

6 Ways to Score a Fulfilling Job When You're Over 50

By [Jane Burnett](#)

July 5, 2017

When you've given decades to the job market already, getting a new position can present very real challenges — but there are ways to land one that will continue to help you grow and develop professionally.

Here's how to get a great job when you're over 50.

Take advantage of your network

As you gain experience, the chances are that you also have a larger pool of people to network with. Networks aren't just rolodexes, contact lists or LinkedIn friends; they're people who are sources of information.

Adam Ochstein, founder and CEO of human resources technology and consulting firm [StratEx](#), [told TheStreet](#) about why this is an advantage.

"The more experience you have, the bigger your network should be, and that will be a big asset in your job search...Make it known that you are looking for a new job to as many people as possible. Companies like referrals and it's easier to get an 'in' with a company from a referral," Ochstein told the site.

Kelly Hoey, a master networker, wrote one of our favorite books on how to make networking work for you: *Build Your Dream Network*. Here are [her tips for how to sharpen your people skills](#).

Look as healthy and well-groomed as possible

A look of vitality, and up-to-date clothes, are big advantages for people over 50 who want to show they're energetic and up-to-date. We all know the risks of trying too hard — please, no leather pants to look hip! No [Buzz Bissinger shopping addiction](#)! — but there's no doubt that putting extra thought into your appearance and making an effort to stay healthy can go a long way.

All you need to do is look current. For men, this can currently come down to well-fitting pants: Younger men and executives in many fields favor a slimmer fit at the moment; you don't need to go full skinny-jeans (in fact, please don't) but buying something with a better fit and lifting hems to break right at the shoe can do a lot for a neat look. A good haircut can go a long way too, as can up-to-date eyewear. Steve Carell [nails a strong casual look that adapts to many workplaces](#).

For women over 50, authoritative clothes can be anything from the usual suit to a well-cut dress with a cardigan or Eileen Fisher-style loose clothes in creative industries. There's much more of a range of styles for women, but a good, neat cut is best. Well-fitting clothes, [particularly well-cut pants and a good leather jacket, go far](#).

Kerry Hannon writes about the importance of presentation for older job-seekers [in a Forbes article](#).

"If you aren't physically fit, get with it. People will judge you by how you look regardless of how politically incorrect that may be. When you're physically fit, it sends the message subliminally that you're up for the job. You have a certain vibrancy and energy that people want to be around. I don't mean you have to run a fast mile. You just need to be in shape. Eating a healthier diet will help you, too. You're selling the entire package of who you are—not just your work experience and talent. And, of course, get a great interview outfit, haircut, and manicure, shine your shoes and all that other superficial stuff. Always overdress."

If you're managing health problems that cause you to limit your time exercising, find other ways to take care of yourself. Incorporating age-appropriate fashion pieces of the moment and being otherwise well-groomed is also part of looking vibrant.

Sell your accomplishments well

How you market your achievements is a huge factor, but being in the game for a while also gives you a lot to highlight. The key here is not to list everything you've done, but to put the emphasis on a few situations where your experience came in handy and prepared you to tackle future challenges. You can also emphasize your contacts in the industry, which have likely grown as you've seen your work evolve.

Needless to say, a title alone won't get you there, and if you just punched a clock at your last job instead of being a big contributor, that's going to be a hindrance. The key is future and forward: Be ready to talk about the positive changes and revenue-generating initiatives you created at your last employer and how you can create them for this one.

Keep your skills up to date

An experienced employee who's skilled in the very latest technology is a killer combo for most companies: not only does the employee know how things used to work, but he or she is clear on how things *should* work and how they *will* work in the future.

How to stay up to date? Industry publications are a good start, because their writers are paid to keep on top of what's happening. Networking — which is really just talking to people — is another good way to learn how other companies work, which can provide you valuable perspective for your own. And finally, there's good old-fashioned book learning.

Jacob Morgan writes about how older workers can sharpen their skills as part of staying “relevant in the future of work” in [a Forbes article](#).

