

PORTER



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Natalia

By Ryan McGinley

Modern
Heroines

POWER
DRESSING

Emma Grede

A love of fashion and a desire to work in the arts and entertainment world meant this pioneering entrepreneur didn't stop until she became CEO of her own talent agency

Photography by
Joachim Mueller-Ruchholtz
Words by Harriet Walker

If 32-year-old Emma Grede, in her simple cashmere sweater and leather pants, seems like a different breed of businesswoman, that is because she is a pioneer in a relatively new field. As CEO of ITB, an entertainment marketing agency, she is the middleman between lifestyle brands and the entertainment industry. She has placed Natalie Portman as the face of Miss Dior, broken records on Instagram with Kendall Jenner in her Calvin Kleins, and match-made Pharrell Williams with denim label G-Star on a project to save the world's oceans. But despite working with these big brands, 'corporate' isn't a word in Grede's vocabulary. Her take on power dressing is a story of easy elegance and confidence, born of a workplace she has created from scratch that prioritizes comfort and collectivism.

How did you get to where you are today? I'd love to say it was a hankering to work around creative people, but

Résumé

Name: Emma Grede

Occupation: CEO of ITB, an entertainment marketing agency

Experience: Dropped out of London College of Fashion to work as a sales assistant and PR intern, before moving into fashion production.

Greatest achievement: "I hate it when people say their child, but it is my baby, Grey. And a happy relationship."

fashion production, working with designers like Christopher Kane and Giles Deacon to find sponsorship for their shows. I really flew by the seat of my pants – I have zero education.

Does your position at your company complement your personality?

The company is very reflective of my interests and my skills. I've always thought "What am I good at?" and "What do I want?" And what I'm

that's not it: it's because I'm obsessed with clothes. I started in

good at is negotiating, and what I wanted was a lot of money and to work in the arts and entertainment industry. I was brought up by a single mum – in my family, it was never frowned upon to be ambitious, or to state your intention.

What does a typical day look like? It's all changed since I had my baby, Grey, 10 months ago. I don't ever switch off, because we have offices in New York and LA too. I get up early and feed Grey before going to the office; I download everything from

Top by Isa Arfen, £203; skirt by Adam Lippes, £600; sandals by Aquazzura, £575; necklace by Moxham, £110; on right hand: bracelet by By Malene Birger, £109; ring by David Webb, £2,350; on left hand: bracelet and ring, Grede's own



Sylist Hannah Cole, Hair Naoki Komiya at Julian Watson, Makeup Ariel Yeh using Sisley

the night before and then I take meetings back to back. But every day I finish at 5.45pm, so I can go home for bath and bedtime. Then I'll start again on emails, but family time is non-negotiable for me.

So you take your work home...

My job is an extension of my life – I met my husband [Jens Grede of Frame Denim] through work. The way people work now means you're switched on all the time. I don't think there's anything wrong with that if you love what you do, and have someone who understands and who you can talk to about it.

What is in your working wardrobe?

A lot of my clients are fashion brands so if I turned up in a power suit, they'd be baffled. But I do like classic stuff. I'm very much about a white shirt, slim trousers by Burberry or Gucci and a good classic shoe, either by Tabitha Simmons or Manolo Blahnik. Though my failsafe is a sleeveless shift dress as I like to show my arms.

Do you express yourself professionally through clothes?

I definitely use clothes to help me

feel confident. Sometimes I go to meetings and they will be directed at someone else until they realize that I am the person in charge. Being a woman, being young, being black – I can't think of a point when I have had a negative reaction, but I do find I dress to look more

serious. A good blazer always works – Balenciaga or Stella McCartney. The office can turn into a bit of a catwalk sometimes – the girls here always look amazing.

How would you define power dressing?

My mother was a banker in the 1990s and, although it isn't how I would dress at all, that is how a working woman

dresses in my mind. Power jacket, shoulder pads, those funny arm garters. But it's more about putting on something that makes you feel really great about yourself. When Mum went to work, I used to think, "I'm going to look like that one day."

Do you have a 7pm transformation tip?

I'm of that generation where flats are fine. I don't feel the need to put on a pair of heels, but when I need to amp

it up, I'll whack on some makeup and that works for me.

Describe the inside of your wardrobe...

I always imagine I'm hoarding for some future daughter, so it's a bit out of control. I also have three younger sisters, so I have a loaning system for them to sign things in and out, otherwise I don't see them again. I wouldn't mind, but they don't have anything I want in return.

What do you enjoy most about running your own company?

I feel very responsible for nurturing people through the business. When Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* book came out, I bought a copy for every woman I employ. Then, after I started reading it, I went out and bought a copy for every guy too.

Dress by Victoria Beckham, £1,475; shoes by Gianvito Rossi, £585; on right hand: bracelet by Jemma Wynne, £4,500; ring by David Webb, £2,350; on left hand: bracelet and ring, Grede's own

"I really flew by the seat of my pants – I have zero education"

Emma's SS15 wish list



Shoes by Jimmy Choo, £375



Shirt by Grace MMXIII, £165



Dress by Isa Arfen, £783



Necklace by Kenneth Jay Lane, £120



Skirt by Danielle Romeril, £378



Bag by Ralph Lauren, £1,860

