

Over 50 and Looking For Work?

If you have ever been made redundant, missed a promotion or simply left a job, starting the process of finding a new role can be challenging, particularly if you have been in your current role for more than three years.

It is even more challenging if you start believing that you are 'too old' for certain roles or you have a sense that you have missed out on a position because of your age.

There are many articles out there that say 'only tell them about the last 10 years' or 'don't put a photo on your LinkedIn profile' but this does not solve the issue.

I read a great article '[5 Things on Your Resume That Make You Sound Too Old](#)' by Marc Miller and I laughed, several times! I agreed with so many of the points.

But what I am more interested in doing is helping people understand how they can be perceived as a guru rather than a dinosaur.

How can you be a legend in your own lifetime on your own terms? No-one wants to live in memory-land and feel useless.

In certain cultures, age is associated with wisdom and elders are automatically given a great deal of respect because of their age. In a world buzzing with electronic devices and an ever-expanding range of technology, it is easy to assume that only the young have the ability to master these tools.

A young person may be able to learn how to use these tools more quickly, but that does not mean that they will automatically use them wisely. I enjoy teaching [old dogs new tricks](#) and new dogs old tricks. I find it interesting to observe how a wise person makes sense of new technology. It is very challenging to try and teach a young person to be wise instantly.

Let's look at a very simple example. In my youth, I was literally sent outside to play, every day. I had to use whatever I could find to amuse myself and keep myself amused for roughly nine hours. My siblings and I created all sorts of stories, activities and scenarios with a pile of dirt, sheets, a few toys, a swing, pegs, sticks, leaves, pots etc.

Compare this to a young child today. Unfortunately I see far too many young children with an electronic device that is actually dumbing down their brain – because the tools and the scenarios are 'provided' and the [gamification](#) process sets up a neural pathway of only doing something for a 'reward' and this is becoming widely recognized as a precursor for addiction.

In my outdoor play area, I was rewarded when I saw the end result of my 'constructions' and I actually had to deconstruct these at the end, so there was no attachment to an outcome, just an enjoyment of a process and a sense of satisfaction with completing a task, enjoying it for a period and then putting it all away ready for a different construction that would be either better or worse the next day (and it didn't matter if it was better or worse, it was just a different day!)

Anyway, let's get back to the original point. When I was in my early 20's and in recruitment, I can honestly say I could not see my future beyond the age of 30. I also felt that everyone over 30 was ancient! I went to a 40th Birthday Party when I was 26 and I have never heard so many complaints from people who hated their jobs, their lives, their partners and everything in general. I thought at the time, if I am like that when I am 40, please shoot me!

But I have managed to get past 40 and I am now 50 and I have no intention to stop doing the work I love and living life to the full. Fortunately, I meet a number of other people either my age or older who are also interested in continuing to grow and develop.

I visited my 98 year old grandmother interstate recently and she says that she was in excellent health until the age of 91 which was when she stopped playing lawn bowls! So technically I am literally midway through my life.

However, I also meet a lot of people who want to semi retire, only work part time or be valued for their brains rather than their brawn. Helping these people showcase their skills in a guru manner involves utilizing a variety of techniques.

1. Don't Mention Years of Experience

As I have said, it is so easy for a 20 year old to perceive someone with '25 years of senior management experience' as a dinosaur! If on the other hand, this person said 'senior management experience in manufacturing, finance and automotive industries,' a 20 year old can easily say 'wow.'

2. Reveal Your Achievements

You might not think that transforming a business from a \$3M to a \$25M annual turnover was anything special, just part of your job description, but in terms of percentages, that is over 800%. You may not be able to say the exact dollar figures for commercial in confidence reasons but you could certainly discuss the percentage – a big 'WOW.'

3. Don't Be Shy

You might start to think that sharing all of this information is over the top, but if you don't tell, you can't sell. It doesn't have to be just about monetary value either.

Perhaps you have increased the staff retention rate or created a more culturally diverse workforce by increasing the percentage of migrants or women in the organisation.

4. Be Quirky

It is liberating to be older. You can actually be proud to be who you are as you are no longer a young person trying to join a tribe and be part of a flock of sheep. You are more likely to be comfortable in your own skin and not a slave to the latest trend. You can reflect this in both the language you use and any photos you supply.

