

Ask the Career Coach: Age Reality for Job Seekers

What should a mature job candidate do to land the position?

By [Lisa Chenofsky Singer](#)

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Dear Career Coach Lisa,

I have been consulting but have not been able to land a regular full time position. What best approaches do you suggest for those of us in our mid-late 50s who want full-time work? I truly believe that my age is a very real obstacle and many of my colleagues feel the same way. We all have impressive resumes, successful track records, yet don't seem to be able to get anywhere. Your advice is appreciated.

L.F.
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Typically most hiring managers see experienced candidates as more expensive than someone with less experience. With tight budgets, you need to sell the value you bring to the opportunity and why you are the best candidate.

Recently, I coached a client headed into a second round of interviews with a startup company. The CEO was 28 years old and his team members were all under 35, according to my client. The client proceeded to tell the CEO that they needed his "seasoning" for this startup. He continued, "Just think of the mistakes you can avoid with my expertise and the networks that I can leverage for you that a less experienced player would not have." This landed him the position a few days later after some additional negotiations.

Some additional negotiations you may consider include a reduced work schedule, additional paid time off (vacation, sick, personal and holiday time) and/or equity in the company (useful in startup and turnaround situations). The value of a reduced work week enables the company to have your expertise while fitting your pay within their proposed budget. It is typically a win-win situation. Having a reduced work week can enable you to continue consulting, pursue additional education or certifications. Once there is an expression of mutual interest, ask whether the company's benefits allow flex scheduled employees to participate in the benefit plans. Many companies offer benefits for employees who work reduced schedules, sometimes as low as 20 or 30 hours per week.

As a mature candidate, you need to understand your skills and how it relates to the current market's demands. You need to understand what the company is seeking, what their in-house talent consists of and what this open position needs to bring to their mix. Make sure your technology skills are current. There are many courses offered online (webinars) and at many public libraries to learn for free. Ask a friend, a student and/or a relative who is tech savvy to train you. Experiment with social media sites such as LinkedIn and learn by following group discussions. Play with Facebook and Twitter, review blogs and other online communities. A word of advice is to be aware of the settings that turn off notifications alerting others every time you are making edits. Taking the initial leap of faith—to sign

on—it only takes one moment of courage and many moments of learning hopefully with limited frustrations.

Your next job opportunity is most probably coming from someone who knows you, your work and understands the value you bring to the job. Now is the time to rekindle your relationships with former colleagues, staff and students that you may have mentored in the past. Tis the season to engage—enjoy holiday gatherings, share what you have to offer, be positive and learn from those around you. How you engage will say it all.

"Ask the Career Coach" is a column dedicated to those who may be in transition or wrestling with a career dilemma by providing a forum for advice. We welcome your questions. Please send them to CareerCoachLisa@gmail.com.

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