

Advice for Job Seeking Older Workers

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September 10, 2008 - Nearly one million workers age 55 and older have won new jobs over the last 12 months, making it one of the only age groups that is actually experiencing employment gains. Here are some tips for older workers during their job search.

Tip #1 - Dismantle The Myths

Older job seekers should face the fact that they will probably be interviewing with someone who may be 10, 20 or even 30 years their junior. These individuals will have their own preconceptions or prejudices about older individuals that could taint their view of the candidate before the interview ever starts, which may include:

- Older people are sick more and take more leave
- They are set in their ways and therefore cannot be trained
- Younger workers and older workers will clash
- They are only looking ahead to the day they can permanently retire

Remember, that employers are not permitted to ask questions that pertain to age, but the questions may still exist in the mind of the interviewer

Be Accommodating

Throughout the interview process, do your best to accommodate the schedule of the interviewer. This may mean meeting early in the morning, in the evening or even on the weekend.

The job seeker who says she cannot come in for an interview after hours will screen herself out of the interview process immediately, regardless of age. It sends the message that once on the job she will not be willing to put in extra hours to get the work done.

Emphasize Past Examples Of Loyalty.

Although employee/employer loyalty has been severely tested over the years due to ongoing layoffs, employers still need to feel that employees are 100 percent committed to the company.

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Emphasize Relevant Experience

- The prospective employer should feel that you can hit the ground running
- It is important to convince the interviewer that age has nothing to do with learning new concepts and accepting new ways of doing things.

Demonstrate Your Flexibility And Creativity

- You want to counteract stereotypes that suggest older workers do not have imagination
- Discuss ways you solved problems and developed ideas in your most recent jobs to make your former employer more money or be more competitive.

Look and Act Young

- Everyone knows people who are 50 who look and act as if they are 65 and people who are 65 who look and act as if they are 50
- Dress in currently fashionable clothes and show enthusiasm for the opportunity
- Exhibit a sense of excitement and energy, traits that younger individuals do not always show

Stay Current And Embrace Technology.

- Do not appear as if the world has passed you by
- If you do not have at least a rudimentary understanding of computers and how they work, take a class at night
- Do not be afraid of computers. They are used in practically every application of work whether it is sales, marketing, and accounting.
- Employers cannot spend a lot of time teaching new employees how to use computers. They need employees to hit the ground running.

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Tip # 2 - Here Is What Not To Do

Do Not Apologize Or Act Defensive

- Never again say the following: "Nobody really wants to hire someone my age."
- You cannot have a defeatist attitude or it will show during the interview
- Employers want to hire people who are confident about themselves and their abilities, regardless of their age

Do Not Lead With Your Resume

- It might show that you graduated from college before your interviewer was even born
- Try to get the interview based on your experience and what you can offer the company
- You cannot omit dates from the resume or stop the chronology early, so don't try
- It is a red flag to employers that something is amiss in your work history and will prompt questions from the interviewer that will not be helpful
- The goal is that by the time the interviewer asks to see your resume, you will have already won him or her over and age will not be an issue.

Do Not Tell The Interviewer You Took Early Retirement

- You do not want to give the impression that you are thinking of retiring in a few years
 - First, it reminds them that you are older
 - Second, that the idea of retirement is more important than the job for which you are interviewing.

Do not mention accomplishments from more than 10 years ago

- Unless they are extraordinary or the only example of experience you possess that meet the employer's needs
- If you do mention a past accomplishment, talk about it as if it happened today.

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Do Not Talk Down To, Patronize, Or Become Convinced That You Could Not Work For A Younger Manager

- You do not want to make the interviewer feel that you are better than he or she
- If you have a problem working for someone younger than yourself, resolve this conflict immediately because odds are the jobs you are interviewing for involve working for people who are younger than yourself

It is a reality you have to accept and deal with properly

Leave your ego at the door and focus on finding out if the opportunity is a good fit for your skills, your needs and your temperament.

Tip # 3 - Where Older Job Seekers Are Most Welcome

Health Care

- This sector is facing major labor shortages due to retirements, heavy turnover and a decline in the number of people entering the field
- Jobs are available in most areas from home health care aides, who require a minimum amount of training, through registered nurses, who require far more training.

Teaching

- Many school districts are so desperate for teachers that they are finding alternative and faster ways to certify interested candidates
- Those who can apply their career background in the classroom are particularly in demand.

Consulting

Whether as an independent contractor or as part of a consulting firm, older job seekers can find ample opportunities to offer their experience and wisdom for a price.

Non-Profit Organizations

- Those who are willing to volunteer or take a lower executive salary may find rewarding work in the non-profit sector
- These organizations are starved for good leaders who not only have passion for the cause but the business acumen to manage operations.

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Customer Service - Customer Relations

- With complaints of poor customer service growing in volume and frequency, more and more companies may look to older generations to make improvements
- Those in their 50s, 60s and 70s were raised in an era when the “Customer Was King” (or Queen) and therefore may have a better understanding of how to deliver superior customer service.

Small Business

- The welcome mat is out at these firms for experienced workers, especially those who have big-league corporate experience
- They are viewed as being able to suggest new and improved ways of doing things because of their large company backgrounds and as being in a position to perform several different jobs.

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