

Study: Attractiveness pays off at work, but there's a trick to leveling the playing field

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Beautiful people are more likely to get hired, receive better performance evaluations and get paid more—but it's not just because of their good looks, according to new research from the University at Buffalo School

of Management.

The study, forthcoming in *Personnel Psychology*, was recently published online. It found that while a "beauty premium" exists across professions, it's partially because attractive people develop distinct traits as a result of how the world responds to their attractiveness. They build a greater sense of [power](#) and have more opportunities to improve nonverbal communication skills throughout their lives.

"We wanted to examine whether there's an overall bias toward beauty on the job, or if attractive people excel professionally because they're more effective communicators," says Min-Hsuan Tu, Ph.D., assistant professor of organization and human resources in the UB School of Management. "What we found was that while good looking people have a greater sense of power and are better nonverbal communicators, their less-attractive peers can level the playing field during the [hiring process](#) by adopting a powerful posture."

The researchers conducted two studies that evaluated 300 elevator pitches of participants in a mock job search. In the first study, managers determined the good-looking people to be more hireable because of their more effective nonverbal presence.

In the second study, the researchers asked certain participants to strike a "power pose" by standing with their feet shoulder-width apart, hands on hips, chest out and chin up during their pitch. With this technique, the less attractive people were able to match the level of nonverbal presence that their more attractive counterparts displayed naturally.

"By adopting the physical postures associated with feelings of power and confidence, less attractive people can minimize behavioral differences in the job search," says Tu. "But power posing is not the only solution—anything that can make you feel more powerful, like doing a

confidence self-talk, visualizing yourself succeeding, or reflecting on past accomplishments before a social evaluation situation can also help."

More information: Min-Hsuan Tu et al, Is beauty more than skin deep? Attractiveness, power, and nonverbal presence in evaluations of hirability, *Personnel Psychology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1111/peps.12469](https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12469)

Provided by University at Buffalo

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