18-25 believe their dress codes are too strict," in part because it requires this population to purchase brand new clothes they otherwise would not own ("Cracking"). Although a dress code may have its benefits, for employees the cost is just too high.

In a study performed by Sarah Slocum and Timothy Vollmer it was found that positive reinforcement (added reward) removed unwanted behavior while negative reinforcement (taking something away) did not (Slocum and Vollmer). The young employees of the call center, as we have discussed, will interpret the formal dress code as a punishment or a negative, thus lowering morale as well as productivity. However, positive reinforcement would be an effective way to incentivize better performance and increase overall profits, as well as have an overall better effect on the call center and employee/employer relationships. Employees will be more productive when they see that their employers work to align their goals, such as productivity, with the goals and values they have, rather than placing goals of the management above those of employees. If implemented, the dress code requirement would force employees to meet employer's goals; rather, the management should use employee's wants, needs, and opinions to create team goals that will maximize productivity and effectiveness, thus helping the call center become more unified. While it may seem counterintuitive that a casual dress code would promote productivity, it is part of a successful emerging business practice. Many successful businesses are focusing much of their time and money on making their work environments

comfortable and enjoyable for their employees to work in. A casual dress code is part of that comfortable work environment ("10 Big Businesses"). As a result, employees feel more empowered and committed to their work because their goals are aligned with the companies and they feel validated in their opinions.

Google, a corporate powerhouse who receives more than 2 million job applications a year, has the philosophy, "You can be serious without a suit" (10 Big Businesses"). Google has been wildly successful with this practice. Overall, a professional dress code stifles productivity in the work environment by contributing to employee dissatisfaction and higher turnover rates. Focusing on positive reinforcement, team goals, and equal opportunities to voice opinions will increase efficiency in the workplace as much, if not more than, a professional dress code. Rather than introducing a stricter dress code for employees to promote productivity, the call center should follow the example of big businesses such as Google and Apple and focus on the job satisfaction of their employees and trust that company success will follow.

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