

# Age Discrimination 2014



## Age and Your Job Search

Every day we counsel with those who have or are experiencing age discrimination and maintaining their edge against younger *or older* competitors.

These challenges aren't going away and— legal or not — age discrimination is something you'll have to prepare for when tuning up your networking tactics, your resume and your interview skills. Below find advice for helping you present your skills and accomplishments to best advantage and dealing with those preconceived notions head-on.

Read these five stories to get a handle on the issue:

### ***Is It Your Age or Your Salary?***

***How to prepare to overcome objections screeners of different types will bring up.***

***Age discrimination is neither legal nor fair. Nevertheless, it is prevalent in a variety of forms, job seekers, career coaches and recruiters agree.***

***Most often the discrimination isn't overt; it's more a function of who does the initial filtering of resumes and job candidates and the likelihood that those relatively junior staffers don't understand the real requirements of the job they're filling or what an experienced executive would bring to it.***

***"I've found age discrimination pretty prevalent." John was recently hired by a leading medical equipment company, six months after he was laid off as director of materials management, supply chain, purchasing and inventory at telecommunications equipment maker JDS Uniface.***

***It's not overwhelming, but it is disheartening. You talk to a lot of recruiters who weed you out before you get to the manager to explain the value you can bring, says John, who is 59. And there are two parts to it: age, certainly in my case, but with 28 years of experience, your comp package is pretty high.***

***The sticking point could be just that the interviewer is surprised to see gray hair on a candidate he or she assumed was younger.***

***The goal is to satisfy the interviewer that your qualifications fit the profile and that there are no other issues – such as age, health problems or unusually high salary requirements – that would disqualify you.***

***You want to convince them you're pass-on-able. If you are in this screening interview with HR, you want it to be as clear as possible.***

#### ***Prepare to Overcome Objections***

***The key to being successful isn't hiding your age or salary, but being prepared with explanations or propositions designed to overcome the objections screeners of different types will bring up.***

***Think like a salesperson, even if you're not. A salesperson practices to deal with any objections you might bring up because they know what the potential objections will be.***

***For a screener it might be enough to demonstrate that you're still energetic, focused and vital despite a few gray hairs. You can get a lot of questions settled before they're even asked. Usually the first few minutes of the interview are; 'Did you have trouble finding the place' or 'How was your weekend?' Instead of the usual, you can go out of your way to say, 'I went hiking with some buddies of mine over the weekend and I feel great! Right at the outset you paint this picture of someone who's energetic and raring to go. You've painted over those misgivings without even knowing if age would be an issue.***

***Questions about compensation and authority are stickier but can be dealt with a lot more directly with the hiring manager than issues as potentially liable as age. If you're talking to the hiring manager, you can cut to the chase and say, 'I can do everything you need done and more and you're going to be thrilled! You will not find anybody who can do this job better than I can do it, so let's talk about how you can bring me on board in a way that's comfortable for you.'***

***If compensation is the sticking point, you can suggest that the hiring manager bring you in near the top of the scale that would have been appropriate for the more-junior person that was originally***

***expected in the role, with the understanding that your compensation will be reviewed in six months based on the amount of value you bring to the job.***

***You can start on a consulting basis to get your foot in the door and say you're comfortable with that arrangement because you know the kind of value you can bring to the organization. Make the entry point as comfortable as possible for them.***

***The key to making the compensation talk work is demonstrating not that you can do elegantly the kinds of things a less experienced person might not know to do at all, but to show that your experience makes you uniquely valuable compared to other candidates for the job.***

***Most executives I talk to are strictly a commodity. They say they have 20 years' experience, but it's one year of experience repeated 20 times.***

***If you do your research, as much as 40 hours of research, including talking to people inside and outside the company before a final slate of interviews, you can show that you know the company, know what problems it's really facing and can offer ways to address those problems.***

***If I'm the CEO or CFO or COO, I care about return on investment, cost savings, how you're going to help me increase revenue, not how you're going to train people in your department. That says to me you're not a commodity. To me as the CEO it states that you can do things to solve the problems I'm worried about.***

Whether it's the gray in your hair or the green in your paycheck, here's how to overcome the seniority sticking point.

