

Age Bias at the Executive Level

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If you're over age 50 and actively engaged in a job search, you've probably encountered a few situations where you felt you were out of the running simply because of your age. It didn't seem to matter that you had precisely the qualifications and experience the company or recruiter was looking for. Unfortunately, age bias does exist in the employment market, and you're going to have to learn how to manage around it.

Begin by reminding yourself of the value of your age and experience:

You Know People

You have business contacts of tremendous value to your new employer. No 35-year-old executive will ever match the number and depth of contacts a veteran CFO has.

You Bring Wisdom and Sage Leadership

After more than 25 years in the workforce, you've taken your knocks, you've learned the hard lessons, and if you're a C-level executive, you've demonstrated your ability to lead, achieve and succeed.

You Give Credibility to a New Company

You give your company instant credibility, particularly if the company is seeking financing. Most Wall Street bankers and venture capital firms do not want to invest in a company whose most senior executive is 24 years old.

Know When to Let It Go

There are instances where your age will interfere with your candidacy, and no matter what you do, that will not change. If you know you're fighting an uphill battle, retreat and forget it. There are too many opportunities available to you to be wasting your time on an opportunity that will never happen. If a prospective employer or recruiter has decided you're too old, there is nothing you can do to change that. Let it go.

Resume Writing Trick 1: Professional Employment

There is no rule stating you must include all of your employment experience on your resume. If you've been working for 20-plus years, either summarize your early experience at the end of your resume and without mentioning dates or don't mention it at all.

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If you do choose to mention your early experience, it should be because you:

- Get mileage out of your early employers' quality and reputation.
- Had an outstanding achievement you want to highlight in relation to your current objectives or to indicate you've always been a top producer.
- Demonstrate a career distinguished by fast-track promotion and advancement.

If you initially think this tactic may be deceptive, don't do it!

Remember, your resume is a marketing tool designed to open doors and generate interviews. It is not a biographical essay of your career.

Resume Writing Trick 2: Education

As a general rule, if you graduated before 1970, simply do not include the graduation date on your resume. This is not a hard and fast rule, but generally speaking, it is best not to include dates from the 1950s and 1960s.

Because so many people do not date their educational experiences, it does not obviously indicate you are over 50.

Interviewing Trick

Interviewing is your greatest challenge. When you walk in the door, it becomes immediately obvious you're at least 50, and the interviewer may be taken aback. Now it's time to perform.

If you are a strong candidate and can powerfully communicate your expertise, knowledge and value to the organization, you can counteract initial negative thoughts associated with your age. Get the interviewer to focus on what you have accomplished, your dramatic profit and ROI results and the new markets you've opened.

If you believe you have been a victim of age discrimination and want to take a stand, seeking legal counsel is the first step in determining if there is a case and if it is worth your time, energy and investment.

If you sue for age discrimination, you will have obviously closed the door on that opportunity (although it was probably already closed) and have to bear the stigma of that lawsuit as you continue your search.

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