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PUTTING BEST FACE FORWARD

Job hunters fight appearance of aging

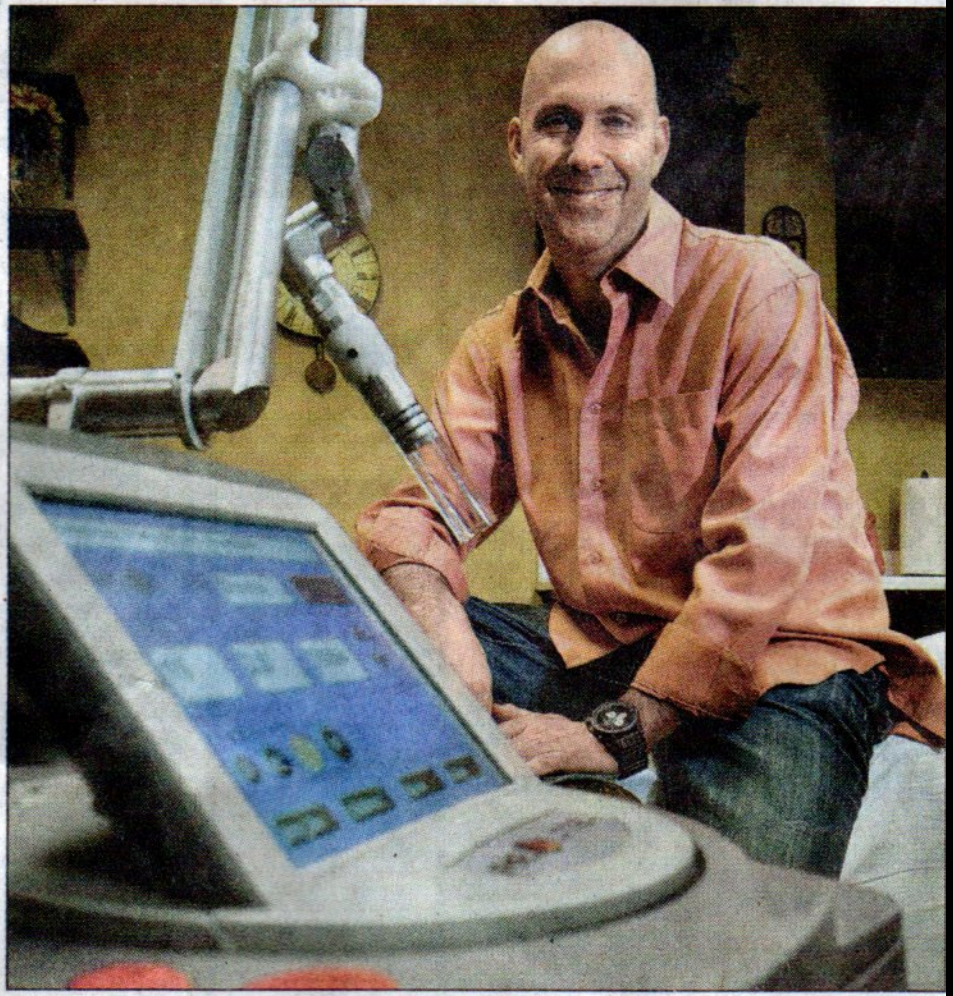
By Patricia Bathurst

SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

A 2006 MetLife national survey of aging workers indicates that employees between 55 and 59 blame age bias nearly 40 percent of the time to explain fruitless job searches.

That tallies with an experiment done by the Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston College that says applicants younger than 50 were 42 percent more likely to be called for a job interview than older candidates.

"The 20-something associate in human resources may not see a candidate's experience and competence in good perspective," said Tony Reynes of Tesar Reynes, a Chicago-based recruitment firm. "And you know, there's an old-looking and a young-looking 50."



In short, it's not solely your appearance, it's how your appearance is perceived that can make a difference in job prospects, especially for candidates of a "mature" age range.

And with unemployment for workers over 55 at about 5 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it may be more than a coincidence that facial-rejuvenation procedures are on the rise.

Louis Silberman, president and CEO of the Physicians' Skin Institute, a med-spa center, and National Laser Institute, a laser and medical-aesthetics training program, says that business at the sister Scottsdale institutions was up more than 300 percent over six months.

Physicians' Skin Institute offers an array of skin treatments, from laser hair removal to photo facials and microdermabrasion and peels. Many of the treatments are also offered at a discount at NLI for those willing to have students perform the service.

"Some say a more youthful appearance might increase your chances (of a positive job interview) by as much as 30 percent," Silberman said. "This bad economy's been

Louis Silberman says business is booming at his Physicians' Skin Institute and National Laser Institute in Scottsdale.

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good for our business.”

Regardless of the state of the economy, no one can deny that first impressions are important in business, said Deborah Bateman, executive vice president with National Bank of Arizona.

“I think it's important to eliminate any distractions from your skills and capabilities,” said Bateman, who regularly has oxygen facials at G Studio in Phoenix. “You always have to sell a first impression.”

Jim Poole, a managing director at Malandro Communications Inc. in Scottsdale, believes in a healthy appearance, which equates with looking

“like you have energy and vitality.”

To look healthier, Poole became a client at Physicians' Skin Institute, where treatments helped erase a series of veins across his face.

“I'm not shooting for beauty,” Poole said, “but it gave my skin a healthier appearance and it was noticeable. People have said, ‘You're looking great.’”

An accountant based in Scottsdale, Catherine Peresini, has had facial treatments to give her face a more youthful glow. She touts the benefits of the procedure at a time when the job market is so competitive.

“This is a youth-driven society (and) there are sometimes 300 applicants even for a bookkeeping job,” she said. “If you look younger, you can enter an interview with much more confidence.”

That seems to be the key: the confidence that comes with looking your best, Reynes said.

“It's not just your face. ... It's not about age, it's attitude,” he said.

Costs

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, age-discrimination filings last year hit an all-time high, up 29 percent from 2006. But age discrimination is almost impossible to prove.

Louis Silberman, president and CEO of the Physicians' Skin Institute and the National Laser Institute in Scottsdale, suggests that older job candidates consider addressing sun damage, especially around the neck and eyes, very dry skin leading to a “tired” appearance, deep frown or laugh lines, and excess facial hair.

Prices for skin treatments vary, and depend on whether you select a basic salon or medical spa for services.

» Facials range from about around \$90 to around \$200 and more for an oxygen facial. Photofacials run about \$400 and up.

» Micropeels (which do not erase wrinkles, but help promote a “healthier” look) begin as low as \$75.

» Microdermabrasion costs from \$75 to more than \$200 per session.

» Botox treatments start at about \$200.