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Three tips for handling ageism in the job search

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “About 40 percent of people ages 55 and older were working or actively looking for work in 2014. That number, known as a labor force participation rate, is expected to increase fastest for the oldest segments of the population — most notably, people ages 65 to 74 and 75 and older — through 2024.” Even with those statistics, yes, age discrimination can still play a major factor in the job search in interviews. Many employers’ perceptions about age do tend to influence their hiring decisions. However, there are strategies that will assist in overcoming the various obstacles that may be encountered. Let’s take a look at three tips for handling ageism in the job search. I encourage you to share this column with anyone you know who has reached 50+ and has been having a hard time landing a job.

- **Build your online presence.** It will be the first to tell you that a key component of getting a job, no matter your age, is networking with the people you know, both online and offline. I certainly recognize that you may say to me, “Shirley, forget that online stuff; no way.” OK, OK, I get it; however, I do sincerely encourage you to consider building your online career network by developing a strong, up-to-date LinkedIn profile. In fact, many organizations are now asking you to apply via your LinkedIn account. So, if you aren’t on LinkedIn, it’s

time to take the plunge.

- **Get up to date with technology.** If you are currently up to date and proficient in the use of Windows 7 or later versions — and at least Microsoft Word and Excel — with skills in efficiently navigating the internet, then you should be sitting pretty well based on the type of positions you are seeking. Keep in mind, though, that many employers fear that the older worker has not kept up with, or will not want to keep up with, technology. With that being said, one of the ways you can fight age discrimination is to make sure you know what technology/software applications are utilized and relevant in your particular industry/profession. Plus, make sure you have taken or are taking the steps necessary to master that technology. And be prepared to relate in an interview how you have applied the requisite technology/software to your work.

- **Showcase your value.** Have you ever used age in your favor during an interview? John Krautzel, author of numerous articles on Beyond.com, points out that demonstrating the professional value you’ve gained from your years of experience is another way to fight age discrimination. Krautzel also suggests you make known you’re flexible and open to making changes to your thinking and work style, as well as adapting to new challenges.

Make sure you provide concrete

examples (quantifiable where possible) that stress your overall qualifications, attributes, skills, abilities and high energy level that demonstrate how your past responsibilities and accomplishments would enable you to be successful at the specific job for which you are interviewing.

In the final analysis, stay positive and focus on the value you bring to the table. Walk into that interview with a confidence level that will create a great first impression — from head to toe — with a firm handshake and good eye contact; that can set the tone for how the interviewer perceives you. Furthermore, Alison Doyle, a highly regarded career expert, tells us to consider each interview another chance to get hired, so we should do our best to be upbeat. Your posture, body language and tone of voice should provide an opportunity for you to exude energy and enthusiasm while providing the interviewer with information as to why you are uniquely qualified for the position, a great fit and should be the one hired for that specific job!

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