# CEO Minutes: A Video Conversation with Christopher Schafer, Proprietor of Christopher Schafer Clothier and Founder of Sharp Dressed Man

*Designing award-winning custom suits that empower men to feel their best*

Christopher Schafer is the proprietor of Christopher Schafer Clothier, and the founder of Sharp Dressed Man. Trained in London, Christopher has earned a reputation as one of Baltimore’s premier tailors and fashion designers, receiving numerous recognitions as “Best Tailor” (*Baltimore City Paper*), “Best Men’s Tailor” (*Baltimore Magazine*, Fashion Awards MD), and Fashion Designer of the Year (RAW Baltimore). Their clients have included professional athletes, TV personalities, business leaders, and many others.

Christopher’s other organization, Sharp Dressed Man, began as a partnership between the Baltimore Fashion Alliance and the Living Classrooms Foundation with the aim of helping men re-enter the workforce. Sharp Dressed Man provides recycled suits and presentation skills training to low-income men preparing for job interviews.

Christopher runs both organizations with his son, Seth.

**OFFIT KURMAN: In addition to your clothing career, you’re also a professional drummer. How did the music world lead you to start your own suit company?**

CHRISTOPHER SCHAFER: I think that music and fashion really go together. They go together very well; they always have—but that’s to say that every client of mine is a musician. It’s just that that’s an influence on me. I find that when you’re doing some sort of a creative art form for a living, you have to have this blend of the creative sense and a business sense. I come from a place where I was the guy who was in the band, but I was also the band manager. I ran the rehearsal studio. I’ve always had an entrepreneurial side as well as a creative side; it just finally wasn’t until I started my own business that I was really able to take full control of everything.

**Q. How did you find that start?**

A. It was fall of 2007. My wife is a mechanical engineer for the Army Research Lab and her work was giving us the opportunity to go move to London. We were newly married and thought this could be a great opportunity to try and go over there. I was very fortunate that there was a headhunter who saw my résumé and kind of took me under his wing. It was interesting because he was younger than me. He was probably like 10 years younger than me. He was like, “Look, if you’re willing to hustle and you’re willing to learn, then this could be something for you.” At that point I was so sick of being the house husband that I was willing to pretty much do anything. It was the right time, right place, and [I had an] open mind.

I think that’s a big thing but it also went back to self-discipline. I think that’s a revolving story of my life—and a lot of people’s lives: What are you going to do with it now that you have it up and running? I was in another country and, by being removed from Baltimore, being in a foreign city, being somewhere where I didn’t know anyone, it made me really personally responsible to me. I was going to earn my success or I was going to earn my failure, and I didn’t want to fail. It was very challenging to be in London, calling people about making suits for them with an American accent. I realized I had to get really good, really fast, if I was going to survive.