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The Leather Portfolio: A Classy Gift

By Adam Justus

Imagine two office workers at a meeting. One has to scramble around, scribbling comments on sticky notes or scrap paper. The other comes prepared with a notepad and pen encased in a sleek leather portfolio. Who's getting points for looking organized, even before the first note is taken?

For many others, it's time to graduate from plastic binders that look like they've weathered a year at school to the more executive look of leather. This shows they're ready to fit in to the highest level meetings and make a strong contribution.

If you have some professionals on your gift-giving list, think of enhancing their look with a leather portfolio. Portfolios bridge the accessory arena between the notepad and the briefcase. Made to look neat and to tuck under your arm when walking, portfolios generally include a notepad, some pockets, and a place to stash a pen. From there, the variety of features is endless. Portfolios range from the very slim to almost the size of a carrying case.

When it's time to get organized, few things make a better impression than the smooth elegance of leather. You can help the professionals in your life make that strong first impression with this distinctive gift in a wide variety of styles.

For the New Executive When you've just moved from middle management to executive level, the first thing you want to do is upgrade all your accessories to reflect your new status. Give the new executive a sleek portfolio for business meetings. Don't make it too clunky—it needs to make the executive look managerial rather than down in the trenches. Features to look for: space to place a pad of paper, a pen loop, and an inside pocket for handouts or business cards.

For the Graduate The graduate taking his or her first job is generally woefully under-accessorized. You may have trouble convincing them to wear a leather belt, let alone gather business accessories. However, their first day on the job makes an indelible impression. Sending them along with a leather portfolio that includes pockets for cell phones, paper, pens, business cards, file folders and the like will help ease their transition to "the real world."

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For the Promoted As a special acknowledgement of a worker's upgrade in status, show them you're proud of them with a portfolio to help them stay organized. This worker might appreciate a simple way to keep track of new contacts, so look for a model that includes an address book. Space for stickie notes, paper clips, and other office tools would also be helpful as they move up in the world.

For Someone Re-entering the Workforce For the parent who's been home with children to the Peace Corps worker back from overseas, the re-adjustment to professional life can be daunting. A leather portfolio can help them feel that much more prepared. Give them space to take notes, compartments to hold important phone numbers and photos, and a calendar to juggle their many appointments.

For the Interviewee Nothing makes a better impression at an interview than taking out a beautifully bound leather portfolio to take down what the interviewer says. You're telling them in one motion that you think what they have to say is important and you don't want to miss any of it. Make sure the interviewees on your list can make that impression with a leather notepad case.

For the Information Technology Professional Running around all day fixing other people's computers means there's a lot you have to carry with you. Cords, PDAs, laptops, phones—find a portfolio for the IT professional that contains compartments for the odds and ends of their business. A zippered edge will also be appreciated, to be sure that nothing gets lost. They'll always have what they need at hand, and they'll thank you for it.

For Staff Holiday Gifts Make your entire team look more professional by gifting them at holiday time with snazzy leather "clipboards." You can send them off to meetings with other departments with confidence. Choose a model where the pad slips into pre-shaped holders, so they're not even bothered with a bulky clip. And at your next staff meeting, see which of your associates whips it out first!

For the Diarist Professional or not, there are few who keep a diary who can resist a leather bound journal. The look and feel alone is enough to make them want to commit their thoughts to paper. Delight the diarist on your list with a beautiful leather journal.

Give your friends and associates the gift of making the best impression. A quality leather portfolio will soon become a trusted part of your recipient's ensemble.

Adam Justus works for

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Classic Groomsmen Gifts Never Go Out Of Style

By Todd Hanes

Your bride-to-be goes down her checklist with you one more time, and she says, "How are you doing on your groomsmen gifts?" Your usual response would be to stare at her blankly. But not today! Below you'll find a wealth of classic choices from money clip watches to cigar humidors that will impress her with your taste and preparedness.

These classic items round out the accessories of men of all professions and ages, and they never go out of style.

For Wearing Cufflinks: Every man has in reserve at least one special suit that requires the shirt with the cufflinks. A classy groomsmen gift, cufflinks show you know he'll have more occasions than just your wedding to look his best.

Pocket watch: Who doesn't love the heavy feel and precision movement of a pocket watch? Clicking open the face to check the time is just one of the coolness factors of these items. Add engraving to your gift to increase its savoir-faire.

For Holding Money clip: A popular item, and no man should be without one. Money clips come in many ingenious styles, including money clip/wallet combos, money clips with watches, money clips with Swiss army knives. They can be silver, steel or leather. Individualize them with engraving.

Jewelry box: For a place to stash all the cufflinks and watches, a special box lined with velvet is just the thing. A masculine touch is to find a model encased in leather or metal.

Travel bag: A practical, classic gift, personalized travel bags straddle the zone between luxurious and pragmatic.

Briefcase: Celebrate the occasion with an embossed leather briefcase for your groomsmen. The range of styles and colors will ensure that your gift is unique.

For Entertaining Bar set: You can just hear the ice cubes tinkling with a classy set for the top of the bar. There are sets to match any décor, from traditional to modern and everything in between.

Poker set: You never know when an impromptu poker game will form. Help your groomsmen be prepared with his own personalized poker set.

Cocktail shaker: When the order is "shaken, not stirred," everyone reaches for a cocktail shaker. Models are available in silver or steel, and ready for engraving.

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For Indulging Tankards and mugs: A hefty tankard or mug is both a drinking companion and a beautiful decorative item. Pewter with engraving is especially classy, or choose a heavy glass mug with a special message or insignia.

Cigar humido: If he likes cigars, he'll need something to protect his investment. Humidors come in many elegant styles, including wood or leather. Be sure to include a few cigars in the package.

Hip flask: For a little pocket refreshment, what man can resist an engraved flask? Engraved silver sets the standard, and some models even include storage for a stogie.

Lighters: Seems like every man should have an engraved silver lighter, preferably given by a good friend. This gift will go over well and be useful for years to come.

The classic never go out of style. Now, it's just up to you and your bride-to-be to choose which one.

Todd Hanes heads

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