

# The New York Times

## CAREER COUCH

Getting Up in Years, and Getting the Job

By EILENE ZIMMERMAN

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**Q.** You are over 55 and looking for a job for the first time in many years. Will potential employers be leery of hiring you because of your age?



Chris Reed

**A.** Possibly. Although it is illegal to exclude an older candidate based on age, there is still plenty of age discrimination in the job market, said Robert P. Riordan, a partner in the labor and employment practice of the law firm Alston & Bird in Atlanta.

Most hiring managers know enough not to ask about age, but their concerns about energy level, technological ability and retirement still exist, he said. Mr. Riordan stressed that older workers can take a proactive approach to overcoming those concerns in their résumés and in interview conversations by staying focused on long-term objectives.

(If you feel you have been discriminated against because of your age, contact a lawyer who specializes in employment law, but keep in mind that age discrimination is very hard to prove unless the interviewer has made a statement directly related to your age.)

**Q.** *Should you be direct about your age on your résumé, or is that likely to knock you out of contention?*

**A.** Never lie about your age. At the same time, you can take steps to minimize attention to it. Your goal is to use your résumé to get an interview, because that's where you will have an opportunity to show that your age is not an issue.

Revise descriptions of your previous jobs to ensure that the terms being used are current, said Genia Spencer, managing director of operations and human resources for Randstad, a staffing agency with headquarters in Atlanta.

"If 15 years ago you were head of the personnel office, that should be changed to human resources," she said.

Do not list the years when you graduated from college or graduate school, advised Michael Neece, chief strategy officer of PongoResume, an online career advice and résumé-writing service based in Northborough, Mass. "Leaving off the date might raise a red flag, but usually it doesn't," Mr. Neece said. "When a résumé is screened, they are looking for specific things like degrees and the minimum experience requirements, not dates."

Show your level of energy by adding a section on your activities or hobbies. If you are an avid runner or recreational cyclist, say so, Mr. Neece said.

To illustrate your ability to work with people of all ages, include any mentoring you have done, either at previous jobs or in your community through volunteer work, Ms. Spencer said.

**Q.** *Many employers worry that older workers can't keep up with changing technology. How can you reassure them?*

**A.** It is crucial to show potential employers that you are comfortable with technology and can adapt easily. Join social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook, Ms. Spencer

said. Then put your LinkedIn and/or Facebook URL on your résumé with your name and address. "I would also recommend creating a Web site — get it professionally done — with a résumé and samples of your work, and include that Web site link on your résumé too," she said.

Take classes to familiarize yourself with new software programs in your industry and add those courses to your résumé, said Joseph Scalice, president of the RW Consulting Group in Holmdel, N.J., which owns the niche job board [www.retireeworkforce.com](http://www.retireeworkforce.com).

**Q.** *If you get an interview, how do you handle issues that you won't be asked about directly but that feel like the elephants in the room — like your health, energy level or when you plan to retire?*

**A.** If you sense that there is concern about your age, ask about it, said Judi Perkins, president of Find Your Perfect Job, a career coaching firm in Bethel, Conn.

If you plan to keep working for a long time, you can say something like: "Do you have concerns I might retire soon? I have had a strong career in marketing and am still very creative. I love the work and as I get older I find I don't want to move from company to company. I want to stay here for the next decade," Ms. Perkins said.

Have you recently taken courses that relate to your field, like an updated management or accounting practices class? If so, make sure to mention them. This will show that you are still learning and intend to be working in your industry for a long time, Mr. Scalice said.

And if you enjoy taking bike rides on the weekends, playing tennis and doing volunteer work, slip in a comment about them, too.

**Q.** *Many companies welcome older workers because of the breadth of their experience and knowledge. Is there a way to capitalize on your age and use it to your advantage?*

**A.** Rather than combing the large job boards for openings, you might start with job boards that cater to older workers, like [retireeworkforce.com](http://www.retireeworkforce.com), [primecb.com](http://www.primecb.com) and [Retirementjobs.com](http://www.retirementjobs.com).

Research companies before you apply, looking for those with a diversity of age and experience in their work force. Take the same approach when you work with staffing agencies and recruiters, Ms. Spencer said.

That way, you will stop seeing your age as a liability and will be in a position to confidently convey the major professional advantages that your age — and the experience that goes with it — has conferred on you.

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