

# FashionJournal

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## Just don't cut my hair

*One man's quest for a more professional style—with a little help from his friends*

by Kevin Voigt

**Q**uick: Think of five adjectives that describe your image. Stumped? So was I.

"How would a friend describe your appearance?" my image consultant, Eve Roth Lindsay (pictured left), asked as we began my makeover session. "Let's find out," I said, calling my buddy, Justin. On speakerphone, I asked him to sum up my look in one word. His response: "Frumpy."

Not exactly the word I'd like a client to use to describe my new business and my product—which, basically, is me. I straddle two worlds: I play in an Afro-beat band named Nude, and I run my own writing, editing and media consulting company. A recent experience with a new client made me seek out Ms. Lindsay's advice on a matter I hadn't associated with my potential success as an entrepreneur—how I look.

A bit of background: I am nearly 38 years old and I haven't had a haircut in about three years. I own three suits—the oldest I wore at my college graduation, the newest was purchased six years ago. (I can't remember the last time I wore them.) I have two pairs of shoes: slip-on dress shoes and a pair of Converse sneakers. Both pairs are frayed because my dog, Luna, used them as chew toys.

None of this really mattered (at least to me) until I got a last-minute call in April to write up a round-table discussion on derivatives trading. I pulled my hair back in a ponytail, put on my blue jeans and a collared shirt and walked into a room filled with investment bankers in pinstriped Armani and Gucci suits. I felt confident and cool for all of five minutes. As the conversation began, my insecurities swelled and settled on my off-the-rack shirt, frayed jeans and curly locks (which, when I saw my face reflected on the video conference monitor, I realized were fast leaving the vicinity of "long" and entering the realm of "rasta").

That led me to Ms. Lindsay, owner of Savvy Style, Color Me Beautiful in Hong Kong, for a makeover that lasted seven hours. I wore the same clothes I wore to the bankers' meeting; Ms. Lindsay's greeting was: "Oh, my...Kevin, we have some work to do."

She asked me to write five adjectives for the image I'd like my company to project; I wrote: premium, smart, honest, thorough and creative. Then she asked for adjectives to describe my actual appearance. I wrote: unselfconscious, lazy, sloppy and creative. "Look at the difference between the image you want your company to project and the image you think you project," she said.

After more questions, she determined my "style personality" is "natural" (relaxed, uncluttered look, comfort and low maintenance are a high priority; grooming a low priority), with some leanings toward "creative."

The next step was to determine what colors of clothes work best for me. My eyes are hazel green, my skin has a pinkish hue. My hair color showed the time since my last hair cut like rings on a tree trunk: golden brown at the ends, dark brown with gray streaks at the roots. Ms. Lindsay pulled out a color wheel and explained that palettes fall into one of six categories: deep or light, warm or cool, clear or muted.

**Diagnosis:** My color type is "cool," with some leanings toward deep and clear shades. Apparently, I am a Ralph Lauren type, with medium-colored hair that contrasts my eye color.

**Prescription:** I should avoid a monochromatic look, and not even think about



Kevin Voigt in action, on stage with his Afro-beat band **Nude**.

**Prescription:** Get a trim at least every six weeks to hold the shape, and wear the bangs long rather than in a ponytail because of my receding hairline—a hairline that will only recede faster as I pull it back. The cut was

clever, eliminating years of deadends that were twisting my hair into heavy braids of rope down my back, but retaining the length. He also recommended shampoos and conditioners that will minimize the Afro effect of Hong Kong humidity.

I venture into department stores about once every two years. I wear my clothes until they are threadbare.

**Diagnosis:** Comfortable clothing shouldn't mean tattered. And the book bag I carried to the bankers' meeting should be replaced with a small, canvas briefcase.

**Prescription:** Invest in at least two good suits every year, and at least six pairs of shoes: two pairs of dress shoes, a pair of sneakers, a pair of sandals and two pairs of casual shoes. Retire anything more than four years old. For smart-casual clothes, buy three new outfits every season.

With my color swatches in hand, I proceeded to try on a mix of Armani and Prada suits, slacks and shirts. I suffered sticker shock. But Ms. Lindsay advised ordering from online retailers like L.L. Bean to get trendy, affordable fashion that fits.

For me, the real test was when I arrived home: Karina, who warned me "not to let them hack off your hair," was pleased. And although I'd like to think my work speaks for itself, I'm hoping the lessons I learned will let my appearance do some of the work for me.

### How to get help

Many major Asian cities have image consultants: The Association of Image Consultants International lists members around Asia on its Web site ([www.aici.org](http://www.aici.org)).

Also, many upscale boutiques and department stores around the region—such as Seibu and Harvey Nichols—provide personal shoppers to assist free of charge.

Photography by Colin Beere/visibillitymedia