

## **Motto for Interviews: Be Prepared**

*By John Rossheim, Monster Senior Contributing Writer*

If you're an older worker heading for an interview at a new company, maybe for the first time in a decade or so, it can feel like there's someone else in the room with you.

Who is this doppelganger?

It could be the hypothetical perfect candidate the interviewer believes he must find:

- Hard-working
- Eager to learn
- Street-savvy
- Not-set-in-his-ways type
- Someone who is half your age

Many job seekers age 40 and older get discouraged by their situation, haunted by the ghost of their vanished, youthful working self.

This discouragement, of course, is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The secret to avoiding self-sabotage is to present yourself as an optimal combination of what you are and what the employer is looking for:

- An energetic, lifetime learner
- Who knows his industry
- Keeps up with technology
- Can communicate effectively with colleagues of any age

Here's how to prepare.

### **Be a Positive Candidate**

"Attitude is the maker or breaker in an interview," says Sarah Hightower Hill, CEO of Chandler Hills Partners, a career search strategies firm.

"A combination of fear and ego most often causes older job seekers to fail."

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To overcome the intense interview anxiety some older job seekers feel, you need to realistically evaluate your standing in the labor marketplace.

"The most important ingredient is to feel good about who you are and what you offer," says Kevin Ecclesine, a senior vice president for career consulting firm Lee Hecht Harrison.

"You need to do a self-assessment and a job-market assessment to survey your professional environment."

Talking with trusted peers, a career coach or outplacement counselor can help you with this.

### **Know the Company's Needs**

If you do have that ego problem ("I'm all they want and more") you can transcend it by learning enough about your prospective employer to package your experience for maximum value to the company and as a result, take the focus off yourself.

"Whatever you do, don't say, 'I've done your job before, so you'll never have to tell me what to do,'" says Peg Hendershot, executive director at Career Vision a nonprofit counseling service. ( see: [www.careervision.org](http://www.careervision.org) )

"Really doing the homework on an employer is something older workers aren't always savvy about," says Linda Wiener, a consultant to employers on the aging workforce and expert on Monster's Age Issues message board.

( See Monster's Career Advice Community with all of their Discussion Forums at:

[www.monster.prospero.com/n/forumIndex.aspx?webtag=monsterindex](http://www.monster.prospero.com/n/forumIndex.aspx?webtag=monsterindex) )

### **Gather Intelligence on the Interview Situation**

Over the past decade, interviewers have gotten tougher, and interview formats have diversified. So it's critical to understand interview situations before the big day, says Marci LeFevre, coordinator for workforce issues at AARP. "Before the interview, ask the employer:

- 'What can you tell me about the interviews?
- Who will I be interviewing with?
- Will I meet with them individually, or in a group?"

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### **Be Confident**

When you show up for an interview with an HR representative or hiring manager who's significantly younger, one of you may well be unnerved. Make sure it's not you.

"If you've written the functional resume well, there's going to be some shock when you walk in the door," says Karen Riggs, a professor of telecommunications at Ohio University and author of "Granny@Work: Aging and New Technology on the Job in America.

The solution is to emphasize what you have in common with the interviewer, regardless of your ages.

Identifying professional challenges you've both faced is a starting point.

### **Speak Your Interviewer's Language**

"Interviewers want somebody who speaks the language," says Wiener. Whether you're painting your industry in broad strokes or getting down to technical nitty-gritty, you've got to display your knowledge through the language of your occupation.

- Reading trade publications
- Attending conferences
- Going on informational interviews

are ways to keep your lingo up-to-date.

### **Prepare to Look the Part**

Older workers know physical presentation matters. They just need to remember to take a look in the mirror, literally and imaginatively, before they head out for that first interview.

Your brief checklist of what to keep in mind:

- Hair
- Grooming
- Attire

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- Fashion sense
- Posture
- Handshake
- Smile
- You can reduce or eliminate your gray in your hair
- Check that your clothes fit well, are age-appropriate and are not dated

Preparation will lead to confidence and translate into how you carry yourself and communicate with the interviewer.

Source: <http://career-advice.monster.com/job-interview/Interview-Preparation/Prepare-for-the-Job-Interview-at-50-Plus/article.aspx>

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