

education & employment



Lifelong learning becomes more important as we live longer, healthier lives. To support this idea researchers have repeatedly demonstrated the value of education. Similarly, the desire to work longer or seek alternative employment opportunities is attractive to many. Below you will find information and listings that offer expertise in these areas.

Selling the Age Advantage

I regret to report that age discrimination remains rampant in the American workplace. That makes job hunting an especially painful experience for laid-off workers age 50+ trying to get back in the game after an unwanted pink slip.

The good news is there is much to sell about what you bring to the table as a seasoned executive or professional with twenty, thirty or more years of experience. A major thrust of your job search effort will be educating younger hiring managers and changing their attitudes.

First let's look at the stereotypes that are typically held: Older workers are set in their ways, they are not technologically savvy, they're slow to accept change, they're counting down to retirement, they're going to be out sick a lot, they're too expensive, they won't want to report to someone younger. I'm sure you can add to this list but you get my drift.

What you need to do is present your candidacy in a way that counters the stereotypes. For instance, when I give my 30 second commercial, I describe the highlights of my career and then end by saying, "And on the personal side, I'm a downhill skier." My intention is to counter their internal response to my gray hair. I want them to perceive me as physically active, energetic, a risk-taker. I'm reshaping their first impressions.

Let me back up a minute and identify the pluses that older workers typically bring:

- You have both depth and breadth of experience – you've seen it all and have developed a healthy perspective that comes in handy when everyone else is operating in crisis mode.
- You bring a sense of history to your profession (and your company, if you are still employed and have

been there a long time) – a quality that will become appreciated in all organizations after it is gone.

- You have a huge "bag of tricks." Over the years you have had to solve a wide range of problems – people problem, customer problems, technical problems, business problems – and you've learned what works and what doesn't. You have options that will fit a wide variety of situations.
- You know a lot of people, especially if you've been active in one or more professional organizations. You very likely know people in competing companies and customer companies, people you've worked with who've moved on to jobs in related industries, and so forth. Your professional network has value.
- Most likely you have a strong work ethic – you want to keep working and you know you have a lot to contribute. You understand the bottom line and you know how your contribution impacts that figure and how your work affects society.
- At this stage in your life there are fewer distractions from your work – no children to race home to, no kids home sick that you need to tend. Perhaps they're even through college so you don't need to be at the highest end of the income scale keeping up with tuition payments.
- Contrary to the stereotype, you probably are both computer savvy and up-to-date professionally. You are very likely to be open to new learning and perhaps have already demonstrated your commitment to continuous learning. You may have found it more difficult, however, to get your employer to sponsor/fund your continuing education.

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- You may be genuinely interested in taking a step back professionally, moving from a management role to individual contributor. At this stage in your life, you may be able to afford a cut in pay and relish getting out of the hot seat. While this concept is foreign to senior management and human resources professionals, it is a commonly held desire of many older workers.
- Like most older workers, you probably have had a great deal of experience working collaboratively with people of all ages. Most report enjoying that aspect of corporate life, knowing that relating to a range of younger people “keeps you young.” The flattening of organizations and the emphasis on working in cross-functional teams has contributed to this breadth of exposure. Sometimes you were in the lead and sometimes that role was filled by others, giving you positive experiences reporting to younger workers.

By Kit Harrington Hayes

Here are some job search strategies you can use to work your way around the walls of age discrimination:

1. Engage a seasoned career counselor or coach.
2. Network to your next position.
3. Alter your resume for applying on line.
4. Go the extra mile.
5. Become current in your field/industry.
6. Join at least one professional organization.
7. Update your image.
8. Prepare thoroughly for all job interviews.
9. Consider changing careers.
10. Become politically active.

I have been witness to hundreds of successful job search campaigns conducted by older workers. This can be done! I realize that the steps I've laid out may seem daunting. On the upside, there is plenty for you to do and all of it will contribute directly to moving you from where you are to where you want to be. You'll learn a great deal and meet a lot of terrific people along the way.

Living to Learn: Continuing Education for Seniors

Learning is a continuous process, and nobody is too old to learn. More and more seniors in America have gone back to school to gain new knowledge and skills, so that they can make the later years of their lives more interesting and fulfilling. While some of them attend schools just to enhance their knowledge, others study to pursue a new and more rewarding career. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, close to 3% of Americans between the ages of 50 to 70 are participating in continuing education.

Continuing education for seniors usually comes in the form of credit-granting courses in colleges and universities. These courses provide curriculums that are specifically designed for people who have passed the traditional undergraduate college age. They are catered to people who already have some form of education, and they do not include basic courses that test language skills and general knowledge. Some colleges and universities also conduct evening classes for seniors who cannot attend regular classes because of their work commitments. Other forms of continuing education that are available include non-degree career training, personal enrichment courses, workshops, seminars, and self-directed learning, which can be online learning, club activities, personal research, and experiential learning.

