

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

## Entertainment

[Front Page](#) > [Entertainment](#) > [Books](#)

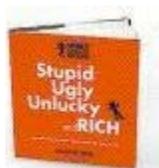
BOOKS

### Beauty doesn't always bring in the bucks

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Richard St. John names these successful people in his book, clockwise from top left, Barbra Streisand, Rupert Murdoch, Matt Groening and Bill Gates.



"I apologize for calling them ugly," he said. "In fact, I think they are just average, but there's an inverse relationship between looks and success. The uglier they are, the richer they are."  
Richard St. John

We all know Ugly Betty, especially now that America Ferrera has picked up a Golden Globe for portraying her in the TV series of the same name.

But did you know this about Ugly Betty - her number is legion. Perhaps not among Hollywood celebrities or on runways, but among some of this country's most successful people. At least that's the theory proposed by Richard St. John in his book "Stupid, Ugly, Unlucky and Rich: Spike's Guide to Success." (Train of Thought Arts, \$34.95)

St. John backs it up with conversations that he had with 500 or so luminaries in the world of business, science, the arts, religion, politics. He also scoured the Internet and other publications for quotes on success.

These are some of the people he talked to, or gathered quotes from: Rudolph Giuliani; Barbra Streisand; Russell Crowe; Martha Stewart; Norman Lear; Quincy Jones; Barenaked Ladies musician Ed Robertson; Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin; James Watson, the discoverer of DNA; Simpsons' creator Matt Groening and Ben Cohen, who gave him his first interview over a Ben & Jerry's ice cream cone.

What he found, he said, was that they made very few references to their looks.

"I'm not saying that being good looking won't get you a date, but as for success - forget it," said St. John, who names multimillionaires Rupert Murdoch and Bill Gates as examples of that principle.

"I apologize for calling them ugly," he said. "In fact, I think they are just average, but there's an inverse relationship between looks and success. The uglier they are, the richer they are."

In fact, many successful people told him they believed that if they had been better looking, they wouldn't have accomplished as much, he said.

"The ALP (average looking person) has to push themselves to be noticed and that's how they get ahead," said St. John. "While the GLP (good looking person) just stands there and gets admired. If you are good looking you settle back in your comfort zone, get the best seats at restaurants, go on dates. Many - not all - of the good looking people don't have to learn to push or work hard because early in life they are popular."

St. John said his curiosity about the topic was piqued during a plane ride 10 years ago when he sat next to a high school student who asked him if he was successful and what he'd done to get there, he said.

He didn't know how to answer her. He knew it wasn't his school grades - his 12th grade report card from Halifax West High School in Nova Scotia shows mostly 50s and 60s, he

said, and college wasn't much better.

"Still, I'm in the club of dumb millionaires," said St. John, whose Toronto-based company handles marketing and communication for BlackBerry and Nortel.

The girl's question stuck with him and he started asking people what contributed to their success. As he went through the 10 million words he collected over 10 years, he started seeing recurring traits that he put into categories.

No surprises here for the success formula: Passion, work, focus, push, ideas, persist, serve, improve.

"The book really should have been called 'The Top 8 Success Factors,' " said savvy marketer St. John, but he knew he needed a catchy title. And, now, he's riding the "Ugly Betty" wave to promote the book.

St. John's method for corraling achievers was straightforward - he went to where they are. "You pay a lot of money and go to these conferences and they are all there," he said, referring in particular to TED (Technology Entertainment Design), an annual invitation-only event for 1,000 thought leaders, movers and shakers, held in Monterey, Calif.

"You go to the conference and you go to the washroom and you beg. I'd sit in the next stall if I had to," said St. John, who once got Quincy Jones to talk with him in a hotel lobby despite his handler's protests.

That scenario exemplifies one of St. John's traits, the "push factor.

"Sometimes you don't feel like pushing yourself, but that's why mothers were invented," said St. John, who admits that he pushes beyond his lifelong shyness and self-doubt.

What he's realized through his research, he said, is that no one controls their looks, their IQ or their luck, so there's no point in focusing on them.

He does, however, admit that at one point he fell under the "looks myth" and had plastic surgery.

"I thought I should look better so I went and had a nose job, even though I'd become a millionaire without it," he said.

"Then I'd go up to people I hadn't seen for a while and ask if they noticed anything. And they'd say, "You got a haircut?"

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