“It's one thing to agree that you need to keep up to date with new workspace approaches and technology, but figuring out how to go about doing this can be another thing entirely. Happily, the same technology that's changing so much about the way we work offers a solution to that problem, too. Sites like Udemy, Lynda.com, Coursera, Khan Academy, and open courses from sites like MIT, Yale, and Stanford give you the opportunity to learn anything from robotics and programming to marketing strategy and philosophy,” Morgan writes.

Negotiate your salary effectively

When you have experience, you're also more likely to command a higher salary — which, in turn, requires some savvy negotiating. Experienced, senior employees are a bigger investment for a company, and HR people in general are more likely to be conservative about where they use their dollars to make sure that they'll get results for them.

When negotiating a higher salary, being able to emphasize the value you bring to the company is key, but it's also necessary to emphasize what you can bring in the future. Your employer will want to know exactly what you bring to the table, and every bit of your experience should translate to your pay. Good advice from Salary.com is to think of your work in terms of the results you've delivered and beyond: “These “extras” could enable you to command a pay premium. Some common leverageable strengths include extensive industry contacts, strong fundraising or partnership-forming skills, or experience with a unique type of opportunity that closely resembles the prospective employer's business, even if it is in a different industry.”

Also remember that as your seniority rises, and expectations go up, so do your perks. You should be thinking of a “compensation package,” rather than a salary alone. The package could include stock options and should definitely include a decent severance package; if you're a highly paid employee with industry standing, the standard “two weeks of severance for a year of service” just won't cut it. You'll need longer than that to find another job if anything happens, and a soft landing is important particularly if you have kids with college tuition or a mortgage.

Inc. also points out that [you should come prepared with a salary range](#). The best way to establish that is to look at comparably paid people in your field, and ballpark a few numbers. Needless to say, pitch a number higher than the one you expect to get — and never, ever take the first offer.

Resist the temptation to rest on your laurels and say “I got this” — do a lot of research before the interview and come prepared to talk about your ideas for the company and to show why you’re worth more.

...and don’t forget the basics.

Regardless of age, personality is a selling point. Being calm and [likable](#) are always a huge advantages, no matter what. And a spirit of flexibility is a huge help. Confidence in your abilities is the key.

If you know you have some persistent problems — high anxiety at work, a little rough around the edges — don’t rule out working with [a career coach](#). Make sure that your resume is in [tip-top shape](#). And if you’ve been [out of work for more than six months](#), be open to welcoming change like a move to another state if a good job comes up.

Lastly, always— and I mean *always*— remember your worth. You have a lot to offer, and the right company will be lucky to have you.

Good luck!

Avoid the Seven Mistakes Job Seekers in Their 50s Make

How to sell yourself in a digital work world, sharpen your interview skills and write a look-at-me résumé

by James A. Martin, [AARP](#)

Job search may have changed since you last looked. Older job seekers should avoid these common mistakes.

[Searching for a job](#) at any age puts most people on a bullet train to Stressville. When you’re 45 or more, a job search can be particularly daunting. If you haven’t looked for a job in years, guess what? Things have changed. A lot. Here are seven of the most common mistakes midlife job hunters make—with tips from recruiters and career experts on how to sidestep them.

1. You Consider Your Age a Detriment, Not an Asset

At midlife, job seekers often assume potential employers will view their age as a liability, say career coaches and recruiting professionals. But, “the biggest mistake you can make is to disqualify yourself based on the biases of others,” says Ninh Tran, co-founder and chief marketing officer of recruiting platform [Hiretual.com](#). Counter potential ageism by stressing your energy, how you’ve kept current with trends and technologies and the value of your experience, advises consultant and author [Barry Maher](#).

Don’t let an interviewer assume you’ll retire soon. Maher suggests saying, “I’m looking for a company I can stay with and grow,” and “one of the benefits of having a little experience under my belt is that I know what I want in life. I’m not going to jump around from company to company, trying this job and that job.”

Tran adds that age is associated with experience and wisdom, so it’s important “to be likable, be yourself, and if you get the rejection letter, move on to a different company that will appreciate your qualities.”

2. Your Résumé Details Your Early Work History—or Ignores It Completely

While plenty of companies hire workers over 45, age discrimination remains a widespread problem, making it tricky for job applicants to know how much past experience to include during the application or interview process, or in their résumés. How do you show the depth of your experience without looking old?

