

COTA ACT
Mature Age Employment Research
Stage 2 Project Report

*Success Factors:
Mature Age Workers (55+) in Paid Employment*

August 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report offers positive examples of mature aged workers aged 55+ who are continuing their working journey in paid employment. It is based on a social action research project completed by Dr. Sherene Suchy (AASW) for COTA ACT June - August 2015.

Social action research focuses on the value of ‘lived experience’. In this case, the research participants were a sample group of 20 workers over age 55, fully engaged with paid work, and happy to share their success factors with others.

Several of the research participants had taken voluntary redundancies and time out to refresh after thirty plus years in the workforce. Then, they went back to work. Others had retrained and started ‘encore’ careers. Most of them used recruitment agencies and found their assistance invaluable.

This Stage 2 research project builds on the ‘Stage 1’ project completed by Dr. Sherene Suchy for COTA ACT in March 2015. The Stage 1 project explored possible barriers to mature aged employment from the recruitment agencies point of view (Suchy, 2015). The agencies all agreed – age does not matter – and... they said, mature age workers need to be the agents for change regarding ageism in the workplace.

The Stage 2 research project extended the good will and relationships developed with the recruitment agencies. The researcher asked the recruitment agencies to provide names and contact details for mature age workers (over age 55) who had successfully gained employment through their agency in the last 18 months. The target sample group was capped at 20 participants due to resource and time constraints. Two more participants were included to explore issues with intergenerational management because – ageism cuts both ways.

The *Conclusion* highlights ten success factors – and – readers are urged to read the participants interview notes in *Appendix 2*. We hope their stories will be published in the future in a format that will benefit other workers – regardless of age.

We also hope the ACT Government will fund suggestions described in *Recommendations*. Recommendations included having resumes professionally written, developing a mentor network, and providing management training in both *Diversity Management: Cross-generational Teams* and *Selection and Interviewing*.

We are indebted to the recruitment agencies for their willingness to support this project, the mature age workers who shared their success factors, and the younger EL1 and EL2 managers who shared suggestions to help our workplaces thrive.

We hope their lived experience inspires others to be change agents – contributing, learning, and growing – no matter what age.

Dr. Sherene Suchy (AASW)
August 2015

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INTRODUCTION

According to Susan Ryan, Australia's Ambassador for Mature Age Employment and the Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner with the Australian Human Rights Commission, the loss of human capital over age 50 is a tragedy and is creating economic problems for Australia's health and pension systems (Ryan, 2015-A). Even the rock star legend Madonna has been described as a crusader, *willingly or not*, against age discrimination (Dunn 2015:19).

According to Ryan, not everyone sees the *power* of oldness (Ryan, 2015-B). At a seminar in July 2014 in Canberra hosted by the IRT Foundation and the ACT Government, guest speakers came together around a central message -- we need to use our heads to build stronger business hearts so people can age without barriers. Ryan described age discrimination as forced voluntary redundancies, denial of training opportunities and promotions, and lengthy periods of time trying for job interviews. Ryan said, "We need positive examples of employers doing the right thing!"

How about positive examples of mature aged workers doing the right thing?

This research report offers positive examples of mature age workers doing the right thing in Canberra. It is based on a social action research project completed by Dr. Sherene Suchy for COTA ACT between June - August 2015.

Social action research focuses on the value of 'lived experience'. In this case, the research participants were a sample group of 20 workers over age 55, fully engaged with work, and happy to share their success with others. A brief summary of key insights will be described in *Success Factors* and – readers are urged to read the interview transcripts in *Appendix 2*.

Several of the research participants had taken voluntary redundancies and time out to refresh after thirty plus years in the workforce. Then, they went back to work. Others had retrained and started 'encore' careers. A few participants did have lengthy periods of time trying to get job interviews and decided to tackle the challenge in new ways. Many used recruitment agencies and found their assistance essential during the long-term recruitment freeze enforced by the current government in Canberra. As Australia's national capital, the primary employer in Canberra is the federal government followed by the ACT government.

The Stage 2 research report builds on a 'Stage 1' project completed for COTA ACT in March 2015. The Stage 1 project explored possible barriers to mature aged employment from the recruitment agencies point of view (Suchy, 2015). The agencies all agreed – age does not matter. If you think you can do the job, apply. Possible barriers included security clearance and citizenship with the Federal Government and lack of effective leadership training for younger EL 1 and 2 staff who make the recruitment decisions within government.

