Beauty Tips an Employee Can Do Without

News
3.10.14

Jim McDonald offered insight in the *NY Times* article entitled "Beauty Tips an Employee Can Do Without."

In the article, readers submit their workplace conundrums and seek advice from professionals.

Reader Question: My sister, who is 61, is constantly pressured by her boss to dye her hair, and even to get Botox, to achieve what her boss considers a more professional appearance. In addition to being very good at her job, my sister is actually quite attractive and always impeccably put together. There is nothing unprofessional about her appearance, and the "flaws" that her boss perceives are simply natural signs of aging that, if anything, are less apparent in my sister than in most people. So far, she hasn't given in. But I fear that she may eventually do so, because of the nagging and the insecurity that it causes her. How would you advise her?

Jim's advice:
The law doesn't prohibit employers from making, say, hiring decisions based on attractiveness, and in situations involving public-facing employees (a TV weatherman, for instance), "this kind of request might not be so peculiar." But a manager encouraging changes in a worker's physical appearance without any business reason for doing so could risk a claim of harassment, he said. Or age discrimination could be contended if the employee is over 40, if the changes involve looking more youthful, and if the worker attributes subsequent setbacks to a refusal to comply.

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