

It's How You Look in Person



There are all sorts of dating websites out there that might shock you. Ones that are exclusively for millionaires, ones where people will pay tuition in exchange for a relationship, and ones like beautifulpeople.com, where membership is exclusively limited to the “attractive”.

The process: choose your hottest photo, click upload, and before you know it a global community of beautiful people will have democratically decided by majority click of the mouse whether you're Kobe beef, or chopped liver.

Why write about online dating on an HR blog? Recently, beautifulpeople.com introduced a [recruitment section](#) on their website that provides membership with exclusive access to job postings, and employers with exclusive access to a unique pool of candidates.

Your knee-jerk reaction may be to say:

1. That's not right
2. That's illegal, or
3. That's discriminatory

You might be surprised at the answer...

That's not Right

Many employers hire based on physical attributes, and appearance. Abercrombie and Fitch's "Look Policy" has become infamous in the news for stipulating the appearances of employees in great detail (You can read more about it [here](#)). Many companies recruiting for positions that interact face-to-face with clients will either intentionally or unintentionally favour more “attractive” candidates. Whether or not these policies and practices are “right” is debatable, the reality is that they are pervasive.

That's Illegal

[The Ontario Human Rights Code](#) prohibits discrimination based upon many things such as: ancestry, age, sex, religion, marital status, gender, etc. How somebody looks, so long as it is not related to one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination, is a legally acceptable reason to hire a person. The same would apply for terminations,

so long as proper notice or severance is provided.

That's Discriminatory

One of the goals of HR professionals when recruiting is to tap into large, diverse talent pools, thereby maximizing the chances of filling the unique needs of the organization. The act of recruiting based upon looks is not directly discriminatory, but it is preclusive. For example, a manager who finds beards to be unattractive may unknowingly be turning away people who grow beards for faith-based reasons, such as Muslims, Jews, Amish, etc. In a similar regard, the users of beautiful people.com might unintentionally exclude persons whose physical appearance is different because of a disability, or because someone is outside of the age demographic of the users. These types of hypothetical situations are instances of [systemic discrimination](#) – broad based institutional policies or practices that perpetuate a disadvantage to a group. In this regard, the exclusion of a group protected under human rights legislation, whether intentional or not could constitute discrimination.

HR managers employing an aesthetic recruitment strategy should be mindful of how such a decision might affect the reputation of their business. Ultimately, the membership of beautifulpeople.com may democratically choose who is worthy of their websites privileges, but so too does the public democratically choose who is worthy of their business.