Normally *WSA* features have a distinct activewear, streetwear or protective wear flavour. This article, however, takes a look at the traveller who nowadays sees business as part of a combined schedule with leisure and sport. In an attempt to disguise this relaxed approach, he is now expecting better performance from his more formal wear.

Changing face of the business meeting



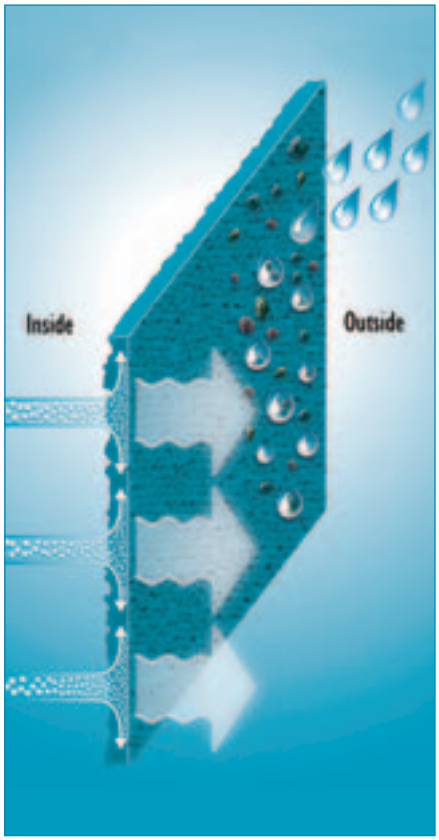
The number of people required to travel for purposes of business is increasing at a rapid pace. According to the Travel Industry Association of America, in the US alone, residents took nearly 144 million business trips last year and, by the end of this year, business travel is likely to have increased 3.6% to nearly 149 million trips. Business is being done on an increasingly global level which is dramatically changing the face of the business meeting - making working life even faster-paced and pressured than ever before and, at the same time, more and more hotels are offering leisure and sport facilities.

These days, travelling for business doesn't mean just stepping on a plane and attending a meeting — it can involve trekking in a jungle or other such locations as a photographer or journalist for instance, which puts stress on both the person and clothing. But, regardless of what type of trip we may be going on, one of the more stressful questions concerns what clothing should be worn.

Generally, travel clothing has always been casual, comfortable and functional - able to take us from a hot climate to a colder climate for instance without causing too much inconvenience. But then business intruded, and the requirement for a casual image was replaced with a smarter one that would still offer all the functions – and sometimes more - available to the regular traveller. Clothing for the business market should allow the traveller to remain fresh, relaxed and confident, and clothing should show no signs of the journey that has just been endured.

The Globetrotter suit and Mac by Rohan keeps you looking smart when you're on the move.

Rohan



Schoeller's function chart to explain how 3XDRY works.

Schoeller

Looking smart

With travel of this type, people go straight to a crucial meeting after a long journey, so travel wear needs to offer the same uncreased, smart appearance as regular office attire. First impressions still count. Until now creasing has been one of the most common problems with travelling, so when Dow Fiber Solutions, a business unit of The Dow Chemical Company, created a fibre that prevents this from happening, regardless of what the clothing is put through, it offered the perfect solution for business travel.

At the recent Première Vision exhibition in Paris, Dow Fiber Solutions announced that its XLA fibre is the first and only stretch solution that can be combined with true non-iron finishes to create the ultimate shirt for the on-the-go consumer. The fibre, based on Insite technology from Dow, is olefin-based and inherently resistant to harsh chemicals and high heat. Other fibres don't survive the processes and chemicals required to become non-iron. Dow XLA behaves perfectly in this environment and is the only stretch fibre to achieve of a DP (degree of polymerisation) rating of 3.5, even after 50 wash cycles. Garments containing this fibre remain crease-free, so even the shirts in a suitcase would not need ironing.

A number of leading brands have already adopted Dow XLA, including German-based CasaModa. The company sees great potential in XLA, calling it the "non-iron shirt of the future". In November 2005 it will launch three different men's shirts which all incorporate Dow XLA.

Feeling good

But, it's pointless clothing looking crease-free if it doesn't feel good. Rushing from place to place could leave a traveller hot, sweaty, flustered, and feeling unprofessional, but Schoeller's 3XDRY Moisture Management System has been used for the regular travel market, and is now being used by a number of brands catering for the business market. Garments featuring 3XDRY offer protection both inside and outside the garment, and since it's impossible to know what to expect when travelling, all round protection is needed.

From the inside, 3XDRY allows the body to breathe which prevents a build-up of sweat. The finish transports moisture rapidly from the inside to the outside where it can effectively evaporate and increase the overall feeling of comfort. Garments treated with 3XDRY also feature a Fresh Plus treatment to prevent the development of bacteria and unpleasant odours.

Working from the outside, 3XDRY repels moisture and is highly breathable which is perfect for wetter conditions. It is also fast drying and helps to prevent soiling, so accidental spillages during a long haul flight should be easy to wipe away.