### ***Is It Your Age or Your Attitude?***

***You can't turn back the clock, but you can show hiring managers your passion and record of results. If you're older than 50 years old, it often seems the deck is stacked against you.***

***Following last year's ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Gross v. FBL Financial Services Inc.*, which put the burden of proof on the plaintiff in age-discrimination cases, even the government seems out to get you — or, at the very least, unwilling to help.***

***People are angry about the treatment of workers over 50 years old because most of us know we must work well into our 60s before we can retire. But recent research indicates few of us actually want to work well into our 60s — and that tendency may help explain, if not excuse, employers' prejudices.***

***Dr. David DeLong of research and consulting firm DeLong & Associates conducted a study of older workers and hiring traits titled *Buddy Can You Spare a Job?* for the Metlife Mature Market Institute.***

***The report found most older workers felt financial pressure to work into their 60s, but few worked out of a desire to do so. In turn, employers fear they're likely to hire employees who are less passionate about their work than their younger counterparts.***

***This brings up an interesting question to ask yourself at this stage of your career: How passionate are you about your work? And how could that passion affect your ability to find a job?***

***Can you find something that you really care about in your work? Your passion (or lack thereof) will show during the interview. So Step One is to consider your own commitment to your current job. How passionate are you?***

***Find your passion, then the job***

***If you no longer have passion for your current work, maybe it's time for some self-examination. While you've accumulated experience in a number of areas over the years, it may be time to redefine and refocus your story.***

***Sure, you might be good at a lot of things, but ask yourself this question, Of all the roles and capabilities, what brings me the most joy at this point in my life? Find that one thing that you're best at and focus on it. If any of your duties and experiences doesn't directly address that job title's requirements, then don't emphasize them. Of course, you'll need a dose of realism, so test the market for this job description or role.***

***Remember, this is your story. Tell it your way. You want to focus your resume to reflect yourself in the most positive, powerful way possible. That means magnifying only the aspects of your background that is relevant to your newly focused career goal and passion. For help with this stage, you might want to consult with a career coach or advisor.***

***Sell results, not years***

***Once you've identified your goals, you may need to sell them differently from the way you did in the past.***

***Not too long ago, you could win a job just by talking about your skills or the 15 years you spent working at a particular job. Hiring managers today are looking for results, not years. Talk the language an employer understands and appreciates: return on investment. Instead of citing 20 years of experience, identify your benefits to the employer and put them into monetary terms. Support your accomplishments with facts that are benefit-based. Sell them on the way your work has helped your employers realize value.***

***Money talks and it talks loudly. The good news is that money can trump age. As an employee, you either make money or save money for your employer. Boil your job duties down to answer how many***

***ways you've helped an employer either to make money, save money or save time. Be prepared to demonstrate instances where you've already achieved this.***

***For example, if you're an operations manager, you could include an achievement bullet that might read something like this:***

***Reduced our payroll cost by \$1,125 per week by reducing supervising doctor hours from five nights a week to only two nights.***

***When you do this, you're leveling the playing field by talking money, a subject near and dear to the heart of employers. They'll think less about age differences and more about the real problems they're facing.***

***You can't eliminate age bias in the workplace, but you can overcome a big hurdle, which is the perception that as an older worker, you lack the passion of a younger worker. You may not be able to regenerate a lost passion, but you can at least develop a renewed enthusiasm and focus on what you want as a job hunter. A more effective sales pitch will go a long way toward overcoming old perceptions about age and indifference.***

You can't turn back the clock, but you can show hiring managers your passion and record of results.

***Question: Do I need to date myself?***

***Karl Lohrmann prefers not to answer questions about his age. But it's hard to avoid revealing it, sometimes indirectly.***

***I'm filling out a lot of applications online. I don't know anyone who fills out an application on paper anymore, said Lohrmann, 62, of Chicago. Most of these forms ask for my college-graduation date. You can't leave the question blank; you can't submit an incomplete form. How can I fill out this form without dating myself?***

***Answer: There are ways to get around the question, but almost all of them draw attention to the issue. By not answering, you are calling attention to the matter. You can put in vague date ranges; for example, you can write, 'Graduated in the 1980s.'***

***If the inquiry comes up during an interview, the best thing you can do is reframe the question, Tell the interviewer how many years you've been in the workforce. As a candidate, you could say, 'If you are asking me how many years I've spent in this particular industry, I've been working for X years.' You're talking about relevant years of experience: it's smooth, seamless, and not confrontational.***

***You want to avoid confrontation, which is a challenge. You don't want to point out that they are being inappropriate, even though it may be true. You need to redirect the conversation along appropriate lines.***

***If an online form won't allow you to submit the application without answering a question about your age or dates associated with your career or education, you have the option of bypassing the computer.***

