

# Tattoos in the different professions



Tattoos In The Workplace Sarah Jo Phillips COM/150 December 19, 2009

Kathleen D'Aprix In some professions, having visible tattoos is completely taboo and in others it is not only accepted, but embraced. What it boils down to is the level of trust the job requires. Tattoos can mean nothing to an observer, or they could mean everything. Those in professional industry such as doctors, lawyers and teachers are expected to be professionals and dress in a certain manor.

The most basic mistake new employees make is under dressing," says Randall Hansen, a professor of business at Stetson University in Deland, Fla. " If unsure, dress conservatively. The best way to avoid a problem is to understand the corporate culture," (Reeves). Dressing conservatively means to not display yourself outlandishly or draw too much attention. Tattoos are like a piece of clothing that cannot be taken off. A doctor or lawyer or investment banker deals with a lot of money and appearance says a lot about a person.

A client or patient probably would not put too much trust or money in someone that looks like a biker. On that same token, in a body shop or at a factory displaying a tattoo is not such a no-no. In these manual labor professions, it is often hot, sweaty, physically taxing work and short sleeves are the norm in which case some tattoos will be visible most of the time. What about those high powered attorneys that do have tattoos? " It's a 'don't ask, don't tell' understanding," says Boston lawyer Dave Kimelberg, who works as general counsel for a venture capital firm. Kimelberg sticks to tattoos he can easily conceal under clothing at work -- in his case, three-quarter " ink sleeves" that extend from each shoulder to the middle of his

forearms but allow him to roll up his shirt sleeves on warm days,”

(Goodman). This example is the most effective way to deal with the issue.

Instead of making it a controversial subject, just keep them covered up. With the changing times, how much have employers really changed their way of thinking?

In the past, a suit and tie was the appropriate attire for going to work in most professions. Women were supposed to wear dresses if they even had a job. Now, the general workplace is more casual. Most places that require a professional dress code allow just about any type of shirt as long as it has a collar. In many cases, gone are the days of having a starched white shirt and tie, now a basic polo shirt is the norm. That being said, a job is done by a person, not by what they look like.

However, “ the laws still tend to support employer dress code/appearance policies in general and employers retain some flexibility in creating rules that require employees to present themselves in a way that is consistent with the employer's image,” (Gross). Possibly the greatest example of this swing in attire is in the big time retail sales industry. Fifty years ago it would be unheard of if a salesman at a major department store went to work without a tie, if not a jacket. Today, places like Sears, Macy's, Dillard's, etc only require a polo shirt with the company insignia on it.

The service industry is not about personal appearance; it is about getting things done. Employees in the service industry are given more freedom in their dress code because appearance is not everything. If something breaks, the customer wants it fixed right and done fast. As long as those two criteria

are met, they could care less what the technician looks like. On the other hand, would you trust the brain surgeon that has tattoos across his knuckles? Probably not. That is because there is a lot more trust put into that surgeon than there is in that mechanic.

In white collar professions tattoos can prevent clientele from using your business. If you walked into your child's third grade class and saw that the teacher had tattoos on his hands, chances are you would probably not like it very much. In white collar society tattoos are still a taboo that most are not willing to test. The image that comes to mind when most of society thinks of a highly successful CEO or lawyer does not include tattoos. The only way to accurately answer the question of acceptability of tattoos in the workplace is to consider each situation on a case by case basis.

In some professions they are not a problem at all while in others they can cause friction between staff members and management. There is not a single answer to the question because it is all about how they fit within the structure of the specific work environment. There are many factors in what is and is not acceptable in the workplace. Between the amount of contact between an employee and the clientele, the amount of professionalism involved in the position, the norms of the profession and the position itself, having a tattoo can make or break a potential job. Getting a tattoo is a conscious act, that being said, think before you ink and your let your own judgments tell you whether or not to get that visible tattoo.

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