Have an energetic appearance (dilated pupils help), a dynamic posture and show how happy you are to be YOU. There is no need to apologize about your personal background, provided you are not breaking the law!

5. Keep Learning

There is never a time to rest on your laurels and assume that you know all that you need to know about your area of expertise. Make an effort to learn something new on a regular basis. If you go to a course, seminar or conference related to your specialty area, you should always be able to learn at least one new thing and share your knowledge with the other participants.

If people see you both online and in person in the 'marketplace' you are much more likely to be perceived as current and up to date rather than stuck in the past and collecting dust!

6. Understand Trends

There are many opportunities around so you need to keep up to date with general news and trends in your industry or profession. Use this language in your conversations and your digital content (LinkedIn, resume, social media and personal website). Share content about these trends through your networks and acknowledge other contributors in your area of expertise. If you are actively using social media, make sure you create about 70% of your content, curate or share about 20% of your content and use the last 10% of your time sharing your purpose or message (selling).

7. Be Flexible

It can be frustrating to realize that your area of specialty has changed so much that the demand for your skills is very low and there are possibly very few opportunities to

achieve your current goals. So do some research and find out if there are aspects of what you do that can be adjusted slightly with either new terminology or be transferred to a new industry.

You don't need to throw the 'baby out with the bathwater' and abandon everything you know. But you may need to adjust your approach, find solid data for decision making or network with other subject matter experts to find the new niches. Don't be locked in the past.

8. Don't Assume That Life Was Better When You Were Younger

It frustrates me when I hear mature job seekers complain about younger people getting the jobs that they want. So I ask them – 'Do you want to go back to working for \$20 per hour for 40 or more hours a week?' and they say 'no way.'

It is far better to look at your current situation and all of the variables and set some objectives that are more closely aligned with your values rather than your attitude. Perhaps you would like to work close to home three days a week and play more golf and travel? But you would also like to be paid well for your time? What is your real purpose?

At this point I want to remind you to remember some of the things you DID enjoy when you were younger. Are you still doing them now? Have you let those passions slip away? Is it time to rediscover them or find some new ones?

There is a saying, you are either 'green and growing or ripe and rotting.' Keep up your interests and you will keep being interesting!

Don't forget to also make healthy food choices and get some regular exercise out in the fresh air.

9. Focus On The Positive

This includes spending time with people who are positive. I have worked with many people who are starting a new enterprise and they are over 70 years old! If you spend all of your spare time with people who have 'given up' on their dreams or are happy with a mediocre status quo, how can you possibly expect to gain support or encouragement for your initiative?

You may realize that you have 85% of what you need for success but getting some professional advice could give you the last 15% and the results you seek! If you need help, source it (there are plenty of free and low cost options available too!)

10. Be A Legend And Leave Your Legacy

You may not think of yourself as a legend or even believe that you could be one. In my opinion, a legend is someone who has the courage to live according to their highest values. If that is to simply be the best parent or grandparent you can be, then bravo! If you have managed to achieve some form of positive change in your local community – well done! Legends leave a legacy by inspiring one or more people to live according to their highest values or achieve just one of their goals. Don't measure your value exclusively in terms of assets or public awards or medals. Some of the quietest achievers have made the biggest difference to the world – or just one person.

These tips may help you realize that you don't necessarily want a full time role in an organisation in the future and that may be scary! You might decide that now is the time to take the first steps towards the goal you have always wanted to achieve. You may like to contact someone you know and congratulate them on the legend they have created or the various legacies they have achieved.

If you want to move away from the sense of being a 'dinosaur,' you will need to take action. You will need to:

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1. Clarify your values
2. Clarify your purpose
3. Clarify your lifestyle

4. Clarify what you need to do
5. Take action and do it
6. Reflect, review and revise
7. Move forward again

You can be a 'legend in your own lifetime' and be valued for your true guru qualities. All of us have some unique and special gifts and we have a wonderful opportunity to share these with our friends, family, colleagues and community. In my opinion, we are never too old to be useful and rather than wait to die, let's learn to live until we die.