***Try to get hold of someone at that company and tell them the site is not letting you submit the application, he said. Tell that person there is one question on the application that is asking for information you don't think you should provide. It's possible they are not aware of it.***

***Your age or dates are not relevant information, and you shouldn't feel compelled to answer it. The danger is that many interviewers will ask seemingly innocuous questions but are digging for more information. It's good to be aware of these questions.***

***No matter how innocently they ask some of these questions, you can start revealing more information, he said. It's legal to ask, 'Are you at least 18 years of age?' and you might make a joke that reveals more than you want. Or they will ask you to describe long-term career plans. Don't say you are looking for a place to retire from.***

***If a company presses for information on graduation dates and your attempts to avoid the issue aren't working, you might reconsider whether you want to work for the company. If you feel they are trying to get age-related information and it seems they are looking for ways to skirt employment regulations, I would consider opting out and finding a company with integrity.***

***Question: License and registration, please?***

***Brian Haley of New York, who is looking for a facilities-management position, has interviewed with several hospitals and corporations. The application form was generally straightforward, but in a few places, they asked me for a social-security number or a picture ID, both of which would reveal my date of birth, he said. Can they ask for this sort of information?***

***Answer: Asking for a photo ID is not appropriate. If you're uncomfortable presenting it, the best response is to submit the application without it, she said.***

***I would take the passive route and not include the photo ID. And if they kick it back to you, I would say, in a non-confrontational way, 'I would check your hiring guidelines, it's not appropriate.' Of course, that might put them on the defensive, and you might not get the job. But the goal is to get beyond the gatekeeper - this first contact. I do think that 90 percent of this type of thing is ignorance on the HR person's part; they aren't trained, and they aren't informed. So it's worth standing your ground and saying something.***

***Not only is the information unnecessary at the start of the interview process, it raises concerns about identity theft.***

***It's OK to leave that blank and say you'd be happy to provide that at time of hire. The candidate is perfectly OK to say, 'I'm very cautious, based (on) what I see in the media, about identity theft.' You can do it in a way that's not confrontational.***

***Question: How much professional history can interviewers request?***

***Certified professional resume writers advise clients that only the last 15 years of your resume is relevant, and most recommend using no more than that to cloak your age. But what happens when the company wants to see your full employment history? What happens when the company is the government and it's part of a security check?***

***One applicant ran into the situation when applying to jobs as a sales manager position in IT and federal sales. What do I say when an interviewer wants my entire employment record? he asked. Is this something the government is allowed to ask? Should I submit my entire employment history if it will date me?***

***Answer: It's not. There's no need for more and you should emphasize the past 10 years over the previous 10; make your most recent job the most important and the previous 10 less of a focus.***

***There are a few government agencies, such as the Border Patrol and the Federal Aviation Administration, that won't hire anyone over the age of 37. And you should be aware of those restrictions going in. But if anyone is trying to find out your age by insisting you provide a work history, you should stick to your most recent employment and emphasize that this is what is most relevant to the position for which you are applying.***

***People also think that because they are applying for a government job, that birth dates and high-school and graduation dates are mandatory. They are not, and you can leave them open. Most interviewers will know better than to push. And you shouldn't let them push.***

***If the job requires security clearance, Troutman said, there may be no way around providing the information, but such a request usually comes after the initial application and interview process.***

***Some questions, like How old are you? are off limits. But how do you gracefully duck the question without offending the questioner?***

***Take 10 Years Off Your Image***

***How old an impression do you make when you're interviewing? Of course, we all know that an interviewer can just count backwards from the year of graduation printed on your resume. However,***

***here is the truth: Perception is the new reality, like 60 is the new 50. So you need to learn the fine art of being perceived as younger as well as looking younger. It's more than just the way you look.***

***Is this fair? Is it even legal? And most importantly, should you give in to such nonsense? I'll put it this way: If you are over 40, you need to read on.***

***The recession we've all been feeling for months is now official. So now bosses can use that magic R word as a blank check to fire almost anyone for any reason. And pay attention, over-40s: The wounded economy is an especially perfect opportunity for higher-ups to fire those senior workers whose high wages and big egos have outlasted their welcome.***

***For those who are unemployed, you must do whatever it takes to convey to hiring managers that you are employable. What does this mean? No one wants to hire someone who's stuck in the old-fashioned way of thinking that being qualified, working hard and being loyal to a company is enough. Your Princeton degree and enviable references won't get you far if you're that naïve.***

