



❑ The worst thing you can do is live down to the expectations of what an older worker is. Energy and enthusiasm come from good health and a positive attitude. Do you see wisdom and maturity as strengths?



❑ Most mature workers must work longer than they planned. Good health can help you more easily cope with the reality of working longer. It is time to follow the advice we have been hearing for years regarding medical care, exercise and good nutrition. This is the time to see your doctor and develop a health plan.



❑ We should be better at planning and developing strategies given our life experience. How do we use this experience to help us in an ever changing employment landscape.

# 2009 HR focus

How to market and sell your experience in a competitive market  
*Old does not mean over (unless you accept this proposition). A mature worker brings: wisdom, planning skills, life experiences, along with years of dealing with people. We have a vision for how our action affects an outcome and from experience we can anticipate consequences that a younger worker might not see. So how do we promote this unique tool kit?*



## Career Strategies for Boomers

Do you wake up in the morning and just lie there for a few minutes to see if anything hurts? I know every morning that I get up and am fully mobile with no aches or pains – is probably a good day. No, I am not ready for the nursing home, but I do recognize the reality that I cannot do everything that I did at one time in my life. Acknowledging the changes and aging with grace is sometimes a challenge. Now I have to compete in the workplace with people half my age. I have to marshal my strength and address/cope with the weaknesses. I was originally writing this newsletter to help others but I am now in the process of using my own advice to find my next role.

Baby boomers are now working longer to get to retirement. Many have seen investments decline and their taxes rise dramatically. With a down economy they have also suffered the added stress of being displaced or out of work and trying to fight their way back in. They are competing with smart, high energy, youthful candidates who seem to be at the peak of their game. What to do?

- 1) Do a self assessment. A lot of younger job candidates do a poor job of taking stock of what they have to offer. Look at your: resume, references, network, unique experiences, learnings from past mistakes. It might help to actually write this down.
- 2) Write the resume. For experienced workers I suggest you condense and prioritize. Look at writing a chronological and functional resume. The benefits of doing both of these resumes provides a way to review your career from several angles and helps to prepare you for your next interview. You do not have to wave your age in front a prospective employer (like showing school/college graduation) but you do not have to hide your experience (like leaving out 10 years of your work experience so that you appear to be younger)

## Coach, Mentor, Guide

I had to laugh recently when I met a young MBA who was in his late twenties. When I asked him what he did, he said he was a management coach. I am the last person to diminish someone’s career goals, but this young man clearly lacked the simple “time on the job” to coach anyone. Whether you aspire to me in management or you are an individual contributor, do not overlook the insight and wisdom that your years of experience can provide to an organization or company. Most people are fired, not for lack of technical skills, but for the inability to see the big picture and integrate their skills into an organization’s culture and vision.

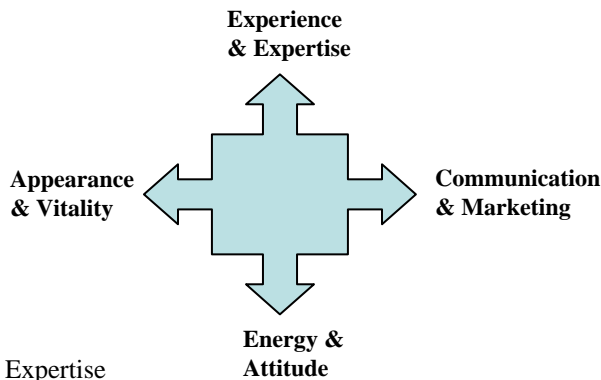


# Career Strategies for Boomers

*Some opinions and hints on your resume (there are many views on what to do – these have worked for me and hopefully will again!)*

- A) Make sure you have a contemporary resume. Go on line and find a template that has good lines, that is organized and reflects your style. It does not have to be one page – that is some myth that has perpetuated from when people went to college and had no work experience. Keep it organized and succinct.
- B) Do not put dates of graduation next to your schools. The schools and degrees are quite relevant, but the dates will provide no value for you, nor should they for the employer. You are well within appropriate parameters when you leave out the dates. If you have the credentials as presented, that is all you need to show.
- C) You can condense your older jobs by showing the company name, dates of employment and job title. Another approach is to state: *Jobs prior to 1984 provided upon request*. The danger in simply leaving out job history is that it could appear like a misrepresentation or that you are hiding something. This is the old “sin of omission”.
- D) Do give specific examples of projects, change management, areas where you added value to an organization – younger candidates may only have read about this in books – you lived it! Talk about how you applied your knowledge.

