

RESUMES:

OVER 50? HOW TO MAKE YOUR RESUME WORK FOR YOU

Takeaway Points

- Take pride in your years of experience, but keep your resume focused on the present. Emphasize the most recent 10 to 15 years of your experience, minimizing (or even leaving out) your older roles.
- Even if you're an "old dog," show them you like to learn new tricks, especially computer software and specialized training you can find in the classroom or online.
- Use social media to your advantage. Having a presence on a social media site such as LinkedIn will at least show you not only know what it is, you use it.
- Have a no-nonsense e-mail address as part of your contact information. Something like `firstname_lastname@internetserviceprovider.com` is all you need.

By: Team Pongo

If you're in your 50s or 60s, chances are you have a lot of experience to offer an employer. Unfortunately, that can sometimes work against you when it comes to job interviews and hiring decisions. It's no surprise that some employers (knowingly or not) engage in "age profiling" and judge older workers based on generational rather than individual traits. We've all heard the stereotypes: "Older workers are less technologically savvy," "Their work habits and attitudes conflict with today's business culture," "They're overqualified and expect more money."

That doesn't mean the deck is automatically stacked against you, though. It just poses an extra challenge you'll have to address in order to convince an employer to hire you, and meeting that challenge begins with your resume. Since the resume is what gets you the interview, it needs to dispel the employer's misperceptions and sell them on your experience and background, making your age a non-issue.

Here are three things to help you promote your qualifications, not your age:

1. Take pride in your years of experience, but keep your resume focused on this decade.

Emphasize the most recent 10 to 15 years of your experience, minimizing (or even leaving out) your older roles. Highlight your biggest accomplishments during that time. Demonstrate your knowledge of new technologies if the job requires it. Describe how your actions helped your previous employers save money, increase sales or profits, or improve efficiency. Here are examples of how you could word an accomplishment statement on your resume:

- *Completed rigorous training to earn Specialist certification in Adobe Photoshop.*
- *Consistently generated revenue at least 10% above annual quota targets for 10 straight years.*
- *Rooted out inefficiencies in supply chain that saved company \$1.5 million over 5 years.*
- *Spearheaded project that led to construction of new manufacturing plant in Shanghai, China, and opened up a lucrative new market.*

One exception: If there's a position or accomplishment from further back in your work history that's highly relevant to the job you're seeking, include it on the resume. For example: If you're applying for a job that requires editorial skills, and your last editing role was 20 years ago, put that older job on your resume (to show you meet the requirement), but be sure to also demonstrate your knowledge of newer technologies that most editors are using today.

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“Isn’t Age Discrimination Illegal?”

Legally, an employer cannot refuse to hire a job candidate based on age. However, few employers would be foolish enough to say, “We rejected you because we prefer someone under 40 for this role.” Still, there are many ways they can get around the law and opt for a younger candidate if they’re determined to do so.

For instance, the employer can say the younger candidate:

- Had a particular skill or experience in their background that you didn’t have.
- Made a better connection with the hiring manager and other interviewers.
- Seemed like a better cultural fit with the company.

However, these can also be very legitimate reasons for choosing one candidate over another. So it’s important to recognize that, although it might *feel* like age discrimination, the decision might not have been age-related at all.

Overall, the best way to avoid age discrimination is to:

- Keep an open mind about where you apply for work.
- Target jobs you’re truly qualified for in companies that are supportive of age diversity.
- Always be open to new ideas.

2. Even if you’re an “old dog,” show them you like to learn new tricks.

Information technology has changed the way most of us do our jobs, and as new tools hit the market, employers are quick to implement them to increase productivity and company performance. As an older worker, you may be tempted to keep doing things the old way, but to remain competitive and viable, you need to ride the curve of technological change, or even stay ahead of it.

If the job posting requires some technological know-how that you possess, be sure to list your technical skills using the adjectives from the job posting that describe your level of knowledge. For example, the job may require someone with **expert**-level experience using a software application, which means you know how to manipulate every function. Another experience level would be **proficient**, which means you can get around the application well enough to perform its chief functions. Here’s an example of how you might list technical knowledge on your resume:

- *Expert in Visio and InDesign*
- *Proficient in Dreamweaver and Excel*

*(TIP: If the job requires a high degree of technical skills, you can insert a **Technical Skills** section right after your **Summary of Qualifications**.)*

If you’re looking to expand your knowledge of certain software, you can learn on your own time using online tutorials through a service like Lynda.com. You can also learn about work-related topics through webinars (web seminars you “attend” on your computer). Online tutorial or webinar training can be a big help in getting you up to speed on the latest trends and information in your field, and they provide valuable information for your resume. Make sure to include them under the **Education** section or in a separate **Specialized Training** section:

- *Tax Accounting Strategies for Partnerships, ABC Management Group, May 2010*
- *Demystifying Web Analytics, ACME Industries Webinar, Mar. 2010*
- *Real-Time Supply Chain Management, AAA Webinars, Apr. 2010*

3. Use social media and e-mail to your advantage.

Social media is not just a younger person’s online playground. People of all ages are seeing its value. Having a presence on a social media site will at least show that you’re not just aware of the power of social media, you’re also a practitioner. If you don’t have a profile on LinkedIn by now, get one! The profile should contain information that supplements your resume, and ideally, recommendations of your work by former employers or colleagues. Some job seekers even add the URL of their LinkedIn profiles to their resumes, along with name and contact information.

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Did you know?

Pongo's Resume Builder helps you create a resume that can emphasize the best of your work experience. It offers advice and helpful phrases as you assemble each section of your resume.

You also need a no-nonsense e-mail address as part of your contact information. Something like `firstname_lastname@youremailprovider.com` is all you need. Avoid nicknames in your e-mail address, or anything that might tip off your age, such as "grandpabill" or "janedoe1953." If you're looking for an e-mail provider, consider Gmail, which can show the employer that you probably know your way around today's technology.

ATTITUDE IS THE KEY

There are many factors that go into a hiring decision, and age *shouldn't* be one of them. But we all know it can be. You can't change your age, but you can change your attitude and adapt to contemporary ways of learning and working. And you can use your resume to show employers that you may have been born in the middle of the 20th century, but you have much to offer them in the 21st.

RESOURCES

If you'd like to educate yourself about the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), here are three resources that can help:

Facts about age discrimination: <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/age.html>

What You Can (and Can't) Do about Age Bias: http://www.aarp.org/work/employee-rights/info-05-2008/what_you_can_do_about_age_bias.html

Navigating Problem Areas of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act: http://www.aarp.org/work/employee-rights/info-2007/navigating_problem_areas_of_the_adea.html

www.pongoresume.com

Pongo Resume is a premier, full-service online resource for job seekers. The Pongo Resume web site provides all the tools and support needed to write professional resumes and cover letters, ace tough interviews, and secure a great job. Pongo users generate over 100,000 resumes per month. Privately held and headquartered in Northborough, Massachusetts, Pongo Resume currently has more than 6 million registered users and averages over a half-million unique visitors per month. In 2009 and 2010, Pongo was named to the Inc. 5000 list of America's fastest-growing private companies.