A brief overview of what you did 20–30 years ago is plenty, says Jane Goodall, [résumé writer and career consultant](#), and you don't need to give specific dates for jobs from that long ago. "Yes, you may have saved your employer 35 percent in overhead costs back in 1984. But what are your current stats? Life is different, business is different. Focus on the now by emphasizing skills, successes and experience from the past 10 to 15 years that are relevant to the job you're seeking."

At the same time, it's a mistake to *only* include the most recent decade of your career on your résumé, adds Karla Jobling, chief operating officer of search and recruitment firm [BeecherMadden](#). "As a professional headhunter, it makes me wonder what you might have to hide, which means I'm immediately questioning your honesty," she explains. "Or, if you've made it to the interview stage, I'm annoyed that you've not been upfront to begin with. It tells me you didn't trust that I would be able to see past your age and look at your skills for the job. You then have to work twice as hard to impress me."

Take just a paragraph to summarize your job experience from more than 15 years ago, focusing on skills and successes that are relevant to the job you're seeking, says Susan Peppercorn, a career management coach for [Positive Workplace Partners](#). "Many mature job seekers have experienced mergers and acquisitions, change of management, competitive threats and corporate reorganizations, which are as relevant today as they were back in the day."

3. You Don't "Get" LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a hugely important social media network for professionals, and experts advise job seekers of all ages—particularly those 45+—to become proficient at optimizing their profiles and using its tools.

Optimize your LinkedIn profile and get the most out of LinkedIn's tools.

For example, if you aren't familiar with the basics of sending a LinkedIn InMail, it's easy to accidentally send a message before you've finished writing it, says Sonja Hastings, a recruiter for [Optimal Sales Search](#). This can happen when you tap the return or enter key. Deselecting the "press enter to send" button in your LinkedIn message can prevent this error.

"I've had job candidates make this mistake, and then they follow up with 'I don't know to use LinkedIn,'" Hastings adds. Not being proficient on LinkedIn makes you look out of touch and unwilling or unable to learn new skills, he notes, all of which can be "the kiss of death for some careers," especially those in sales and marketing. The remedy? "Get familiar with LinkedIn. Test out the inbox and send a few emails to friends for practice. Don't wait to test it out on job leads."

See also: [10 Ways You Didn't Know LinkedIn Could Find You a Job](#)

Also, be aware that many companies now find and contact potential job candidates through LinkedIn rather than going through recruiting firms, says Jenny Hargrave, founder of U.K.-based [InterviewFit](#), which provides interview preparation services. So if your LinkedIn profile is half-baked, or nonexistent, you're potentially losing out.

4. Your Résumé, Email Address and Terminology Are Outdated

Résumé formats have changed with the rise of the applicant tracking system (ATS)—software that quickly sorts electronically submitted job applications and résumés by looking for relevant keywords. But job seekers in their 50s, especially those who've not looked for a job in a while, may submit résumés that aren't ATS-compatible, which don't emphasize keywords or mention the skills and requirements of the position being applied for, says Goodall.

(LiveCareer offers tips on [optimizing résumés for ATS](#).)

"Job candidates often unknowingly show potential employers that they're older and a bit out of touch by how they format their résumés, present information and use outdated language," says Lela Reynolds, senior career consultant for Resume Strategists Inc. "Take a hard look at your résumé and eliminate common language giveaways such as 'references available upon request,'" she recommends.

Other tips: Don't insert two spaces after a period, as "only one space has been preferred since the death of the typewriter," Reynolds says. Don't include "http://www" before a website name or write "internet" instead of "web" or "digital," as all of this makes you look like you're stuck in 1996.

Also avoid using outdated terminology for your industry, either in your LinkedIn profile or on your résumé, adds Joanne Meehl, owner of [Joanne Meehl Career Services](#). "A client of mine whose old field was once called telecom changed the terminology to digital communications and included that phrase in the summary and skills areas of his résumé and on his LinkedIn profile," she says. "It de-aged him and it worked, as he was found on LinkedIn and then hired."

Even your email address can hurt your image, Reynolds adds. "Don't use revealing numbers like your birth year in your email address, and avoid an AOL, Hotmail or Yahoo email address on your résumé." Those services are considered outdated, Reynolds says. "To look more current, create a Gmail address with your first and last name," she advises. "If your name is common and you need to use a distinguishing number, don't choose one that reflects your age or birth year."

