

## Financial Post

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# Good looks can get you that job, promotion and raise

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Despite the sophisticated advances in hiring and compensation practices, it appears your appearance, and particularly looks, still matter.

Gill Corkindale's blog on the Harvard Business Review blog titled *Exploiting Beauty in the Workplace* notes that Catherine Hakim, a professor of sociology at the London School of Economics, and author of *Erotic Capital: The Power of Attraction in the Boardroom and the Bedroom*, suggests professional women should use their "erotic capital" — beauty, sex appeal, charm, dress sense, liveliness, and fitness — to advance their careers.

Hakim is an expert on women's employment and theories of a woman's place in society. The "beauty premium" is an important economic factor in women's careers, Hakim says, citing a U.S. survey that found good-looking lawyers earn 10% to 12% more than less attractive colleagues. Moreover, she says, an attractive person is more likely to land a job in the first place, and then be promoted.

"Meritocracies are supposed to champion intelligence, qualifications, and experience. But physical and social attractiveness deliver substantial benefits in all social interaction — making a person more persuasive, able to secure the co-operation of colleagues, attract customers and sell products," Corkindale quotes from Hakim's column for a London newspaper.

Other research has shown that individuals tend to find attractive people more intelligent, friendly and competent than less attractive people. A University of British Columbia study found that people identify the personality traits of people who are physically attractive more accurately than others during short encounters. The study conducted by Jeremy Biesanz, Lauren Human and Genevieve Lorenzo, showed a positive bias toward attractive people.

"If people think Jane is beautiful, and she is very organized and somewhat generous, people will see her as more organized and generous than she really is," Biesanz writes. The researchers say this is because people are motivated to pay closer attention to beautiful people.

Another study by Duke University researchers John Graham, Campbell Harvey and Manju Puri found CEOs are more likely than to be rated as competent looking than other employees. The team found that CEOs rated competent just by their appearance tended to have higher incomes.

A Tufts University study by psychologists Nicholas Rule and Nalini Ambady found a random sample of people could rate the competence, dominance, likeability, maturity and trustworthiness just by examining the facial photographs of CEOs.

Finally, researchers Elaine Wong at the University of Wisconsin and her colleagues at The London Business School examined the faces of CEOs and determined that those with wider faces had better performing companies than those with narrow faces.

It seems physical appearance is a significant factor in the hiring, compensation, competence and performance of chief executives, as much as we would like to think it doesn't.

Ray Williams is President of Ray Williams Associates, a Vancouver based company providing leadership training, mentoring and executive coaching.

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