

Case studies

Would you outfit your Porsche with cheap rims? Of course not. Then don't bring down a deal-closing suit with a bag worthy of a bike messenger

For the Greatest Generation, the briefcase was a sign that a man had pulled himself up from blue-collar ranks and into the executive realm. "It was an instant status symbol, yet they all looked the same," says Jan-Patrick Schmitz, president and CEO of Montblanc North America. "Today's briefcase is an accessory that allows for a tremendous amount of personal expression." When selecting a bag, you need to answer two questions: Do you prefer a hard case, or an unconstructed bag like those below? And is your style conservative or contemporary? If you're reluctant to bid farewell to your trusty backpack, consider what Mario Puzo wrote in *The Godfather*: "A lawyer with a briefcase can steal more than a thousand men with guns." AMY LEVIN-EPSTEIN



FINE | Cole Haan Collection A Line Brief (\$1,875) Two artisans in Italy laser-cut and then hand-sew the calfskin used for this bag, a blend of modern technology and old-world craftsmanship. The case has different sizes of pockets to hold your PDA and business cards, and a zippered compartment for valuable items. colehaan.com

FINER | Louis Vuitton Taiga Line (\$1,500 to \$5,550) Taiga is the Keith Richards of leathers: rough in appearance but built to last. This grained cowhide is resistant to water, pen marks, and sun damage. The Moskova (shown, \$1,700) features two large compartments and several patch pockets for smaller items. vuitton.com

FINEST | Montblanc Custom Leather Alligator (\$15,000) The bag is constructed from two alligator skins and takes four master craftsmen 12 hours to produce. One cuts, one assembles, one stitches, and one gives it a "final look." The last artisan's initials—a luxe quality-control tag—are embossed inside each bag. montblanc.com