

Bulletin Board: To get ink or piercings? That is the question

by Amy_Winter

Job-seekers may want to reconsider going under the needle for a piercing or tattoo when it comes to finding a job. Eighty-five percent of respondents feel that tattoos and body piercings hinder a person's job search, according to a survey of 468 U.S. employees by Vault.com, a career publisher. However, only 16 percent of the respondents had an official policy against tattoos and piercings at their companies.

Mark Oldman, Vault's co-founder and co-president, says there is uncertainty in the workplace when it comes to self-expression. The doubt stems from a combination of the workplace's casual ways of expression and pop culture's idea that tattoos and body piercings are an edgy vehicle of self-expression.

Creative businesses are likely to be more lenient, while more conservative companies may have stricter rules. Oldman recommends employees conceal tattoos and piercings until they know whether their workplace tolerates them.

"In the workplace there are still preconceptions and misconceptions about those who wear tattoos and body piercings," says Oldman. "You don't want to send the wrong message at the wrong time."

Forty-two percent of the respondents admitted to having either a tattoo and/or body piercing (besides pierced ears). Of this group, 40 percent had one or more tattoos and 20 percent had one or more piercings. Fifty-three percent choose to conceal their tattoos and body piercings while at work. And only 2 percent have been fired or disciplined due to their body art.

Answers varied in how body art is perceived by co-workers and bosses. Sixty-four percent think tattoos and/or piercings hinder the opinions of co-workers and employers, while 2 percent believe it helps opinions in the workplace. And 34 percent feel it has no effect on those at work.

Oldman suggests that job-seekers with body art approach a job interview with caution in terms of the way they present themselves.

"Job-seekers are looking for any advantage for a job," says Oldman. "Why openly display a tattoo in an environment that may or may not be open to it?"

For more information on the survey visit www.vault.com.

SUMMER BUSINESS WARDROBE TIPS

Business casual dressing becomes more difficult when the temperatures rise. What is both presentable in the office and comfortable in the warmer temperatures? Are stockings required under skirts and dresses?

It is probably best to determine whether your company has a formal policy on clothing suitable for warmer weather, according to Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources for Careerbuilder.com. T-shirts and sandals may not be part of the attire. If the company lacks a formal dress code, employees should consider these questions before shopping for a new summer wardrobe:

- Is the industry I work in usually conservative?

- What is my office environment?

- What kind of image am I trying to project?

- Do I spend a lot of time with customers?

Bright colors are popular during the spring and summer season. Haefner recommends bringing more color into your work attire. Adding a colorful scarf or pin brings a touch of summer, but don't wear all of the same bright colors. It is overwhelming if an employee wears a pink shirt, skirt, shoes and handbag.

If you choose to wear white and lacy clothing, make sure to wear proper undergarments in order to avoid overexposure. Haefner also suggests having a cardigan or blazer at your desk; it keeps you warm in the air conditioning and dresses up an outfit for a meeting.

Some summer clothing and accessory items fall in the gray area; check with your employer before adding these to your office wardrobe:

- Sandals and open-toed shoes.

- Capri pants and gauchos.

- Polos and T-shirts.

- Big, trendy jewelry.

Haefner suggests leaving these clothes at home: denim shorts, short skirts, halters, strapless or tank tops, flip-flops, beachwear, midriff-bearing clothing, T-shirts with offensive slogans and workout attire.

For more information visit www.careerbuilder.com.

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