

Manage Your Career

(on overcoming Ageism) How to Get Out of Your Own Way

This issue is the second being delivered by the Mail Chimp service. It's fairly user-friendly, although I do thank Adam Smith of My IT Guy for setting up the original. He provides expert and timely service and I highly recommend Adam (adam@myitguy.ca).

As if often the case, this month's newsletter idea comes from a recent client, a few in fact. With last year's financial fiasco several American companies pulled up their Canadian stakes and high-tailed it to the other side of the border.

Consequently, some of their long-time employees found themselves unemployed. And because they'd worked for decades for one employer, they also found themselves "of a certain age" and unemployed.

This issues deals with ageism in specific, but by extension to any obstacle that a person puts between him or herself and employment. Overqualified, not enough experience, too young, too old, not the right sex or colour - I've heard each and every one of these "reasons" cited for not landing a job.

Most of the time these are

First Things First

Apply some critical thinking and consider the source of your idea that you are too old, or that your age will in some way preclude you from landing a job. Are there people your age working? Do they continue in the profession of their choice? Are they still productive? The answer to all of these questions is "yes."

Now, to play devil's advocate, I will take the opposite view. Are there people 55+ who are chronically unemployed? Or are there folks that age working in a lesser role than their ideal? And again the answer is "yes." What then, is the difference between the two groups?

Although I've no access to any research or hard facts, I can say that in my opinion, more than one person from the second group likely resigned him or herself to the popular notion that once you've reached a certain age it is difficult to land a job. Why buy into that defeating idea when you know darn well that there are plenty of people who are working, and happily so?

A Few Ideas

Here are a few ideas on pulling yourself out of the mud and shaking off those dismal ideas, and stepping into the real world, competitive, polished and employed!

1. Assess your resume. Is it stuck in the '70s, with an objective and boring list of position description statements right back to the job you had in 1974? Perfect way to paint yourself as old-fashioned, unprogressive, resistant to change. Find out what today's resume standards are and transform yourself on paper from "old" to "current."
2. Assess your appearance. Although I do not advocate changing your image if you don't want to, I do suggest making a few changes if necessary. Up-to-date eyewear, a trendy suit and shoes, and instead of looking old (even with grey hair) you look funky, interesting, polished.
3. Assess your interview skills. Here's the big one. Here's where your attitude shines through, and where serious strategy is crucial. Nip any concerns in the bud! When asked that usual "tell us about yourself" question, launch into a strategic reply that mentions a typical day begins with a workout (removing any perception of ill health or sick days), and how you get to work before many colleagues. Continue with how people come to you to ask suggestions and what skills you put to work replying to these. Finish your answer by sharing how your work and ideas have improved

simply perceived obstacles, and not at all real, IF one has the right attitude and employs a few strategies to overcome bias on the part of an interviewer. Will attitude and strategy overcome 100% of recruiters' biases? No, we are, after all, human. And that means that we all have a few ideas mulling around our heads that don't necessarily make sense and wouldn't pass any logical discourse. Nonetheless attitude and strategies CAN positively impact perception.

I hope you find something useful in this issue. And of course, do send this newsletter to anyone who may benefit from its information.

something: identified new revenues, streamlined a previously tedious operation, or advanced a corporate goal, and how you continue self-learning with on-line tutorials because you love your work - who could resist such contagious energy and presentation of value?

A Few More Scenarios

If you are stepping back to a lesser role, and are asked how you will feel reporting to a younger person, explain how you are ready to turn over crises management to others, but you'd make an outstanding support person. Add that your in-depth knowledge and experience could be useful—if needed.

When asked about how you'll manage with a smaller salary, you can share how you've scaled back expenses since you retired, and have learned to live with a lot less, and that besides, you are only looking to augment your current income, and put your excess energy and customer service skills to good use.

Prove that you can do the job, that you'll accept the money, and that you are a good fit, and perceived obstacles fade away. Did you know that it isn't necessarily the most qualified applicant who lands the offer? It is often the candidate who interviews best who lands that coveted job offer.

Extra Resources

If these strategies sound right for you, and if you think you might need a bit of help in devising strategic interview answers, do consider an hour's session with New Leaf. As an Interview Strategist, and as an Invited Blogger with Career Thought Leaders on the topic of "Interview Tips Beyond the Usual," I have a few ideas up my sleeve!

Your insight, suggestions, questions and musings are always welcome. Please email me at newleafresumes@gmail.com.