Gorden Gekko character in Oliver Stone's film Wall Street, many real-life brokers wore powder blue dress shirts with a white collar and cuffs. Other trends included the return of the double-breasted suit (usually in dark blue) and oversized suit jackets with wide, padded shoulders.

By the end of the decade, however, a strange new impulse swept offices nationwide—casual Fridays. In the pressure-filled work world, giving workers a chance to relax their everyday formality by taking off the tie or wearing casual pants, seemed revolutionary. Within a decade, most offices turned completely “business casual,” cemented by the dot.com craze of the late 1990s. However, after the boom went bust, a return to formality made a comeback in the early 2000s. Today, the corporate world is a mix of business casual and more reserved dress.

GIORGIO ARMANI

Born in Italy on 11 July 1934, Giorgio Armani attended medical school for two years before signing on to complete his military requirements and taking up the hobby of photography. After the army, Armani worked in the famed La Rinascita, a department store, where he was first introduced to the possibilities of fashion as a career, designing their windows with his instinctive taste. He signed on to work with Nino Cerruti as a designer from 1961 to 1970, and embarked on a solo career as a designer shortly thereafter. His women's wear label was founded in 1970; he began designing his men's wear label in 1974.

Armani's designs reached international popularity in the late 1970s, but his casual wear was not launched until 1981, which set off a global demand for his “designer jeans.” In 1982, in addition to launching his first fragrance line, Armani began selling his designs for underwear and swimwear, gradually moving into accessories and eyewear by 1987. Throughout the 1980s, he was the recipient of many industry awards, including: the “Cutty Sark Award for International Men’s Fashion Designer” (five times, 1981, 1984, 1986, and 1989); the “GQ Magazine’s Men’s Style Award” (1981); the “CFDA Lifetime Achievement Award” for men’s wear (1987); and the “Media Key Award” (1988) (modaitalia.net).

Armani’s clothes became the fashions of choice throughout Hollywood, and his style enhanced a number of films in the early 1980s. His costumes for Richard Gere in American Gigolo, directed by Paul Schrader, set the standard, as men everywhere wanted the sleek two-piece suit that Gere wore throughout his escapades as a male gigolo. Seven years later, he designed the costumes for Brian DePalma’s remake of The Untouchables, and his Depression-era suits, with large fedoras and vicuna coats, set the stage for a retro look that padded the shoulders of men’s jackets, and tapered their double-breasted suits.

RALPH LAUREN

Born Ralph Lifshitz in New York City in 1939, the man who became “Ralph Lauren” never attended any design school at all. He worked in the fashion industry as a retailer until 1967, when he launched his own line, Polo—named for the game that promotes an ideal of “discreet elegance and style.” Lauren is credited with widening the men’s tie, making it a more flamboyant article of clothing. By 1988, he was designing an entire men’s wear line of tailored suits in the style of European fashion designers. According to Lauren himself, “I never went to fashion school—I am just a guy who had some style. I never intended this all would become what it is. I just followed my instincts.” In 1970, he won the first of eight Coty Fashion Awards.

By the 1980s, Lauren and his “Polo” emblem had transferred themselves into a multimillion dollar conglomerate, after launching his popular mesh shirt in 24 colors in 1972, his fragrance and women’s accessories line in 1975, and his women’s wear line in 1974. The 1980s saw the creation of Lauren’s home-style line, introducing home décor, luggage, and furniture.