

RETAILER
OF THE
YEAR:
JCPENNEY

FOCUS:
THE NEW
PANTS!

PEOPLE
ANDY HALL
OF STAGE
STORES

PLACES
PHOENIX
RISING

PRODUCT
NAME
THAT
SHIRT!



Trimming the Trouser

Five-pocket and modern fits update trousers at all levels.

By John Jones

Khakis, the shapeless uber pant that dominated men's dress closets for decades, were dumber than dimes and more "every man" than gray flannel. But in the wake of jeansmen, denim and the several crises, the modern worker is looking for a new uniform. He wants a slimmer silhouette and denim's tripped corduroy, but needs something dumber and more affordable. And if he can save money by machine-washing rather than dry-cleaning, even better. From casual to dress, modern men's special khaki-like trousers represent an more than happy to comply.

Dockers, the Levi's spinoff that defined the khaki for decades, is getting a lot of a credit and razzie rack, despite the fact that they have 40 percent of U.S. market share in the category.

"This isn't a relaunch," says Dockers' Karen Riley-Grant. "It's just that right now [the Dockers customer] doesn't love his khakis the way he loves his jeans." Two new Dockers collections include new colors, cuts, and fit styles (shown here). The first group, with a suggested retail of \$30, is targeted to moderate earners, the second, at \$50, features more fabric and upgraded construction details for better stress. Not on display are the D1 category, which are suggested with signage in Dockers displays, D1 is the newest, a slim fit, available in flat front only, while the D2 (straight leg), D3 (slim) and D4 (relaxed) vary by a few inches each in waist at Dockers.com (shown here the differences aren't). They will also be nine colors in the range, as well as total pleats.

Retailers are getting behind the changes. JC Penney's Aaron Fisher says "Where we introduce fashion, such as new plaid fabrications, you'll see some dress (and) styles on the floor. It's where we can inject newness. We're launching Dockers soft khaki for holiday, and here we'll offer an explosion of color. It's not going to be the same old khaki, we're going to offer fashion and newness with a color selection that is very appropriate at \$25.99."

There is a 20 (and) fit, currently available only in Europe, that retailers think will be attractive to a contemporary street market lens. The K1 fit, inspired by a WWII officer's pant, continues as the brand's "premium" offering. Although only available domestically at Dockers.com, the pant recently saw an afternoon sellout at Pacific's Boutique Colette.

Fisher's Fisher says, "What's really important are core values that about value. We try to ensure that we meet the wearing occasion for our customer, whether it's weekend wear, office wear or dress casual."

Hugoboss's Jim Huggins says that although casual styles are selling more units than dress, even khakis are more formal. "Fit is most important, followed immediately by a better hand. The fit is straight, not slinky, defining the knee and leg." Huggins's newest model is a 100 percent cotton, 100% (and) khaki. He points out that Penney's does well with Huggins's corduroy waist product, part of their "Work on Weekend" collection. The brand emphasizes performance, including the Good 18 machine-washing, no-iron trouser.

"Part of our job is to more clearly educate the customer," says Fisher.