The Swiss Protection Parka from Strellson is manufactured in a comfortable fabric with a 3XDRY finish. It works by allowing rain and wind to simply unaffect it, but also has added design details to cope with hurricane conditions, such as a see-through viewing flap on the arm allowing for a quick glance at a watch, and when the hood is up a protective ear flap is built-in for using a cell phone.

Tough Business

But whether it's mild or extreme conditions, 3XDRY will work just as effectively. The National Geographic Society, one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organisations, understands that business may sometimes lead people into rough terrain, and even doing a jungle trek, and has come up with a new collection to cope.

Pierre Voltaire, designer of the new range, said: "The idea was to develop a travel collection which caters not just for the explorer but for the masses that do just ordinary travel. It has to be comfortable, easy care, convenient and with technology in both the material and the design which makes it special."

The concept led to what Voltaire describes as the "ultimate" pant, shirt, jacket/blazer, and field jacket. It was done in response to the changing nature of business and travel and to a certain degree the convergence of the two. The five core pieces feature Schoeller's 3XDRY fabric technology and are also made from a fabric that is 98% cotton and two per cent Lycra, which means the wearer gets the soft and comfortable benefits of cotton too.

Storage solutions

Making clothing that is suitable for business travel doesn't just stop with fabric applications. Safe storage of essential travel items such as passports is paramount so, like the Swiss Protection Parka from Strellson, National Geographic also incorporates storage



Some garments from National Geographic's new collection consider the convergence of business and travel.

National Geographic

solutions for travel items and gadgets in its range.

Voltaire added: "The modern traveller now carries a host of gadgets so the jacket has twenty pockets and the shirt has seven, including a hidden passport pocket inside. The Field Jacket comes with an ID tag holder, a key holder, MP3 pocket and a deep map pocket." The garments even come with a schematic drawing so the user can tell where different items should go (or remember where they went).

"Everything in the garments has a reason to exist," adds Voltaire, who noted that for issues of care he was not yet ready to consider fully integrating electronics into the garments at this stage. In part this also reflects the fact that the shirt, while full of pockets and other technical functionality, looks like an ordinary shirt. He also wanted to ensure that the materials, while very high tech and suited to demanding environments, had a soft and 'friendly' feel.

Tim Jasper, design director at Rohan, a UK brand that has been providing travel clothing since the 1970s, has noticed a definite increase in the demand for smarter travel clothing for business purposes, and now some of this range is coming through as major sellers for the company. He said: "Three years ago, old fashioned outdoor products were the best sellers, and while they are still excellent sellers for us, sales for smart clothing are increasing significantly."

The range, which is currently only available to men, features everything required to make the right impression at a business meeting, including a machine washable suit, non-crease shirts, smart Macs, town shoes and even belts.

Tim continued: "When you go on a business trip you never know what might happen, so our clothing is designed to withstand many conditions, whether in warmer or cooler climates. Everything in the range is travel friendly, featuring performance properties that work to keep the clothing looking and feeling good, enabling the wearer to travel without limits.

"With travel clothing, particularly for business purposes, the key is choosing the right composites. We use a combination of natural fibres and various technical fibres that will not affect the comfort of the garment for the wearer. For instance, our globetrotter suit is a mixture of composites including Lycra and an extremely high quality polyester. These allow it to feel silky and soft, but still bounce back into shape after being squashed during a ten hour flight."



Dow XLA fibre can be combined with true non-iron finishes to create the ultimate shirt for today's busy lifestyles.

Dow



Retailers in Europe, such as CasaModa in Germany, are already using Dow XLA in their products.

Outdoor gear gets businesslike

A product that does sell well for the company is the Rohan Mac, which combines the conventional, smart appearance of a regular town raincoat with a level of performance more generally associated with mount-aineering waterproofs, providing total wet weather protection in rainy cities – without the need to resort to specialist outdoor waterproofs and an inappropriate "just stepped off the North Face of the Eiger" look.

Made from a durable, but supple, 100% polyamide the Rohan Mac incorporates advanced laminate technology to offer a good level of permanent waterproofing and breathability. A detachable, adjustable hood offers extra protection in the worst weather, and waterproof facings at the cuffs, front opening and hem – a detail normally only seen in rainwear of the highest qaulity – stops moisture wicking around the inside of the coat.

It also features two zipped hand pockets and three inside pockets and, when not in use, folds conveniently into its own compact storage case which can be slipped into a briefcase or travel bag.

For short haul business trips that may not cause too much distress to clothing, specialist business travel garments may not always be required. Eurojersey supplies brands such as Giorgio Armani, Marithé et François Girbaud, Calvin Klein, Marks & Spencer, Australian and H&M with Sensitive. Because life is un-predictable, people are expecting more functional qualities from their clothing and with Sensitive's functions making clothing comfortable, impeccable, practical, light and wearable, garments can be taken straight from the office and on to a plane.

Sensitive's honeycomb structure ensures that clothes will be highly breathable, lightweight and need a far shorter drying time than 100% cotton garments (15 minutes instead of 38). Furthermore, clothes made of Sensitive provide maximum comfort and wear-ability while requiring minimum ironing after washing.

Regardless of what is expected from a business trip, whether it involves a trek around the jungle or just a long haul flight, there are brands able to offer different levels of functionality, allowing people to get the most out of their business trips.