

# 10 YEARS OFF IN 10 DAYS

Amid pressure to keep a youthful edge, more businesswomen are spending their holiday break with their plastic surgeon.

BY SUZANNE GLEASON

**Y**ou probably wouldn't think twice if one of your company's rising or higher-ranking denizens didn't show up for the company's holiday party this year. Or returned to work looking considerably more refreshed, rejuvenated and energized than you remember seeing her. You (or she) might chalk it up to two weeks of R & R at St. Bart's or 10 days of detox and yoga at Canyon Ranch. But it might be something else entirely. "The winter holidays are my busiest times – they book up in July," says Tony Youn, M.D., a cosmetic surgeon in Detroit. "It's an easy time for executives to take off because co-workers will assume they've been on vacation. When they return two weeks later most of the swelling or bruising will have gone and they'll just be looking good."

It's a business fact of life. The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery reports that surgical and nonsurgical cosmetic procedures increased by 44 percent in 2004 to a total of nearly 11.9 million – 90 percent of them on women. And a recent survey by Aziz, a leading British executive communications company, found that one in four women would consider cosmetic surgery to boost her career.

Even though a woman's achievements, experience, skills and performance are primary factors leading her to professional success, the appearance she projects is key. "It may not be fair, but women are held up to a much higher standard than men are," Youn notes. "Some of the most powerful men in business are 70 years old and pretty dumpy-looking. How often do you see

a dumpy-looking 70-year-old woman in an equivalent position?" To put it more bluntly: Most believe a woman who keeps her look up to date is just keeping a smart, competitive edge in today's ever-changing job market.

To wit: The majority of professional women who do opt for surgery – be it face-lifts and eyelid surgery or less invasive cosmetic procedures like fillers, peels or Botox – tend to be generally secure and fulfilled. It's less about morphing into a "babe" than about projecting the more youthful, energetic professional within. When Greta Van Susteren, one of the most successful and respected reporters on television, went public with her surgery to remove under-eye bags (and, suspect many surgeons, a tad more than that), she brought plastic surgery out of the closet for professional women. Suddenly, it was no longer a vanity-driven cliché for aging actresses or *Baywatch* wannabes. "Greta's transformation was not about looking transformed or younger as much as about not looking quite so beat up anymore," says New Orleans dermatologist Mary Lupo, M.D., who, at 51, freely admits to having resurfacing laser treatments and injected fillers herself. "There's a difference between looking old and looking tired, worried and uncertain. I think Greta did it for the right reasons. It's clear she valued herself as a person but opted to do it because she was looking a little drawn and tired."

We tend to feel a certain age within. Many women hit their stride – personal and professional – in their mid-30s or early 40s, when we feel an empowering synergy of youth, success and