

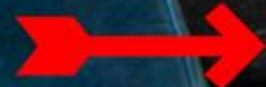
the Perfect Fit


INDOCHINO IS
REINVENTING
HOW WE SHOP
FOR SUITS, ONE
CALCULATED
STITCH AT A TIME



MATTHEW WEXLER

I'm standing in Indochino's swanky, yet approachable New York City showroom, waiting to meet my fit guide for my first-ever made-to-measure suit, and I'm hit with a sense memory: it doesn't smell like mothballs. There is no cigar-smoking, Old World tailor emerging from behind a stained curtain to hover at my feet. My parents aren't in the room to argue over the sleeve length or cuff. I'm a grown-up now, and buying a suit has changed dramatically in the 21st century.





I'm greeted with bottled water and piping hot coffee, and as I stroll through the sunlit studio in New York City's fashionable SoHo, I feel like the executive that I always wanted to be but never had the temperament for. Such is the vision that co-founders Kyle Vucko and Heikal Gani have realized.

While students at University of Victoria, Gani – like many millennials preparing for internships and job interviews – struggled to find a properly fitted suit at a price point he could afford. The pair recognized a platform that could target unlimited customers if their business model was efficient and offered a more personalized product at a lower cost. According to Forbes, the U.S. apparel industry is a \$12 billion business, so it's obvious that consumers are spending big. With a bit of tinkering in terms of both style and substance, Indochino was born.

For those who want a made-to-measure suit without leaving the comfort of their own homes, Indochino will mail you a tailor's kit for \$29 (redeemable toward the price of your new suit), which includes 16 fabric swatches of your choice and two tape measures. Specific instructions and videos (and the assistance of a special someone who doesn't mind reaching between your legs) make it easy to record all of the details.

Once submitted, a tailoring team in Shanghai, overseen by a master pattern maker, reviews measurements, and the suit is sent off to production. These proprietary algorithms are the brains behind the beauty, with 80 touch points throughout production that ensure the final product meets rigorous standards. Once complete, the garment heads back to Shanghai for a final check before being shipped FedEx to your doorstep.



Not trusting my own fashion sense, I prefer to take advantage of one of Indochino's 10 showrooms throughout North America (fear not, their rapid expansion hopes to open 150 globally by 2020). On trend with other online retailers such as Bonobos and Warby Parker, Indochino's brick-and-mortar presence offers customers the opportunity to get hands on, with a full display of available fabrics, limited-edition collections and samples of the various customizations, including lapels, vents, buttons, pockets, jacket lining, pleats (yes, pleats are coming back!), collar felt and button-holes.

More than just a rundown of fabric and thread count, I feel as though my fit guide has become my new BFF, asking me how I like to spend my days, where I hope to wear my new suit and what makes me feel comfortable. She's more communicative than most of my recent dates, and I drift off into a fantasy world, where I'm fabulously dressed all

the time and the most interesting person in the room, no matter where I go.

Tom Kearnan, director of apparel development and merchandising, is the man behind my makeover and responsible for Indochino's product line, fabric selection and design details. Not an easy job, given the broad-spectrum customer base.

"Our customer tends to read a bit younger but not in demographics," says Kearnan. "They've experienced a bit of fashion, and although we sell a ton of traditional suits, we have plenty of edgier options as well. Younger-thinking clientele also bring a new sense of masculinity. It's a fresh approach compared to 20 years ago. People aren't afraid to dress themselves."

Kearnan also demystifies the differences between made to measure and "bespoke," terms often misused to describe products and services. Made to measure uses base patterns that are then individually sewn. Working from three basic silhouettes, customization is achieved by then adjusting this pattern to a customer's specific measurements and style preferences. The result – particularly for the price – is far and above what I've bought off the rack from top retailers.

THE LOOK



Beyond cut, fabric choice is a huge factor in representing one's individual style. I was looking for an all-purpose suit, and in lieu of a solid, my guide steered me toward a gorgeous charcoal Prince of Wales fabric with a subtle lavender check in 100 percent Merino wool. While navy, charcoal, tan and brown will always be in style, Kearnan offers options for the more fashion-forward customer, bringing in burgundy, lemon and lavender for spring 2017, nudging slightly ahead of global trends.

