

Mona Elyafi | ILDK Media

# Freedom from Convention

**"I love to dress, it gets me in working mode."**

**Tag Heuer watch:** Elyafi's mother worked in a Tag Heuer watch store, giving Elyafi easy access. "Everybody had to have one in the '80s."



**Belt:** "It's a men's belt, but it works."



**Ralph Lauren blazer, Tommy Hilfiger scarf:** A designer jacket and a scarf can be enough to dress up a casual outfit. Elyafi believes in buying quality brands, but keeps an eye out for sales.

**"Fony Milkman" iPhone case:** A tongue-in-cheek homage to that 1979 innovation, the Sony Walkman.



**J. M. Weston loafers:** Elyafi can't wear high heels because of post-surgery back problems. She's willing to pay a little more for these classic French-made flats in multiple colors because they last.

**M**ONA Elyafi, founder and chief executive of **ILDK Media**, doesn't care for labels. She is married to a woman, but isn't interested in labeling herself gay, or bisexual. Elyafi was born in Lebanon and raised in Paris, and now holds dual U.S. and French citizenship.

Elyafi flouted the conventions of corporate labels in naming her company, which she runs from her Los Feliz apartment. People assume ILDK stands for international something or other. The letters are actually the initials from her grandmother, Irene Louise Dieu Khordoc.

ILDK has come to specialize in PR campaigns for the LGBTQ and Latino markets. She represented openly lesbian actor **Michelle Bonilla** when Bonilla was invited as a celebrity guest at the Dinah Shore Weekend in Palm Springs,

self-described as "The Largest Girl Party Music Festival in the World." Superstar guests have included **Lady Gaga** and **Katy Perry**. That connection brought Elyafi her biggest client: The Dinah Shore festival itself.

Elyafi's frequent publicity work with celebrity lesbians introduced her to her least favorite label of the moment: "celesbian." In fact, today's gender-bending labels may be one reason Elyafi, 46, declares herself to be happily stuck in the 1980s. Her home is a shrine to her '80s idol, the late **George Michael**.

"I know there was a lot of pain going on at the political level, but it was my music, my films – it was less complicated," she said. "It was before the Internet. Workwise, it's wonderful to be able to communicate at the click of a button,

but I hate everything else about it."

Elyafi also keeps it simple in terms of wardrobe, with a few '80s touches among classic items. She uses the French word *sportif* to describe the business casual look that works in L.A.

Elyafi rejects the stereotype of the at-home worker who spends the day in sweats or pajamas.

"I love to dress – it gets me into a working mode," she said. "To go to the supermarket, my grandfather would freshen up, and put on a little scarf. I would say, 'But you are only going to the supermarket.' He would say, 'You never know who you are going to run into.' That stayed with me, because it's so true."

– Diane Haithman