

Forbes

Women Of Influence: Television And Its Career-Driven Leading Ladies



Forbes Style File: Women Of Influence is a platform featuring women who are embracing change in the business and political landscape. The series highlights her professional endeavors and the way in which she uses the tools available to her to influence change. She is intelligent, competent, dynamic, supportive, collaborative, and, by the way, she is also interested in what she wears as a means to visually convey these qualities. What a WOI wears is a business decision and, so this series will also discuss how she uses style as an effective communication tool in today's highly-visual, modern world.

Television dramas and even comedies, featuring leading ladies as career women, have become a great source for ideas and inspiration for the professional woman. Everything about them is influencing, including what they wear on the job. I had the opportunity to talk with the costume designers who dress some of

television's most popular working women for our inaugural *Women Of Influence*. These style experts are on a mission beyond the small screen to support the everyday professional woman.

Dan Lawson is responsible for dressing the entire cast of the award-winning drama *The Good Wife*, including its main character, lawyer Alicia Florrick, played by Julianna Margulies. Recently, Lawson co-created 35•DL, an elegant women's business wear collection, and DL for PONO, Italian resin statement jewelry also geared towards the professional woman. Lyn Paolo is the Emmy Award winning costume designer for the hit show *Scandal*, which features actress Kerry Washington as D.C. crisis manager, Olivia Pope. Paolo collaborated with clothing retailer, The Limited, this past fall season to create a women's workwear collection inspired by the show. She also has a fashion line with Gaspar Gloves and is the brand ambassador for Platinum Guild International. Salvador Perez is the lead costume designer for the comedy-hit series, *The Mindy Project*, starring Mindy Kaling as Dr. Mindy Lahiri. Perez also launched his BaubleBar x Salvador Perez jewelry collection this year.

Designers share more:

Kristina Moore: The Good Wife's Alicia Florrick projects professional competence. How do you convey that through her attire?

Daniel Lawson: Alicia's look is clean and elegant, simple and modern. Her attire is always appropriate, with one eye on style and one on business. As a powerful woman, her clothing is thoughtful with every detail considered. I often like to dress her in a column of color so that she looks solid and strong while celebrating her feminine silhouette and sensibilities. Fit is absolutely key; if one's clothes fit properly then one is half way to winning the battle of looking put together, composed and confident. Alicia also wears minimum jewelry, opting instead for her clothing to tell the story and avoiding a frenetic look. Alicia does not wear masculine dress shirts or masculine suitings.

Instead, I like her wardrobe to incorporate special touches that convey her individuality: interesting trim, a unique cut, elegant seaming. Remember, one only buys clothes. One doesn't buy style. That you bring to the equation with your personality, taste and purpose. Alicia does that. Of course, it helps having someone put that all together for you. But if what I do with Alicia's wardrobe didn't support Julianna's (Margulies) acting choices, then her wardrobe would not be believable and, consequently, not successful.

Moore: Scandal's Olivia Pope's character projects influence and power. How do you dress a woman who is powerful?

Lyn Paolo: My initial response would be that it would depend upon the woman, each of us is different, and we all have our own way of expressing both our femininity and our strength at the same time. In the case of Olivia, Kerry Washington and I work together as a team to find those key notes that express Olivia's strengths...however, I think those notes could be very different for each individual...for myself, personally, it is all about my shoes, do I feel grounded, could I walk all day in these heels, and then finally it is all about the accessories, do I have a powerful accent piece, a vintage bracelet, the right purse or a pair of divine gloves....accessorizing appropriately for each meeting or interview is very important to Olivia and to myself in my personal life.

Moore: When today's woman is worried about how she looks, she tends to dress down. The Mindy Project's Mindy Lahari does the opposite. What impact do you think her style has on the professional woman who doesn't feel confident about her appearance?

Salvador Perez: I think Mindy's bold confidence, shows that you don't have to be a perfect model size 2, to be sexy and glamorous. It's about style and fit. Anyone, in any size, can look stylish and professional, if they put the effort into to what they are wearing. It doesn't have to be high end, it has to be stylish.

Knowing you look good and feeling good about yourself is a great confidence booster.

Moore: Do you think of your leading lady's character as a fashion role model for the working women of today? How do you believe her style influences or resonates with your audience?

Lawson: I believe the clothing that Alicia wears on *The Good Wife* is decidedly resonating with our audience and with real female lawyers across the country. Julianna and Christine (Baranski who plays Diane Lockhart) have told me multiple times about real lawyers coming up to them on the street and thanking them for illustrating on the show an elegant and professional way to wear business wear that is modern, fresh, feminine, at times sexy, and always appropriate. Women are no longer the exception to the workplace. So why do they need to dress in a way that belies or hides their femininity? When I started *TGW*, I wanted my leading ladies to be strong, powerful women wearing clothing that celebrated the female form without making the looks soft or ineffectual. Our audience responds to the chic professional looks on the show.

Paolo: I did not intend that Olivia should be a role model, that has somehow become an organic transition as our amazing audience has embraced Olivia's look. I approach dressing Olivia from a story point of view and I strive to tell the story that Shonda Rhimes has written through the fashion choices that I make for all of the characters on the show. I then work with our cast and collaborate with them and we discuss our choices together in the fitting room...film is a truly collaborative medium and this is one of the reasons that I adore being a Costume Designer.

All of us who work on the show, my amazing team, our actors and, I believe, our producers, have all been truly amazed by the response our audience has to the looks on the show. I hope that the collaboration we now have with *The Limited* will make Olivia's power and femininity available to working women who want to

emulate and aspire to have that same edge in the work world...and The Limited line, while being aspirational, is I hope also affordable for many of the women out there who have written to both Kerry and myself asking how to dress like Olivia Pope.

Perez: I absolutely feel Mindy is a fashion role model; she loves fashion and wears it so well. We have created a world where she is a professional woman who has fun with clothes. I think the viewers can relate to her, because she is so approachable, and they can emulate her style at work, and change the way women dress at the office.

Is there an inspirational professional woman or WOI that you would like us to interview on Forbes Style File: Women Of Influence? Let us know in the comments section.

Kristina Moore is a style expert focusing on visual presentation as a dynamic professional tool. She is the founder and editor of [Corporate Fashionista](#). Kristina welcomes your comments and questions.