The coming year promises blue as an anchor color with a leaning toward teal in lieu of classic navy. Kearnan describes “the romance of fabric” as coming back into style, with slightly looser tailoring and a bit more movement. As far as do’s and don’ts, Kearnan says, “I’ll wear anything as long as I’m comfortable with it.” This is where the customer’s responsibility comes into play, knowing what sort of occasions at which that suit will make an appearance and understanding one’s body proportions.

Several weeks after my initial visit, I return for a fitting. A few minor alterations are made and logged into my profile, so that my next suit will (in theory) be perfect when I order it online from my couch. When I pick up the final garment the following week, I feel as though I’ve gifted myself a mini makeover, each detail an expression of my ever-evolving style. Without a forthcoming occasion on the calendar, I make dinner for myself that evening, set the table, light a candle and put on my new suit. Table for one. I’m the best-dressed date I’ve had in quite some time.



Transcending the Suit Industry

Indochino has opened the door for the transgender community when it comes to suiting, where finding the perfect fit presents challenges from multiple perspectives. Sonny Oram, founding editor of Qwear, offers insights to educate and inspire equal opportunity suiting for all.

How would you describe some of the issues transgender people face when it comes to shopping and retail?

First of all, there is discrimination when entering a clothing store. If we don’t “pass” – meaning people can tell we are trans – we face a lot of harassment when we go shopping. People tell us that we’re in the wrong section, give us weird looks, sometimes don’t let us in the dressing rooms or won’t help us find the right things. I should also add that this type of discrimination applies to all gender nonconforming individuals, not just trans people.

Finding clothing that fits is also a huge challenge. The average retailer is designing clothing with cis bodies in mind. Trans guys with chests and big hips have an extraordinarily difficult time finding button-ups that fit. We have to either get shirts that are too big in the shoulders or get clothing tailored. There are queer brands available, and we offer lots of solutions to these

Tap here for more about Indochino





edge

THE LOOK

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problems on Qwear, but the fact is that you can't just walk into any store and expect to find clothing that fits.

Another issue trans people face that isn't addressed often enough is that aside from the lucky few of us who were able to transition during childhood, we weren't raised learning how to dress ourselves. Many of our readers come to us at Qwear having no idea how to tie a tie or style their hair. These are things that cis people take for granted, because growing up their parents and friends taught them these things.

I had the privilege to meet with some trans women in their 50s and 60s who were mid-transition recently and found that they didn't have the slightest clue how to even begin shopping! They didn't even know what size they were in women's clothing or what styles would look good on them. Things like finding the right bra size were completely new to them, and if they entered the bra section of a women's store, they'd be looked at as a predator. It's absolutely heartbreaking what these brave women and nonbinary individuals go through simply to find clothes they feel comfortable in.

When we're kids, our parents (hopefully) provide us clothing appropriate for our gender identity. If they don't support our transition, we have to pay for them on our own. I didn't transition until I was a young adult, so I had to build a wardrobe from scratch. My family






didn't initially support my transition, so I couldn't get any help building a wardrobe. It took me the longest time to get a proper suit. And given that the majority of trans people have employment discrimination, we don't have the most expansive budgets to spend on clothing.

How do you see Indochino as a forerunner in this category?

My experiences with Indochino thus far have been very trans-positive. I've known women who were fit for men's suits and treated very respectfully, and I recently went to get fitted myself and had a great time. The staff was respectful of my identity and worked hard to adjust the suit to fit my body.

I think Indochino is a great option for people on a budget who want a made-to-measure suit. The fit of a suit is *really* important. I, too, suffered from employment discrimination, but when I finally landed the position I'm in now, I had a suit that fit really well. All those little details, like arm length and shoulder width, make a difference, and Indochino will fit infinitely better than anything off the rack. 



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