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Job-search help for people over 50

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For anyone 50 or older searching for a job, the quest is almost always lengthy and often futile. But even in this tough economy, there are ways to increase your chances of finding a new job.

A big problem older job seekers have is they rely on tactics that worked in the past but are less effective today. "Too many people tend to look back on where they've been instead of putting top priority on where they're needed now," says Bob Sloane, co-author of "Fired at 50: How to Overcome the Greatest Executive Job Search Challenge" (OptiMarket, \$15). Sloane and co-author Tucker Mays founded Darien, Conn.-based executive coaching firm OptiMarket after both lost executive-level jobs during the downsizing of the 1990s.

While the book is aimed primarily at senior executives, the advice is sound for anyone older than 50. Sloane advises applicants to deal with the age issue head-on. First, accept that many employers cling to unfavorable stereotypes about older workers. "It's not just being over 50, it's what being over 50 implies," Sloane says. For example, some employers will be worried the older applicant won't be able to work for a younger boss, or that someone in their late 50s won't have the vigor to do the job. Make sure you counteract those obstacles, even if you are not questioned directly about them, by displaying a high energy level and assuring your potential employer you can work with a supervisor of any age.

Sloane is an advocate of social networking, specifically LinkedIn. "The reality is 80 percent of jobs are gained by networking," Sloane says. If you are lucky enough to snag an interview, Sloane says, make sure you have a well-thought-out and consistent "exit story" -- an acceptable reason why you left your last job. Additionally, he says, most interviewees do well using the "PAR" (problem, action, results) approach. "State a problem you faced in your career, state the action you took, and state the results you achieved," he says. "And keep your answers short."

To get help on your job search, Nassau and Suffolk counties offer many free services. Nassau is holding a series of employment workshops for those older than 55. For a list of workshops, go to 1.usa.gov/nassauworkshops. To register, call 516-227-8945. Suffolk's One-Stop Employment Center offers classes and instruction for all job seekers who live in the county. Go to bit.ly/suffolkjobhelp for a schedule of services.

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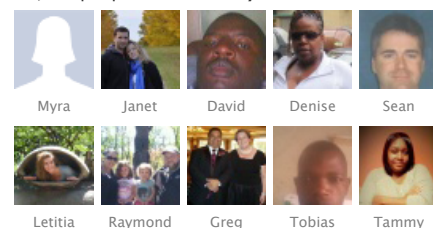
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