

Older Workers: Don't Take a Backseat in the Hiring Process

by Joe Turner, "The Job Search Guy"

Does age-bias exist in the hiring process today? That's a tricky question as it's often hard to prove yet many mature workers seem to face more of an uphill battle when competing against Gen-Xer's and Yer's today.

Here are five pointers for those job hunters who may have a few years under their belts.

1. Change your mindset

Remind yourself that you're *experienced*, not old. You're seasoned, not over-the-hill. You're here-and-now, not history. It's all about spin and reframing. If you have any doubts, just watch the current presidential campaign.

The latest recession has created a lot of employment casualties and anxiety. But there's hope. Just because you're an older worker doesn't mean you're permanently sidelined. We may not all agree on which candidate would make the better president, but we can all agree that today's job market is tough, challenging and competitive. You can win in any job market with a can-do attitude and by powering up the tools you use to find a good job.

2. Go on the offensive

You may be an older worker, but you're not stupid, and you're not dead. Use your savvy to sell against youth and experience. Heck, John McCain is doing it. Why not you? There are benefits to being older, like having wisdom and common sense, and a long work record of accomplishments. Sell your track record. During the interview, take advantage of your lengthy work history. Remember when you were fresh out of school and had no experience? It's hard breaking into a career or getting a job without experience. Aren't you glad you're not in that position anymore? Appreciate being on the other end of the spectrum now, and turn your age into an advantage. Start by seeing your age as a strength and an asset.

3. Wear just one hat

Focus only on the job title for which you're applying. Tell them what they want to know and nothing more. Most likely you've worn many different hats during your career. If your duties and experiences from some of your previous positions don't address the job title's requirements, don't emphasize them. In fact, get them off your resume entirely if you can, as it will only give employers another reason to screen you out and you don't want that. This is your story. Tell it your way. Magnify only the aspects of your background that are relevant to your target objective. You want to focus your resume to reflect yourself in the most positive, powerful ways possible.

4. Modify your resume

Take another look at your resume. Ask, "would I hire myself for this position?" You can't do anything about your age, and you can't change the cultural and employment biases

against older workers. But you can stack the job hunting deck in your favor by reworking your resume to emphasize your strengths. Spin your story in your favor. Make sure everything on it relates in some way to your desired job objective. Drop old work history from your resume. You generally shouldn't need to show more than ten years' work history. Any prior work is most likely irrelevant now, bores the reader, and emphasizes your age. Remove obvious road markers like dates. For example, remove college degree dates and other older professional training dates that may go back more than a few years. Of course you've been around a while, but you don't have to shine a flashing light on this.

5. Sell results

Here's the most important tip of all: hiring managers today are looking for results, not years. Talk the language that an employer understands and appreciates, which is Return-on-Investment. Instead of citing 20-years of experience, identify your benefits to the employer and put them into monetary terms as much as possible. Back up your accomplishments with facts that are benefit-based. Sell them from the perspective of the end result of your work, and how it positively impacted your present and previous employers.

Money talks and it talks rather loudly. Here's some good news: Money can trump age. As an employee, you either make money or save money for your employer. If the hiring manager doesn't see your value in one of these two categories, then you don't want to work for this company. In this recession, if the company isn't concerned about its bottom line, then it may not be around for long, and isn't a viable option for you anyway. Get as close to money as you possibly can in the language of your accomplishments and list them on your resume.

Summary

If you're an older, experienced worker, you don't have to take a back seat in the hiring process. While there will be age discrimination with some employers, you can still stack the deck in your favor. Remember, it's about being honest, but also about emphasizing your strengths rather than magnifying your vulnerabilities. Do this, and you can find a great job regardless of the economy.

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The complete article can be found at

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