

Instructor's Guide

for

Keys to Getting Hired for Job Seekers over 50

- *Job Search Steps That Get Results*
- *Resumes and Cover Letters That Work*
- *Ace the Interview and Get the Job*

Overview

Older workers face the same difficult job market that job seekers of all ages do, but they also must overcome additional obstacles, including employer concerns about salary, longevity, and health. Though it is illegal to discriminate against job applicants based on age, some employers still have a bias against workers over fifty. They worry that such workers are not technologically savvy or up to date on their skills or education. They are concerned that older workers are not a good long term investment. Because of this, today's older job-seekers need to know how to best position themselves in the job market—how to leverage their work experience and showcase their transferable skills. After all, older workers usually have the attitude, work ethic, and hands-on-experience that employers admire and require.

This set of videos discusses the three keys to getting hired for those over fifty: networking to find openings, creating an attention-getting and professional resume and cover letter, and preparing for and acing the job interview. Each video highlights specific strategies that older job seekers can use to show employers they are the best fit for the job.

Presentation Suggestions

Begin by asking participants about their own experiences with finding work. Have they had difficulties finding openings? Building a network of contacts? Do they struggle with resume writing? Or are they more worried about the interview process? Have they ever felt like their age and work experience has been a barrier rather than a boon when it comes to getting hired? Make a list of the kinds of difficulties your group of job seekers has faced, highlighting similar experiences. Assure them that the video and the work they do following will help alleviate some of their fears and empower them with time-tested strategies for succeeding at all stages of the job search. Remind them that finding a job is a skill—one that can be learned and improved. Finally, have them brainstorm potential strategies that could use to improve their chances of getting hired.

When you feel participants have begun thinking about these issues, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to watching the video. If you wish, allow the participants to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the videos. Encourage participants to take notes or to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the videos.

At the conclusion of the video, ask participants to discuss any changes they made to their answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information they learned. Follow up this discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from participants or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group. Assign one or more of the **Homework Options**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You may revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. True or false: Most people find their next job through “word of mouth.”
2. What is the point of a cover letter?
3. Name three things you can do to prepare for an interview the night before.
4. What are the keys to making a good first impression?

Answer Key

1. True.
2. A cover letter provides specific reasons for why you are good fit for the position—it ties your skills directly to the job requirements and shows how your goals and values align with those of the organization.
3. *(Answers may vary)* Research the company online ahead of time. Eat right and get a good night’s rest. Prepare your clothing the night before. Map your route. Double check your resume and print out additional copies.
4. *(Answers may vary)* Dress professionally, smile, introduce yourself, extend your hand for a friendly but firm handshake, and try to relax.

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Three Question Interview

Format: Pairs

Time: 20-25 minutes

Materials: Questions printed out or on board or overhead

Procedure:

1. Split the group into pairs for mock interviews. Give each participant three questions from those listed below. These can be assigned at random or participants can choose which ones they want asked. If there is a particular question that your participants feel they've struggled with in the past, you can have all pairs include that question.

What are your strengths?

What are your weaknesses?

Why are you interested in working for this company?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Why do you want to leave your current company?

Why was there a gap in your employment?

Tell me about an accomplishment you're most proud of.

What are your salary requirements?

Tell me about a time you had to work as part of a group.

Give a time when you went above and beyond the requirements for a project.

2. Participants should take turns as interviewer and interviewee asking and answering the questions provided. After each mock interview, have the participant playing the role of interviewer tell how he or she thought the interview went and offer suggestions for improvement.
3. At the end of the role-playing session, discuss what made for effective and ineffective answers to each question. If you'd like, you can choose three participants to interview you using the questions they found most difficult. Just be prepared to model good answers!