## The Model



## ☐ Experience & Expertise

The issue of competing with a younger smarter job seeker is a real issue. Rather than focus on the missing components, why not look at what your experience does for a company. These businesses need to navigate a tough economy. Most presidents/CEOs are looking to their workforce for ideas and solutions to the revenue and budget issues. Who better understands how companies operate in tough times than those who lived through it? Who has worked with customers and really understands the psychology of what motivates buying behavior and how to adapt and change style to better support the customer needs. Sales theory and business courses are a good foundation, but in economic times like this – nothing can replace experience. What are your key skills that derive from experience/maturity:

- Ability to see the big picture, not just your role, your department’s impact or that of a particular group
- Insight to anticipate the consequences of action or decisions before they are implemented
- Maturity to collaborate with people of different styles, approaches or backgrounds – understanding the value of a different perspective
- Planning skills that incorporate real life obstacles and issues. The difference between reading about planning and project management and living through the real obstacles and issues that impact workflow.

# Vitality:

# 2009



According to Wikipedia, the definition of vitality is:

*The capacity to live and develop; energy or vigor; That which distinguishes living from nonliving things*

Sounds like we have some choice in the matter, we are not physically as young as we once were, but we can still have energy, vigor and passion about our lives....and yes our work. This takes conscious effort and self awareness about how we act and the level of joy and energy we present.

## Consulting, Part-time, Temporary, Volunteer?

So you are not Warren Buffet, but the full time gig does not appear to be on the near term radar. You are sitting at home sending resumes, calling agencies and friends and applying on-line. Depending on your skillset, you might be able to do projects for certain companies or clients. Approaching a company to do smaller, more defined tasks might get more attention. Offering to work a reduced or shared schedule might make sense for some companies. Filling in for an employee who is on leave or disability may also give you a foot in the door when it comes time for full time hire. If all else fails helping other individuals or volunteering at a non-profit can help to lift your spirits.



## ❑ Communication & Marketing

If you visit any job boards on on-line career forums, you will read lots of stories and issues about bad interviews or strange interview questions. The web is loaded with sites full of potential interview questions and interview strategies. My opinion, is that more experienced workers know themselves and their capabilities. Many younger workers are reading interview questions and trying to memorize the “right” answer that will impress that next employer. Experienced workers can express their answers to interview questions in real life examples. You have the living experience about how projects can go wrong or communications can fail and you know what to do about it. Be confident in what you offer to future employer

This is a time to package the experience and tangible examples of the work, programs and projects that you worked on in your career. Another key area is managing transitions. Experienced workers no how to maintain productivity while the workplace around them is changing. Whether you lived through downsizing, acquisitions, restructuring, re-engineering, re-organization or budget cuts, you know that in business the only answer to keep producing at the best level and adding the most value you can. This can lot be learned in school, in a book or on-line

## ❑ Appearance & Vitality

Recently a consultant at a large search firm told me the one of biggest issues for experienced workers is their lack of vitality. The often show up in clothes that they wore in the 70’s. They seem out-of-touch and lack the presence to match their life experiences. This is such a personal issue, but if you are 25 pounds overweight and still wearing that suit that you bought for your first job – the negative outcome of your job search could be, in part, due to your image. We can all identify with the difficulty of staying fit and dressing appropriately – that is why it matters. When you look in the mirror before you go out for that next interview – would you hire you?

## ❑ Energy & Attitude

A few months ago, I attended a networking group session with out of work professionals. Most of these people had jobs that paid \$75k or more and had great company benefits. Many had worked at their companies for 5 years or more. The majority of these individuals had been out of work for 6 months or longer. This is terrible. These people, their families, friends and communities are all impacted by this. It is hard to advise people in these circumstances to “keep a good attitude” or “stay strong” when everything seems to be going wrong.

After being out in this market, I can say that many wonderful people (former colleagues, my network, friends and family) have been nothing but helpful and supportive. At a time like this, if you are working, you should take some time to get back to someone in need or offer to keep you eyes open for opportunities (and really do it!). Nothing is more meaningful right now than a supportive phone call or someone offering to meet for a cup of coffee or lunch. I can also tell you that it is still disappointing to see that lack of support that comes from a market like this.

Some employers should be ashamed of their shabby treatment of job applicants. I am sure that they can be overwhelmed with resumes, but I hear so many stories of people who are interviewed who never hear back. Job seekers who have phone interviews but never get feedback on their status or what they could do differently. There are people who called you every day when you were employed to sell you their services, but when you were not employed, you could not even get a return phone call.

So what's the point? The point is that there are many reasons to be down – to not feel good about yourself or where you are in this process. No one could blame you for being upset when it feels like you are getting kicked from a lot of directions. The problem is that no one will hire a whining, angry, complaining employee. This comes across on your, face, your word and your tone. The longer you are out of work the harder it is to maintain this positive perspective – but all I can say is that you have to. You will have to marshal every ounce of positive energy and good attitude that you can. If you were hiring, you would only hire the person that you want to work with and who will be productive for your organization. It is also hard to be angry for weeks on end, and then trying to put on a good face the day you have an interview. This is a huge challenge, but you have to find ways to keep the positive energy – do not allow yourself to be defeated.

As I said, earlier, I was originally writing this for people out their in a tough market – trying to provide a few points to help them think through what they have to offer. I am now in the same boat – I will take stock of my energy and attitude every day – be grateful for what I have and be optimistic about the future. Good luck to every person who is going through this right now.



### **Al Zink**

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