With so much information available on the Internet, it is very easy for seniors to find a continuing education program that suits their learning needs. Many colleges and universities display detailed information about their continuing education programs in their websites, and they also provide clear enrollment instructions. Those who wish to enroll in distance learning can find many online education programs that are specifically designed for seniors, and they can submit their applications online.

Continuing education also requires considerable investment, and some seniors have to look for ways to get the necessary funds to support their education. The most common way for seniors to secure funds for their education is to get loans from banks and financial institutions or their colleges and universities. Such loans can help them pay all their tuition fees as well as their living expenses, but they have to pay a certain amount of interest. The United States government also offers subsidized and unsubsidized loans to Americans who wish to pursue continuing education, and these loans are called the Federal Stafford Loans and the Federal Perkins Loans. Other popular loans for continuing students include the Sallie Mae Continuing Education Loan and the TERI Guaranteed Continuing Education Loan.

There are also grants that are available for seniors who have shown excellent academic performance. The government offers grants such as the Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent Grant, Academic Competitiveness Grants, and the Federal Work Study and Part-Time Employment Award. Seniors who are still working can apply for partial or full funding from their employers if they intend to learn new skills that can benefit their companies.

For working seniors, continuing education can lead to better career opportunities and financial rewards. Those who are studying just to gain knowledge and academic certification will earn more respect from their friends and families, and they can inspire their children or grandchildren to pursue higher education. Continuing education is very beneficial for seniors, because it can rejuvenate their minds and bring new meaning to their lives.

Reprinted from Assisted Way Living

Missouri Listings

AARP Foundation

Phone: 314-830-3600 **Fax:** 314-830-3674

11681 W. Florissant, St. Louis, MO 63033

Email: stlcountyaarp@aol.com **Website:** www.aarp.org

Counties Served: St. Louis MO, St. Louis City MO, Madison IL, St. Clair IL

Description: *Employment assistance program for those 55 and older who qualify. On-line WorkSearch assistance program available. Training assignments required. 50% and above placement rate. Serious job seekers can go to work!*

Gerontology Programs at the University of Missouri - St. Louis

Phone: 314-516-5280 **Fax:** 314-516-5210

406 Tower Building; One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63121

Email: gero_advising@umsl.edu **Website:** www.umsl.edu/divisions/graduate gerontology

Lindenwood University - Gerontology Program

Phone: 636-949-4522 **Fax:** 636-949-4505

209 S. Kingshighway, St. Charles, MO 63303

Email: cmanjounes@lindenwood.edu **Website:** www.lindenwood.edu

Counties Served: Franklin MO, Jefferson MO, St. Charles MO, St. Louis MO, St. Louis City MO, Bond IL, Clinton IL, Madison IL, Monroe IL, Randolph IL, St. Clair IL, Washington IL

Description: *Institution of higher learning. Degree programs, including gerontology, available in traditional and accelerated formats. Concerts, theatre, art displays, lectures and sports events available to the public.*

MERS Goodwill

Phone: 314-647-7453 **Fax:** 314-647-9364

2545 S. Hanley Rd., St. Louis, MO 63144

Email: dvaisvil@mersgoodwill.org

Counties Served: Franklin MO, Jefferson MO, St. Charles MO, St. Louis MO, St. Louis City MO, Madison IL, St. Clair IL

Description: *Employment and training services are provided for persons with barriers to employment, allowing individuals to work and live more independently in the community. MERS Goodwill also administers the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Anyone age 55+ seeking training and employment services should call 1-888-651-4177.*

Shepherd's Center of Webster/Kirkwood, Inc.

Phone: 314-395-0988

1333 W. Lockwood Ave., St. Louis, MO 63122

Email: gmchenry@websterhillsumc.org **Website:** www.shepherdscenter-wk.org

Counties Served: St. Louis MO

Description: *Think, Dance, Learn, Laugh, Play. Shepherd's Center is all about positive aging! Join us for breakfast and three hours of class on Friday mornings. Topics to choose from include watercolors, tai chi, travel, book review, discussion groups, spirituality and much more.*

University of Missouri Extension of St. Louis County

Phone: 314-615-2911 **Fax:** 314-615-8147

121 South Meramec, Suite 501, Clayton, MO 63105-1725

Website: extension.missouri.edu/stlouis

Counties Served: St. Louis MO, St. Louis City MO

Description: *MU Extension provides practical, research-based education from University of Missouri. Take a class in the community! Learn about diabetes, nutrition, strength training for aging adults, aging in your home, managing stress, personal finance, home safety, gardening, home maintenance and more! Have your soil tested to improve your lawn and garden.*

This year,
we're spending
the holidays
with Mom
and Dad.



Drunk driving wrecks lives.



IF YOU'RE FACING
FORECLOSURE,
TALK TO YOUR
GRANDMA SECOND.

CALL THE
HOPE HOTLINE FIRST
AT 888-995-HOPE.



Make sure you're talking to the right people.
Speak with HUD-approved housing counselors,
free of charge, at the Homeowner's HOPE Hotline.

