

Beauty Earns a Bonus

Last month, Deirdre Macken from the Australian Financial Review produced a double page spread article on the impact looking good can have on your pay packet. Business is also starting to notice the benefits of a healthy workforce.

Survival of the fittest is developing new connotations in the 21st century workplace. It's not just about your qualifications. It's also how you look. As economists, employers and health professionals begin to drill down into the role appearances play in the workforce, they are discovering some ugly secrets. Beauty pays more for men than for women. Tall men tend to dominate the top 100 boardrooms and good looking sales people sell more but beautiful lawyers earn even more!



The role appearances play in getting a job, winning promotions and securing pay increases is under investigation partly because it exposes another form of discrimination – the beauty bonus. It's on the radar even more because more jobs are influenced by appearances, whether they are sales jobs, service jobs or work

that involves dealing with clients and managing staff.

You don't need to be Einstein to realise that the world we live in is highly visual and the workplace is full of first impressions. Jonathan Walmsley of Dolman Legal Search and Recruitment doesn't resile from the impact of beauty in the recruitment process. In terms of being able to get a job, appearances matter, he says, because it's all about first impressions. They have to look the part, dress appropriately and look reasonably attractive. Once in the job, it's more about the skills. But then there is also the issue of promotion. Do you look like you can cut the next level? Management will believe whatever they see.

But if skills win over beauty, how come a study in the *journal of labour economics* found that beauty impacts legal salaries more than any other profession – giving lawyers a beauty premium of 12%?

Lawyers are not just technicians. They are constantly building and maintaining client relationships. First impressions make an impact over and over again.

If human capital is a company's main asset, it should come as no surprise that many organisations are training their staff in dress and grooming standards along with behavioural codes.

Social psychologist, Michael Platow who has worked on the psychology of leadership says we see status in certain appearances. We still on the whole, listen to the man, we still listen to the white man and we listen to the beautiful person. While we defer to beauty, height, maleness and whiteness for unjustifiable reasons, our deference to those generic winners helps entrench their position in both society and in jobs.

Platow says 'we do know that people listen to attractive people more, they give them the floor more often and give them more of a chance to influence people so they'll at least be seen and heard, whereas others might not.'

If beauty and a fit body are signatures of status, then it doesn't surprise that professionals are sweating laps around city parks, booking cosmetic procedures and investing in professional image advisors.

The Image Quest team work with organisations to ensure that your people in client facing roles are managing first impressions and protecting the business branding. Our client list: <http://www.imagequest.com.au/professional-image-clients.php>