



# BOOBY TRAPS

Revealing too much cleavage can hurt your career. Urban finds out how low your neckline can go



**A**fter being under wraps for the past few seasons, the bust is busting out this fall fashion season. It was cleavage, cleavage on the runway and the clothes have now made their way to the racks here.

Well-endowed women will enjoy showcasing their curves with this trend. Those whose cupolas have not risen – a situation that many with slender figures face – find themselves in a can't get creative with topings (see Page 14). Designers going for décolletage included Marc Jacobs, whose collection for Louis Vuitton put the emphasis on the "D" with swooping bustier tops. Moschino Paris took the phrase with New Look dresses with bustline ruffles that made it look like the models did not wear bras, but balconies.

The lesson? Look could sport double bustle though there are two issues bouncing around: How much is too much around? And is flaunting your assets work a definite no?

**WORK EXPOSURE**  
Ms. Cancelli Tolan, an associate consultant at image consulting firm Woodcocks, says, "Socially, a lot of cleavage is much classier than letting it all hang out. As a general rule, the exposed area from your chin to the end of your cleavage should not be larger than your head."

Cleavage at work, however, is a bodily trap for your career, she says. Declaring that "it is simply inappropriate to flash any cleavage in the office," she points out that 93 per cent of communication is non-verbal.

"Unless you are a ventriloquist and can project verbally through your cleavage, cleavage are only about 1 per cent of your message in getting through if people's attention is on your chest," she says.

Most employers share her stance. Ms. Jacqueline Goh, the human resources and administration director at Series Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre, says, "Cleavage that reveal too much is a distraction. The way you dress affects your credibility and professionalism."

It is no wonder some well-endowed women view their assets as liabilities. To female office manager Cecilia

Ng, 33, who fessed herself – and her well-filled 36C cups – the subject unwarranted attention at previous jobs despite dressing modestly. "It came to a point where I had to say 'no' to sleeping with the boss," says Ms. Ng, who is now an interior designer. In an e-mail interview, American author Elizabeth Dale of *Book: A Guide To You Girls*, says the media has conditioned people to believe that a woman's breasts are a crockpot if she leaves her breasts.

"The more women who have breasts a push-up bra or a low-cut garment, the more she understands the power of breasts."

## BOOBS

This might explain why more women now believe bigger is better. Not only are more going for breast implants, they are also asking for bigger cup sizes. The average size of silicone implants in Singapore has gone from 200cc in the past to above 300cc, says consultant plastic surgeon Tan Ying Chien of The Sloane Clinic Plastic Surgery Centre in Novena Medical Centre. 100cc of implants is roughly equivalent to an increase in one cup size.

Up to 20 per cent of his patients ask for cup sizes which he deems make them too "top heavy", he adds.

Even without silicone aid, breast sizes have gone from buds to blossoms in the past 10 to 15 years, causing some bra fitters to declare that E is the new C. In Singapore, where the average bust size was a 75A about five years ago, the norm is now 78B, with a 15 per cent jump in the number of women with larger sizes like D cups.

"70D bust size is becoming more common these days," notes Willem Chen, advertising and promotions manager for underwear giant Triumph International (Singapore). Better nutrition is one reason for the bigger busts.

For those who are hung up about their small bust size, Ms Dale has some reassuring words. "Many women assume that men prefer larger breasts, when there is no such preference."

"Men are happy to be around any breasts at all and know they are found in a variety of shapes and sizes."

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# HOW LOW SHOULD YOU GO AT WORK?

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