***While many workers have learned that good looks and a polished appearance go a long way toward success in the workplace, too many of them fail to realize that cultivating the perception of youth and a hip attitude is an equally important part of the equation. It's no secret that we live in an age-obsessed society. Like it or not, interviewing younger is the new catchphrase.***

***Interviewing younger and being perceived as more youthful at the office is a vocabulary, a body language and a look. And here's a secret: These rules apply even more when your boss is your age or even older. It's not like you are following these rules to impress a young person. Whatever the age of your boss or interviewer, you need to create a youthful perception about yourself. Otherwise, there's someone else waiting in the wings with quicker computer skills and contemporary pop-culture knowledge who will be all too happy to fill your shoes.***

Like it or not, interviewing younger is the new catchphrase. And being perceived as more youthful at the office is a vocabulary, a body language and a look. Here's a high-octane, humorous take on how to seem younger.

***Pete Kresky exemplifies a new breed of job seeker. He is 70 years old. He said he's had three distinct careers and retired once already. But right now he's looking for work.***

***The percentage of workers age 50 and older is expected to rise 52 percent in the next year as more Americans remain longer in the workforce and the job search.***

***The decision to postpone or cancel retirement after it has begun is financial. There are many factors that prompt this move: Your mortgage has become more costly, your retirement savings was depleted by the decline in the stock market, your adult children now need support or your aging parents have their own trouble making ends meet.***



***The result is a workforce and pool of job seekers older than ever and desperate to overcome age discrimination in the hunt for work.***

### ***Proving age discrimination***

***The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has reported a significant, recent increase in age-discrimination complaints. While the number of complaints filed for age has steadily increased for the past 10 years, they jumped 25.8 percent in 2008. And those complaints are just for those who already have a job. Age discrimination on the job search is less visible and rarely reported.***

***When you're applying for jobs -- the difficulty there is it's frequently hard to tell if you've been discriminated against. You can get an interview, you can get a friendly interview, but you can also get an interviewer who takes one look at your resume and your appearance and says to themselves, 'Too old,' and you'll never know.***

***The evidence seems pretty clear and dramatic that the treatment of job applicants is different for older workers, given all other circumstances being equal. But it's hard to detect.***

***Older workers also have, on average, a much longer job search than their younger counterparts, he said. It can be more than a year right now.***

***Chuck Jordan's last job search lasted more than a year. Jordan worked 28 years as a salesman for a major technology company's federal government sales group before he retired. But six months later, he was back on the job search.***

***For multiple reasons, like kids going to college, it was appropriate for me to keep bringing in some money.***

***Over the next four years, Jordan had three jobs and finally quit his job at a technology company in California that moved him to a sales territory that had him traveling 100 percent of the time. He decided to take some time off, thinking he could easily re-enter the workforce when he was ready.***

***But then I realized that was not the case, and the environment had changed a ton, he said. It was incredibly competitive trying to find a job. So I had an absence of more than a year out of the marketplace. It was traumatic because I spent a lot of energy looking.***

### ***Age vs. experience***

***Jordan said he thought of his experience, age and maturity as an advantage in the marketplace when he was competing for jobs against younger candidates and believes it was eventually what helped him land his current job, but for the vast majority of my conversations and interviews, I think I was fighting an uphill battle.***

*He thought his age was a handicap, despite his energy. The young are ruling the world, and they really think they know it all so they don't really need us, he said. I've never personally been confronted with my age, but I know they figure it out, and they just don't call.*

*It's a shame because I'm on top of my game, and I'm pretty bright, and I know there are a lot of guys and gals who can offer an awful lot to some of these young people who really... have no idea and think they know everything themselves.*

*Part of the reason older workers face trouble is the stereotypes employers have. Some employers think] if you have a long career and a lot of experience, you have to get a job at equal to the highest salary you've ever had, which is not true. The perception is that if you can't equal the best job you've ever had, you'll never be happy.*

*That's precisely how Jordan read the difficulties he had in his job search. People thought they could find other candidates who were willing to work for a lot less, so I think that (my experience) was a disadvantage.*

*Using age to your advantage*

*One way to get around the stereotypes of age is to promote a new one. many older workers don't need the large salaries they once did, and employers might see them as a bargain. Many 50+ employees do not need the 30-year-old's salary like they do. That is not to say they come by the cheap, but they would be less expensive with just as much enthusiasm and knowledge and just as much or more experience. So they bring a lot to the table, frugally. It is a good sell, from a business standpoint. to bring the 60- and 70-year-olds in.*