5. You're Inflexible on Salary

If you've been in your profession for decades, no doubt you've reached a high-income bracket. Consequently, you may expect a fatter salary than a perfectly qualified, younger competitor—which can be a mistake.

"I've seen how some recruiters avoid candidates in their 40s and up, not because they're not experienced or capable, but because their salary expectations might be too high," says Alexander Grosu, project manager of [TestUP](#), which offers pre-employment tests for companies.

If you suspect salary might limit your chances at being considered for a job you really want, address this upfront, advises Grosu. In your cover letter, mention what motivates you about the job beyond the salary, such as the opportunity to learn new skills, be part of a new initiative the company is undertaking or collaborate on a specific team.

While it's important to show flexibility regarding salary (if indeed you can be flexible), don't get into specifics early on, as you could leave money on the table. Once you've emphasized your expertise in efficiently handling the situations you'd likely face in the job, you'll have more bargaining power, which can translate into a more desirable salary, adds Michele Mavi, director of Internal Recruiting and Content Development, [Atrium Staffing](#).

Try to get a realistic sense of what the typical salary is for the job, taking industry, geographical, and the size of the organization into account, says Reynolds. Online resources such as [Glassdoor](#) can help.

Ultimately, deciding what you can and can't accept in terms of salary is a highly personal decision based on multiple factors, Mavi says, such as the realities of your economic situation and whether the job is something you truly want to do, even if it means less money. You may have to balance how badly you want or need a job with the salary offered, she adds. And that can depend upon your circumstances. If you're out of work and need the money, you should show you're flexible on salary, she points out. If your kids are grown and gone, your house is paid for, and you're going for a job that will truly fulfill you, you can also be more flexible if necessary.

"If you aren't familiar with the basics of sending a LinkedIn InMail, it's easy to accidentally send a message before you've finished writing it, when you tap the return or enter key."

6. You'll Only Look for Full-Time Jobs or Consider Permanent Positions

Maybe you want or need a full-time, permanent position (or as permanent as any job is today). But "many employers are looking to hire experienced workers for project assignments or temporary jobs, which can turn into full-time jobs," notes Art Koff, founder of [RetiredBrains](#), a job resource for boomers and retirees. So, look at temporary as well as permanent job listings, keeping in mind temporary gigs usually don't offer benefits, he notes.

In most cases, it's to your advantage to let a hiring manager know you'd accept a permanent position on a temporary, contract basis, in order to demonstrate your abilities, Koff says, adding that a time frame for the contract position should be set, such as two or three months, after which, if all parties agree, you can be converted to a full-time staffer.

Any suggestion that you'd accept a job on a temporary basis should only happen toward the end of your interview with the hiring manager, Koff continues. It can be risky to bring it up with a recruiter, Koff advises, as you might not be viewed as a serious candidate. "And you'll never reach the hiring manager if the recruiter doesn't feel you're an appropriate candidate," he says.

7. You Don't Mention Your Software Skills

As famed Silicon Valley venture capitalist Marc Andreessen pronounced, "[software is eating the world.](#)" turning practically every business into a software-driven enterprise. So it's a mistake not to list specific software programs among your skills on job applications, LinkedIn profiles, résumés and during interviews, says retained search consultant and executive résumé writer [Donna Svei](#). Recruiters often perform keyword searches on software vendors and programs on digitally submitted résumés, job applications and on LinkedIn, she explains. Some keyword search examples include Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint or Salesforce.

If you don't have software skills, it's time to acquire them through training. Should you land a job interview, you want to avoid making excuses such as, "My company didn't train me in that," or mention that a subordinate or younger staff member did that for you, says Meehl. Instead, show prospective employers that you're still learning new skills to keep yourself current.

"Be prepared to describe where you used specific applications, how you learned them and how your use of software helped your previous employer increase sales, reduce costs, accelerate processes," Svei adds.

