

## Facial Piercings | bizMe

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Look around you. How many people have some kind of in-your-face piercing? No, I'm not talking about the girl across from you with her cartilage pierced. How many have their nose pierced? What about tongue? Eyebrow? Lip? Septum?

What are the odds the new bizgal will have a lip ring? Have facial piercings become an acceptable concession for employers?



### **That all-important first impression**

"I don't think I would say that employer's find the [above piercings] as acceptable," says Scott Andersohn of Water's Edge Coaching, a career coaching center in Illinois. "I think that in larger metro areas employers might be more accepting but I would hardly say it is acceptable. The type of work being done has a significant impact on the acceptability too. Backroom operations such as IT, administration, or telephone customer support are likely to be more accepting than positions that have direct interaction with customers or even senior levels of management. Right now there is so much talent actively looking for work that employers have their choice of who they hire. To me that makes the choice for any job seeker one between personal expression versus reduced employment opportunities."

"By the way, I hate giving that answer personally, but it is the way of the world today," Andersohn says.

Herma Schmitz, principal of Executive Life Coaching, has a similar viewpoint; it depends on your work environment.

"I don't think they have become acceptable compromises for employers," Schmitz says. "It depends on where I want to be employed. Every organization or even industry has ethical values that are still shaping the acceptable expressions. If I want to work at Morgan Stanley, it will not go over well to have rings through my nose and ears or even wear jeans to work. If I want a career in Hip Hop that might get me the job."

Schmitz also says some employers will think facial piercings would give their companies a negative outward perception, while others would not.

"It depends on who I am, and the audience I am involved with," Schmitz says.

Shannon Graham, motivational speaker, author, and life coach of 321lifecoach.com says the solution to the piercing problem is very simple, "it's about understanding both sides of the table." But Graham also mentions that first and foremost "any piercing that interferes in anyway with an employee's communication or focus should be off the table that is a no brainer."

The employee must understand a few things, by taking out their piercing if need be they are not necessarily giving up who they are. This is important to keep in mind, the piercing does not make you, you as an individual make it. Second of all, from a legal standpoint an employer has the right to decide the dress code of their employees. So if you as an employee are not happy with how the company works or their dress code, maybe you are in the wrong career field. Your career ultimately should be a place that allows you to express who you are, not hold it back.

On the other side employers to a degree have to understand that times are changing. The face of business is

changing figuratively and literally. My belief is that with the state of the global economy the way it is an employer should be focused on one thing and one thing only, and that is results. Giving employees some freedom allows them to feel valued, makes them feel like they matter. When you have employees that feel that way they have a tendency to produce better work.

Zuri Hadi, a full-time intern at a public relations agency says she used to have her nose pierced but took it out but not because she was going on interviews because it got infected.

Yes, I was concerned what my potential employer would think, Hadi says, but I would hope my resume would speak for itself. I didn't take it out because I didn't want it to close or be painful to put back in.

### **Personal expression vs. lost opportunity**

Ed Hunter, head coach of Life in Progress Coaching says facial jewelry should be taken out when interviewing.

Piercings or any other obvious adornment (even excessive jewelry) can take the interviewer's attention off of what is most important: that is, what you have to say, Hunter says. It's still true that some individuals will also make judgments about the meaning or significance of body piercings. Is this fair? No. Do people do it? Sure. If you want to reduce the risk of losing a job offer because of stupid assumptions, take the piercings out while interviewing.

Not only affecting the way you look, but also the way you speak, is the tongue ring. Dun dun dun. How would that go over in the work place?

### **The pierced tongue . . .**

I think employers will automatically assume a tongue piercing is a hindrance, Andersohn says. I think if you can demonstrate it doesn't hinder effective communication it will become less of a concern. I know I'm sounding like a broken record here but you are stacking the odds against you a bit. You are asking an employer to revise their point of view to meet yours and that is more of a challenge today than it has been in the past.

Schmitz has an opinion that diverges slightly from Andersohn's. Schmitz thinks it's okay, as long as you don't show anyone.

As long as somebody can communicate in a way that the audience gets the message, I don't think it matters if they have their tongue pierced and I suggest they don't stick it out.

The consensus is it really depends where you're working. Young biz girls should err on the side of caution; it's better to be safe than sorry and if you really can't part with your facial accoutrements, talk to your boss.

Hunter closes, One thing for sure: employers that are uncomfortable with them won't call you back. And employer that do hire you won't have a problem!