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GoodLife

TECHNOLOGY

DRESS UP IN HI-TECH CLOTH

BY TARA PEPPER

ANYONE WHO'S worked in an office knows the uncomfortable challenge summer poses for stuffy, traditional suits. It's hard to look suave in an air-conditioned conference room when you're still sweat-drenched from a commute and, until recently, warm-weather office-wear options were limited. But now high-end men's and women's suitmakers are turning to sports and outdoor wear for inspiration, using

high-tech fabrics to make smart clothes



TRY AND STAIN THEM: Nordstrom shirts and Brooks Brothers neckties

that wear well, whatever the temperature.

As post-dot-com offices move away from the era's sloppy style, suit sales are up—by 13.6 percent on last year—to \$2.5 billion in all, says research agency The NPD Group. In the first half of 2005, a third of men's suits and sport coats were enhanced with some sort of high-tech performance feature to control moisture, resist wrinkles or shrug off stains, according to an NPD survey. Jos. A.

Banks Clothiers has developed a line of Stays Cool Suits in a two- or three-button style (\$595; josbank.com). Walk into a sweltering street and millions of microcapsules within the

lining get to work absorbing excess body heat. Go back to your air-conditioned office and the fabric releases the trapped heat. For dress-down days, Dockers's smart

sanded microfiber pants have a similar technology (\$52; dockers.com).

Another widely used treatment, Nano-Tex, is now found in more than 100 clothing brands, from Brooks Brothers and Nordstrom dress shirts to more casual togs from Levi's and Gap. Hugo Boss's Orange Label shirts are enhanced with Nano-Tex (\$65; hugoboss.com), as are Gap's classic dress shirts (\$44.50; gap.com). L.L. Bean's Timberledge pants are ideal

for relaxed business travel (\$55; ilbean.com).

Those who won't wear synthetics will be glad to know traditional tailors are coming up trumps, too. Thomas Pink of Jermyn Street launched its 200 range this summer featuring shirts made with a fine cotton yarn spun in Switzerland, then woven in a specialist Italian mill. The shirts, which are as airy as silk, come in traditional Pink designs, such as the popular blue or pink Deyton check, and can be made to order or bought ready-to-wear (\$282; thomaspink.co.uk). Savile Row tailor

Gieves has designed a high-twist, wool single-breasted suit, which is ideal for summer business travel. The yarn is twisted during manufacturing so that the lightweight fabric, unlike linen, keeps its crispness and won't look creased and tired at the end of a busy day (\$994; www.gievesandhawkes.com). No matter how stuffy your office, there's no excuse not to keep your cool.

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