The *Conclusion* to the Stage 1 research project report described a range of insights about the Canberra job market due to government being the primary employer. The agencies said there *were* opportunities available, on short and long term contracts, and encouraged mature age workers to invest in know how – retrain for life long education. The agencies all agreed on the power of positive self-perception. They said changing attitudes toward mature age workers starts *with* mature age workers who take an active role as change agents in reform.

The Stage 2 research project extended the good will and relationships developed with the recruitment agencies. Described in *Methodology*, the researcher asked the recruitment agencies to provide the names and contact details for mature aged workers (over age 55) who had successfully gained employment through their agency in the last 18 months.

Due to resource and time constraints, the target sample group was capped at 20 participants with individual thirty-minute phone interviews. Participants were asked about their experience with the job application process, their strategy for success, current work situation, summary of success factors, and suggestions for other mature age workers.

Having said the focus for the Stage 2 project was lived experience, there were a few articles, interviews, and public talks that will be described in the *Literature Review*. They highlight ongoing challenges with ageism in the workplace.

According to some COTA research participants, and the Westpac Women of Influence Report, ageism cuts both ways and gender wars are far from over (Stewart: 2015: 8). Of the Gen Y respondents in the Westpac report, 41% believed they were more likely to experience ageism through either lower pay than their older peers or missing out on pay rises. One in three said they were given fewer training and development opportunities because of their youth and older peers were not sharing knowledge or helping them develop.

Participants in the COTA ACT research included younger EL1 and 2 managers who shared similar perceptions. Some of the ‘older peers’ in the COTA research shared their perceptions of younger co-workers. Both made suggestions described in *Issues*.

The *Conclusion* pulls together what appeared to be key themes with the sample group’s current experience in the Canberra job market. We hope their stories will eventually be published in a format that will benefit other workers – regardless of age.

We also hope the ACT Government will fund suggestions described in *Recommendations*.

We are indebted to the recruitment agencies for their willingness to support the research project and to the mature age workers who were generous and willing participants. We hope their lived experience inspires others to be change agents – contributing, learning, and growing – no matter what age.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the last decade, there have been major changes to the way people look for jobs and the way organisations look for people to fill jobs. In the old days, people looked in newspapers for positions vacant. Now, electronic job boards such as SEEK.com or E-job boards specific to industry sectors, professional groups, and recruitment agencies list positions. Instead of ‘one’ source, people seeking employment have to search many sources.

And... a specialist heading up Horizon One boutique recruitment agency in Canberra pointed out that job boards fail to connect with top talent: “The efficacy of generalist job boards as a means for connecting with high-calibre candidates is fading... rapidly” (Cox, 2015:10). He listed several reasons why:

- Time – generalist job boards generate 98% unsuitable candidates.
- Proactive – the best people are not relying on job boards –passive job seekers may be proactively looking for the right opportunity – but not through job boards. They have their name ‘out there’ and are waiting for the right opportunity to come to them.
- Multiple channels – Linked In and other ways of connecting people online such as personal referrals is the key to sourcing the right talent for some recruitment agencies.

Cox suggested the humble telephone is a critical tool to source talent and secure referrals. The recruitment agency chooses to proactively call through their trusted networks to find clients with unique talent that can’t be accessed through job listings.

Along with this process, is an expectation that individual’s must have a ‘digital presence’ through Facebook, Linked In, or Twitter. Not everyone agrees with the push for a ‘digital presence’. For example, a well-known Australian author (Jones 2015) said recently he did not feel the need to go down the ‘digital identity’ tract because his identity as a writer was more complex than the façade of Facebook or the tenuous endorsement suggested by Linked In. Colleagues have complained about being asked to ‘endorse someone professionally’ on Linked In when they have never actually worked with the person so they declined the invitation. After a university database at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra was hacked in 2012, exposing the identification details of 10,000 students and 1900 staff, ADFA students, academics, and Defence force staff were advised to erase their electronic lives – no Facebook, Google, or iTunes accounts (Mannheim 2015: 9).

What’s the moral to this story for mature aged workers? As you read participant’s reflections on success factors in the COTA research, make a note of how many of them were proactive in developing relationships with two or three recruitment agencies. They stayed in contact with the agencies even if it took 18 months to find the right position. No one specifically mentioned Linked In, except the recruitment agencies.

‘Suzie’ is responsible for Group Talent Attraction and Global Mobility at Hays, a global recruitment agency. She is often asked about how to cope with rejections along the job application path and said, “See what can be learned from the experience rather than giving up” and offered suggestions (Hays 2015).