*Making that case - and showing the passion and energy you've still got at your command - may be one of the best marketing tools you have at your disposal. But your network may be the best way to get you through the doors in the first place.*

*Letting people know that you're back, if that's right, from retirement. If you let the people with the kind of businesses you were in before, associates and former relationships know (you're looking), that's probably the best avenue for getting a response.*

*So How Old Are You? Things You Can/Can't Do About Age Bias:*

*You're in the middle of a job interview and the recruiter or prospective employer asks, "So, how old are you?"*

*What do you think when you read this scenario? Let me guess that you are probably caught off guard and thoughts are racing through your head. "Can they really ask me that?" you wonder.*

***If you are like the majority of age 50+ job seekers, I'll wager you answered yourself with a resounding, "No."***

***And asserting that, you would be wrong.***

***While it may fly in the face of what you know about the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and on top of that be outright rude, the question itself is legal.***

***You should know before an interview how you'll react and what you'll say when asked about your age. Much of what we believe we know about age discrimination is vague and ambiguous. That's bad news for age 50+ workers. Our opinions about age bias can influence our behavior during a job search and after we become employed. While it's important to understand the principles of age-discrimination law, it is more important to figure out how to deal with it out in the world.***

***Age bias in hiring and employment may be the last socially acceptable form of discrimination. While the ADEA makes age-based discrimination in hiring, pay, benefits, training, advancement, and termination illegal, many people over the age of 50, and increasingly older than 40, believe that age bias still exists and affects them.***

***Research from two recent studies conducted by RetirementJobs.com and AARP confirms that between 80 and 95 percent of people over age 50 believe that "age bias is a fact of life." The published statistics about actual age-discrimination claims, however, don't support common perceptions about the extent and power of age bias. All this is not to minimize concerns about age bias. I want you to think about what you can and cannot do about the reality, or self-fulfilling perceptions, of perceived age bias. Here's what you can do to avoid or overcome age bias:***

***1. Know your rights: Become familiar with the fundamental rights provided by federal and state ADEA laws. You may not always choose to pursue or enforce these rights, but you should know what is and what is not permissible. Refer to this AARP explanation of your rights under the ADEA.***

***2. Be clear about your objectives: Examine your personal life and work history, and inventory your knowledge, skills, capabilities, and achievements. Consider what you most enjoy doing. Identify specific employers and know the type of job you want. Get some career advice and select the occupation or profession in which you are most apt to prosper. Put all this information down in a clear and concise resume. Your clarity and confidence of purpose will come through to employers.***

***3. Be at your best: This may sound a little silly, but look and be at your best. Splurge on a new interview outfit (even if that 30-year-old suit still fits). Be well groomed, maintain your personal fitness to the highest possible level, make sure your health or medical conditions are under control, be well rested, research the employer, and display your knowledge. These tasks should help keep you confident and poised. Try practicing for interviews with a friend or professional coach. Finally, put all concerns about your age and the threat of age bias out of your mind.***

### **How To Get Hired Faster on LinkedIn**

**4. Be a continuous learner: Whether you are a candidate or an employee, always grow and learn. This is particularly important for your computer skills and knowledge. The abilities to use a computer, send e-mail, surf the Internet, and handle basic applications, such as word processing, are not optional anymore. Inability to make even basic use of a computer is a cause for rejection in all but a handful of jobs—many of which you wouldn't want. Buy a computer, set up an Internet account, and take lessons. While you're at it, get a mobile phone. PC skills and a cell phone are powerful ways to show you are technically savvy and not a dinosaur.**

**5. Seek employment and work in the right places: Many industries and employers value older workers. Search them out and apply there. If you're already working for an age-friendly employer, do everything you can to stay with that organization. Meanwhile, here are a few places to start looking for companies who hire and affirm older workers: - AARP National Employer Team: A list of major national employers who have committed to age-neutral practices. - AARP Best Employers for Workers Over 50: A list of employers recognized by AARP for their exceptional practices relating to the older workforce. - Web Job-Posting Boards for Older Workers: There are numerous Web sites with job announcements focused on workers 50 and older. These include RetirementJobs.com, which evaluates employers and grants Age Friendly Certification to companies who welcome older candidates, RetiredBrains, Senior Job Bank, Jobs4.0, and Seniors for Hire.**

**May God bless you in your job search. You can make it happen!**



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