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## Image & Job

# INTERVIEWS

*Do your looks matter when getting hired?*

By  
Billy  
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Landing a job in fine economic times is a harrowing enough process, never mind when unemployment continually hovers near 9 percent. It is difficult enough to out-credential other candidates vying for the position, without having to worry about physical appearance.

But the image you project — and to a lesser extent, your looks — may be what gets you over the top and into that job.

“Image is very important, for everybody,” said Shayne Kahn, CEO of ERS Search. “If someone’s tie is crooked, you’re going to notice, if someone is unshaven or missed a hair on their face, you’re going to notice. We’re a visual society, so we notice

these things.”

These image missteps shift the interviewer’s focus off your resume and onto you, making your credentials for the job a second-thought and damaging your chances of a call back. Kahn, who conducts executive searches, coaches interviewees to dress conservatively, dark gray or navy blue suit, don’t wear a lot of makeup and look professional.

“You don’t want them to remember what you wore, you want them to remember what you said. You want them to remember you,” Kahn said. “You don’t want to stand out, you want your resume to stand out.”

Comparisons between job interviews and first dates are

inevitable. You get dressed up, you’re nervous and you’re trying to impress the person across the table, or desk, from you. It’s a nerve-racking experience, especially as you go on interview after interview without securing that coveted position. Candidates may seek that extra bump to finally get hired, even if it means going under the knife.

“People want to do whatever they can do to maintain that competitive edge,” said Dr. Adam Schaffner, a Manhattan-based plastic surgeon. “In reality people are judged based on multiple factors, not only their credentials, but also their appearance and personality.”

Studies back up these claims.



Research reviewed in “Beauty Pays: Why Attractive People Are More Successful” by University of Texas economics Professor Daniel Hamermesh found that people thought to be more attractive will earn 3 to 4 percent more than those with below average looks.

This may seem like an inconsequential amount, but it can be the difference between several thousand dollars per year. That’s not to mention the finding that attractive employees get promotions quicker and advance higher.

They also get hired sooner.

“It may not necessarily be fair,” said Schaffner, “but that’s human nature.”

Schaffner said those that come into his office after continually failing to land jobs do so most often so they can regain the confidence to get back out there and continue interview after interview while staring potential rejection in the face. Most commonly clients come in for botox and similar procedures, rather than more invasive surgeries, he said.

While he always counsels patients that a procedure will not necessarily land them that job, he said he often hears positive feedback.

Studies exposing these biases doesn’t necessarily mean they occur consciously, wrote Professor Dario

Maestriperi, Ph.D. of comparative human development, evolutionary biology, and neurobiology at the University of Chicago.

“Good-looking people are more appealing as potential sex partners, and other people choose to interact with them so as to increase the chances to have sex with them,” Maestriperi wrote in an article on the studies on PsychologyToday.com.

Federal employment laws prevent employers from actively making hiring decisions based on attractiveness.

Consciously or unconsciously, Lindsay Joyce, head of marketing and spokesperson for BabyGanics, makes employment decisions based on one characteristic: credentials. Someone more concerned with superficiality would likely hurt their chances of gaining employment, she said.

“We hire, and I think that most companies that are looking to do the best for their business are hiring, based on skills, experience, intelligence and not hiring because of what somebody looks like,” said Joyce. “I know from my own experience, it’s the farthest thing from my mind what somebody looks like.”

Kahn agreed that when it comes down to it credentials carry the day.

“I think at the end of the day, the

corporations want the person that brings the best experience to the table,” Kahn added.

Joyce said she wants to be impressed when a candidate walks through the door.

“What I’m looking for is someone who’s outgoing, who is intelligent, who has the ability to use their background and experience and leverage it to add to our company and help it grow,” said Joyce. “I’m looking for someone who is tenacious and committed, not afraid to speak their minds, someone who is not timid, but really someone who is a critical thinker.”

But what if the candidates have equal credentials, equal resumes?

“I think the person that shows they are going to take care of themselves better is probably the person,” said Kahn.

But do not think you are wasting time and money during your college years, nothing outweighs a diploma. While more attractive people may earn 3 to 4 percent more at a job, someone with a bachelor’s degree can earn 38 percent more than someone with a high school diploma.

“If someone lacks the necessary credentials for a position,” Schaffner said, “they can be the most stunningly beautiful person in the world, but they’re not going to get the job.”

In the end, credentials win.