Finally, remember it's not about you. It's about the employer. In job interviews, midlife job seekers sometimes make the mistake of focusing too much on what they've done and how they've done it, notes career consultant and Life Reimagined expert Rich Feller, Ph.D. While this is important, you should also talk about how you've collaborated with others, the value you added to the team and how those achievements translated into success. Telling stories that show your tech savvy, ability to learn, years of experience, and most important, how you'll make your potential boss's life easier can help you overcome any potential age-related concerns.

Over 40? 7 Things to Never Say in a Job Interview

What not to say in a job interview? Here are the world's worst interview answers - and what you should say instead

by Sarah Mahoney, AARP

March 14, 2018

As today's job hunters know, getting a [face-to-face interview](#) can feel like a career coup. It probably means you've sailed through numerous e-mail and phone screenings and are in a terrific position to sell your skills and experience to a new employer.

But you're not home free. Career experts say midlife job seekers have some blind spots, and are prone to subtle, sabotaging gaffes. "One big problem is they often assume they are pretty good at job interview answers," says Amanda Augustine, job search expert at The Ladders, the online employment site. "They've usually done a lot of them, and have

likely been on both sides of the desk. But just because you've been in hundreds of job interviews doesn't mean you can't brush up on your skills."

Here are seven worst job interview answers you can say during your precious 30 minutes.

1. "Am I over 18? You're kidding, right?"

While [interviewers can't ask how old you are](#), at least not legally, they are allowed to ask if you're over 18. Many do so, just to see how sensitive you are about your age. "Of course, it's a silly question," Augustine says. But even if you think a jovial response makes you seem relaxed about how old you are, save it for the next time you get carded at Safeway. Instead, just smile, and say, "Yes. I am over 18."

2. "I'm ready for a change."

As true as this may be, it's a terrible way to sell yourself to a potential employer, especially in this uncertain job market, says Roy Cohen, career coach and author of *The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide*. "I had a client say this recently in an interview, and really, why would any other company be interested in him? It gives the impression that he was bored, his experience was growing stale, and he was unmotivated. Otherwise, why would he stay in his field so long?"

So when they ask why you're looking for a new job or exploring a new field (and they will), "answer with something that shows you've given this a lot of thought, without any negativity. You don't want to sound like someone who copes with an unsatisfying job by bailing out."

3. "I've got 25 years of experience."

While you may think such statements make you a shoo-in, they are more likely to make you sound like a dinosaur. "What the interviewer hears is 'I'm so bogged down in what I believe I already know that I'll be difficult to work with,'" says Rosemary Hook, a recruiter in Austin, Texas. "You paint yourself as unfriendly to learning new things." Besides, in many industries, what was happening even five years ago is ancient history: Concentrate on your most recent experience, and how it applies to this company.

4. "I love Tweeting!"

You've no doubt heard that admitting you can't master your iPhone marks you as a technophobe, and that's a pervasive complaint employers have about applicants of a certain age. But touting your tech skills in ways that aren't relevant may seem like you're over-compensating, says Laura M. Iwanycky, a recruiting manager for Progressive Insurance. If you've used social media in the past to boost sales or create employee engagement, highlight it as part of your professional skill set.

5. "I see myself staying in this job until I retire."

While you might think such a statement demonstrates your commitment, avoid putting the r-word in their heads. Employers rightfully want applicants with plenty to give, not someone looking to coast through the last few years of their career, says Augustine.

6. "Tell me a little about the benefits."

"Think of a job interview like running for the Presidency," says Hook. "You must appear vibrant and healthy, able to bring energy to the job regardless of your gray hair." Asking about healthcare too early in the process may knock you off the short list.

7. "No, I don't have any more questions."

Almost all interviewers will end by asking you what else you'd like to know. Don't squander the opportunity to score more points, Augustine says. Some of her favorites:

- If I were to join this organization and be successful, what are the three things I would accomplish in my first 90 days?
- How do you see me stacking up against your other candidates?
- What is the time frame for hiring, and how would you like me to follow up?

The point is to leave on a note that conveys your enthusiasm and professionalism. Finally, don't be shy about talking around your age in constructive ways. "One of the great things about older workers, for example, is that they often have older or grown kids, and the ability to be more flexible in scheduling," says Augustine. "If that seems like it's important to this job, by all means say so."

Those are a few things you should not say in your job interviews.