Activity #2

Title: Resume Renovation

Format: Pairs or Small Groups

Time: 20-25 minutes

Materials: Copy of current resume, sample resumes of all types, paper, pen or pencil

Procedure:

1. Make sure participants know to bring their current resume to class. Spend some time discussing the differences between resume formats, specifically between the chronological and functional resumes. Show examples of each. (Free sample resumes are widely available for teaching purposes online.) Pick one resume and highlight several changes you would make to turn it into a functional, combination, and targeted resume.

2. Split participants into pairs and have them decide what format their current resumes take. (Most of them will probably be chronological.) Have each participant decide on a different format they would like to try. With their partners' help, participants should revise their current resume to fit the new format. (They can always redo it on a computer later.) Provide assistance and coaching where needed.
3. When each participant has had the chance to revise their resume to fit the new format, come back together as a class to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each. Have participants tell which format they like better and why.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the similarities and differences between an interview over the phone, via video, and in person? What specific strategies would you use for each?
2. There are four different styles of resumes: chronological, functional, combination, and targeted. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Which one best fits your work experience and why?
3. Technology has drastically changed how we network. What online tools are best for establishing and maintaining a network? How do you most effectively use LinkedIn and social networking sites, such as Facebook, to find job leads?
4. Employers are interested in your skills most of all—they want to know what you can *do* to help their company succeed. What can you do showcase your skills on your resume? In a cover letter? During an interview?
5. Employers sometimes fear that older workers are no longer up-to-date with regards to skills, training, and technology use. What can workers over fifty do to convince prospective employers that their skills are relevant and that they are current in their field? What role does continuing education play in this?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for participants to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise.

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. Your resume is often the first contact an employer has with you.
2. Most of your time in a job search should be spent looking for job openings online in sites like Monster and CareerBuilder.
3. Resumes should never be more than one page long.
4. Your dress and grooming play a huge role in making first impressions.

5. You should come prepared to ask questions of your own during an interview.
6. You should keep negative feelings about past employers to yourself during an interview.
7. You should not submit the same resume for every position.
8. Social networking sites such as Facebook have no value when it comes to job searching.
9. It is illegal to discriminate against a potential job seeker based on age.
10. Functional resumes are best for job seekers who want to emphasize their skills.

Answer Key

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. True

Homework Options

Keeping Current. The video stresses the need to stay current, to know what is happening in your community, especially with regards to the job market. Using local news sources and online resources, identify three changes currently taking place in your city or town with regards to local businesses and work opportunities. These can include new companies or industries, government regulations, changes in unemployment, job fairs, and so on. Come to class prepared to share the results of your findings.

Building Your Network. The easiest way to start building your network is to make a list of all the people you know. Often it is easier if you break this list into categories: family, friends, colleagues, people from clubs and organizations you are a member of, former classmates, people you know online, and so on. Using these categories and others of your own devising, come up with three names of potential contacts for each (three family members, three friends, three work colleagues, etc.). If you have a LinkedIn account or other social networking accounts, try to locate each of these people and ask to add them to your online network. Also be sure to ask them if they know of any potential job openings in your field.

Staying on Target. Identify an employer in your area that you would like to work for and a specific job title you are interested in. (*Note:* It does not matter if the employer has any open positions or not.) Research the company online, taking note of their mission statement, history, and future plans. Create a targeted resume specifically geared towards this company and a targeted cover letter inquiring if there are any positions available.

Summary Statement: At the end of the interview, it can be beneficial to deliver a prepared summary statement that statement about why you believe you're a good fit for the position. Emphasize the specific skills you possess that address the company's needs and wants. Repeat your interest in the position and let the employer know you will be following up with them soon based on any parameters they gave you earlier during the interview. Thank them for their time in meeting with you.

Staying Educated: Employers are often concerned that workers over the age of fifty lack the necessary computer and technology skills to succeed in today's world of work. However there are many ways for older workers to keep their skills current, such as taking classes through a local community college or attending free workshops sponsored by a local library. Have participants identify one or two continuing education or professional development opportunities offered in their area. They should bring this information in and share it with the rest of the class.