



HOW WAS YOUR DAY?

DANIELLA MARKS, *shopping consultant*

Styling celebrities, five-figure shopping sprees and working 24/7 – glamour and graft merge in 25-year-old Daniella's role as personal shopping consultant at Harvey Nichols, London

I've been at Harvey Nichols for four years and never imagined how indispensable I'd become to my clients. Hiring a shopping consultant can really transform their confidence and image. I love the interaction I have with them and there is no better feeling than seeing someone leave with the perfect item.

I don't have set working hours. I have to be available when my clients want to shop – that could be the early hours of the morning for a valued customer or the weekend. I can't just walk away at 5pm, I have to make sure they're 100 per cent happy. I've worked right through the night before for international clients on different time zones, taking clothes to their hotel rooms or homes. I have the total opposite

schedule to my friends and family, which is hard but it's all part and parcel of the job.

My clients include celebrities, royalty, VIPs, cash-rich, time-poor people and those wanting a complete image overhaul or an outfit to wear to a special event like a wedding. I can't discuss my clients, I have to be discreet. It can be stressful but there's always a rush of adrenaline. My job is to take the stress away from them even if they've left it to the last-minute to find that killer piece.

I have an hour and a half commute from Essex so if I start work at 9am, I wake up at 7am. I pick out my clothes in the morning because I can't decide the night before. I need to know what mood I'm in before I can decide. I don't like to feel caked in make-up but I can't live without mascara and blusher. My style is

very feminine and I like to wear colour. I love dresses, they make me feel done, glamorous and practical. Diffusion lines are a really great way to get a designer look for less money and I have to look good so clients will trust my fashion advice. For appointments I wear pretty ballet flats because I'm running around non-stop all day. The reality is that however glamorous and indulgent the experience is for the client, for me, it's work.

I always have cereal or fruit and a cup of tea for breakfast because I never know if I'll have time for lunch. On Sundays I treat myself to brunch. I hit the ground running once I'm in the office, I check my diary and emails then catch-up with the team to discuss which clients we're seeing and what they want. Then I'll pre-select clothes for an appointment with a regular customer, grabbing the latest pieces I know they'll like. I have a minimum of two appointments per day and each takes two to three hours.

In the consultation we discuss their lifestyle, what they like to wear, what they accentuate and hide and then I style them head to toe

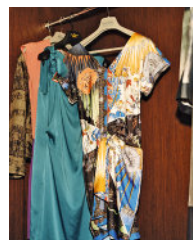
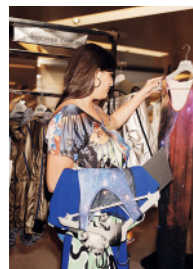
'WHEN SOMEONE SPENDS £30,000 IN AN HOUR I DON'T LET THEM OUT OF MY SIGHT'

from underwear to accessories. Some people want a bit of pampering, while others want to walk round the shop floor and be educated about brands.

Every so often someone will come in and spend a huge amount. When someone spends £30,000 in an hour I drop everything and don't let them out of my sight. It's really exciting, the adrenaline of running round the store, arms full of clothes, grabbing members of staff to help you carry everything.

We have to stay on top of everything that's happening in fashion. I read fashion magazines on the train and obsessively check style.com. We also have training from designers we stock. Lazaro Hernandez and Jack McCollough from Proenza Schouler came to the store to talk us through their collection and inspiration and we liaise with buyers, seeing what they've bought a season early so that we can get customers excited about what's next.

[Right, from top] 'Pretty flats are a must for running around'; checking style.com; pulling clothes for clients; Daniella's favourite Mulberry bag; her go-to print dresses; Daniella's diary



At lunch, if there's time, I go out for a salad and check what's on the high street. It's important to know what's out there so I can advise my clients on other items to complete their wardrobes. I speak to my regular clients on a daily basis updating them on what's new and finding out what they have coming up.

There are different stresses every day. We had a bride who had a disaster with her dress and came to us 24 hours before the wedding. We finally sent her away with a non-traditional but very romantic Lanvin dress. She was thrilled. With every client I look at their personality, the message they want to convey through their clothes and what's appropriate for the occasion and their lifestyle. I'm very honest but in a gentle way. I don't ever want anybody to leave with something that is out of their comfort zone but I like to encourage them to try things they wouldn't normally.

We get a lot of men too. They're usually brought in protesting by their wives or girlfriends but they come back again and again.

Before I leave the office I prepare anything I need for the following day. I'm constantly thinking ahead and anticipating what clients will want before they even know it themselves. Because I live out of town, I make an effort to wind down before I go home otherwise I feel like I live on the train. We go for dinner or drinks and discuss our days. They all work in different fields so it's nice to swap notes.

A few times a month there will be a work event. I get my make-up done in the beauty hall and often borrow something from the store. I love Mary Katrantzou, Phillip Lim and Balenciaga. There's nothing better than wearing a "talking point" piece. ■

CV

STUDIED

'Fashion communication and marketing at Leeds University.'

FIRST JOB

'Interned in buying at Topshop and in the fashion department at Tattler.'

LENGTH OF TIME ON CURRENT JOB

'Four years.'

CAREER AIM

'To set up a freelance fashion styling business.'

CAREER HIGHLIGHT

'Organising a successful event to celebrate Donna Karan's 25th anniversary last year. We raised £21,000 for charity.'

TOP TIP

'Network! Build relationships, be enthusiastic and aim high.'

BEST ADVICE

YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN

'Be yourself.'

SKILLS REQUIRED

'You need to be personable, gently persuasive, encouraging, honest, kind and vocal.'

WORDS: EMMA SIBBLES. PHOTOGRAPHER, JAMIE HAWKSWORTH. HAIR & MAKEUP: CAROL MORLEY AT ONE MAKEUP