

'Today' Is Couric's Last; Tomorrow, Her New Look

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While Katie Couric, signing off this morning after 15 years on NEC's "Today" show, will resurface on network news in September, her impressive collection of strappy sandals, formfitting tops, and shiny makeup may be gone for good.

New York stylists surmise that the popular 49-year-old newswoman will tone down her wardrobe and makeup to cultivate a more serious image in line with her new gig as anchor of the "CBS Evening News." Ms. Couric may trade her bolder outfits and hairstyles for tailored suits, classic pumps, pearl jewelry, stay-in-place hair, and matte makeup, observers say.

"She can't deliver international news in a sweater set," a director of the marketing and consulting firm Just Ask a Woman, Jennifer Drechsler, said.

Ms. Couric's "Today" wardrobe isn't appropriate for the person filling a job once held by legendary newsman Walter Cronkite, a New York-based image consultant, Samantha von



ON 'TODAY' Katie Couric signs off

ERIC LIEBOWITZ/NBC

'She Can't Deliver International News In a Sweater Set'

Sperling, said. "The morning news is a fluffier role," she said. "You can be more fashion-forward; you can wear pink frosted lip gloss. In her new role, she needs to make a stronger statement. She'll probably need to look a little more conservative, a little more structured around the edges so as not to distract from the actual delivery of the news."

Still, Ms. Couric is not about to sport boxy or dowdy suits, Ms. von Sperling, the owner Polished Social Image Consultants, said. "She has great legs, and I don't think this is the last time we're going to see them" she said. "There's nothing wrong with wearing skirt suits, as long as she's no longer pairing them with open-toe stilettos. America doesn't want her to morph into this hard, serious creature - it wouldn't be believable."

She estimates that Ms. Couric will need to purchase at least 10 designer suits, and matching shoes, which could cost more than \$30,000. Not that those brand-name outfits would set her back much, even if she didn't have a wardrobe allowance. At CBS, Ms. Couric will reportedly take home some \$15 million a year.

While Ms. Couric may be commanding a salary on par with or higher than her male counterparts, women broadcasters face more pressure to keep up appearances, Ms. von Sperling said. "Here is the unspoken rule: Anchormen are allowed to get that wise, distinguished, salt-and-pepper gray," she said, referring to the just-named anchor of World News Tonight, Charles Gibson. "For anchorwomen, that's not the case. Katie Couric will be dying her hair until she no longer wants to be an anchorwoman. Katie's a very smart cookie, and I'm sure she was aware of that when she took the job."

Aging in the spotlight is no easy feat, but customized skin care and workout regimens can make it easier, the beauty and fashion director of the lifestyles magazine *More*, Lois Joy Johnson, said. Ms. Couric has appeared on the cover of *More*, a *Ladies' Home Journal* spin-off for women in their 40s and 50s. "Most women over 40 in the public eye know that good skincare, a toned body, a few highlights, and a good night's sleep can do more than all the makeup in Sephora," Ms. Johnson said, naming a cosmetics mega-store. "I'll bet Katie's got a great dermatologist, a great colorist and hairstylist on her speed-dial, but the fashion aspect is all her own."

Updating Ms. Couric's look will be "a

collective effort," likely comprising wardrobe specialists, hair stylists, and makeup artists, a New York makeup artist, Jessica Liebeskind, said.

Ms. Liebeskind, who has made up "Today Show" guests on about a dozen occasions, recommends that Ms. Couric wear makeup that matches her natural coloring, and limit the use of shimmery shadows and blushes.

Not that Ms. Couric's career hinges on her makeup application, she said. "Katie's really evolved so beautifully over the years," Ms. Liebeskind, whose celebrity clients include runway model Heidi Klum and a "Sopranos" actress, Lorraine Bracco, said. "As she transitions into the next stage of her career, I think viewers will continue to embrace her for the talented broadcaster she is - whether or not she chooses more conservative style of makeup. She'll always be 'America's Sweetheart.'"

Ms. Drechsler of Just Ask A Woman said she is optimistic that Ms. Couric, who will be the first woman to be a solo evening news anchor, will help change some of the received ideas about what women in broadcast journalism. "Maybe she'll be the first woman to go gray on the evening news," she said. "If Katie was brave enough to get a colonoscopy on camera, then she's brave enough to get a wrinkle on television."