- Don’t take it personally: Perhaps the position didn’t really match up, or the employer wanted a key skill, or there were changes in the work place.
- Measured response: Respond by considering what happened and what can be done to improve chances next time. Be very careful not to criticise the recruitment firm or the organisation – it is a very small world.

- Seek feedback: Ask for information behind the rejection. It could have been timing, budgets, changing needs. With a rejection, get in contact with the recruiter or employer by email and ask for constructive feedback. Asking for feedback builds the relationship.
- Refocus: Refresh attitude after rejection – focus on the end goal. Consider retraining and volunteer opportunities using the skills you want to strengthen. Apply for the right jobs.

What's the moral to this story for mature age workers? Participants in the COTA project talked about dealing with rejection. They used it as an opportunity to reflect on what they *really* wanted to do, questioned whether the organisation *really* knew what they wanted, and worked proactively to make sure their personal networks knew what they were looking for and that they were job ready -- ready to hit the ground running.

A report in June 2015 by business services company PwC ranked the UK 19th out of 34 of the OECD countries based on the company's *Golden Age Index* (Recruiter, 2015). The Index ranks countries according to a number of factors, including employment rates, earnings and training of workers aged 55-69. The article highlighted suggestions from the Head of PwC's global people and organisation practice who said, "Measures such as tax rebates for companies taking on older workers, increased spending on retraining older workers including digital skills and apprenticeships, and enforcing age discrimination laws more strictly could be all considered as a way to boost participation of people aged over 55 in the workforce." The article concluded with comments from the managing director of EMEA Search, at online executive search firm Future Step that is part of Korn Ferry. The director reinforced the responsibility employers have to retain experienced talent, and to reward loyalty and commitment through career development programs to ensure workers are supported to progress *regardless of age*.

What's the moral to this story for mature aged workers? Participants in the COTA project positioned themselves as experienced talent and highlighted their loyalty and commitment to the organisations they were working for. They also helped mentor younger staff so they too could realize their full potential -- *at any age*.

An article in *The Economist* (Buttonwood, 2014: 71) said in Britain, the proportion of men aged over 65 in employment has risen from less than 8% at the turn of the century to more than 13% today; for women, the increase has been from just over 3% to more than 7%. A similar trend in the USA since 2000, employment of those aged 65 and over has risen by 51% while that of those aged 25-64 has fallen 3.5%. The field where a growing number of older workers will be needed is -- looking after those who are even older. At the moment, around 80% of staff in residential care and social work are women - 16% are aged over 55.

A researcher on the impact of the labour market and older workers described a recent report from The Australian Institute of Management that said different age groups want different types of work place flexibility (Davey, 2015: 16). A gradual reduction in hours leading up to retirement was the preferred option for older workers. One of the barriers to working beyond pension eligibility age was the inability to access greater work place flexibility.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a specialist in social action research, the recruitment agencies were contacted that participated in the Stage 1 research to see if they would contribute names and contact details for mature age workers (over age 55) who had successfully gained employment through their agency in the last 18 months.

A letter from COTA ACT was provided describing the background to Stage 2 research, the researcher's experience and qualifications, confidentiality, timelines, and the deadline for COTA ACT to submit recommendations for funding to the ACT Government.

As lead researcher, qualifications include a Social Work degree, Graduate Diploma in Communication Management, a Masters, and a PhD. Professional memberships include the Australian Association of Social Work (strict guidelines on ethical practice) and the ACT Writers Centre (registered as a creative non-fiction writer with several publications).

Due to resource and time constraints, the target sample group was capped at 20 participants with the addition of two young EL1 and EL2 managers. Sample group or N = 22.

During June and July 2015, each individual was contacted with the cover letter from COTA ACT explaining the research, a copy of the interview questions, and options for booking a thirty-minute phone interview.

During the phone interview, participants were asked about their experience with the job application process, their strategy for success, current work situation, summary of success factors, and suggestions for other mature aged workers. A copy of the Interview Protocol is in *Appendix 1*.

Interviews were not taped but transcribed from notes taken during the interview. The notes are not verbatim but as true as possible to the participant's contribution.

The interviews were analysed for repeat patterns of experience (shared trends), unique insights (every working journey is different), and suggestions for other mature age workers (success factors). The complete transcripts are in *Appendix 2*.

SUCCESS FACTORS

Social action research is built on the value of lived experience. In this case, the lived experience of 22 participants discussing mature age employment in Canberra. The participant's reflections revealed a rich array of personal strategies for success and practical suggestions for others. Please read the complete transcripts in *Appendix 2*.

Here are the highlights:

Interview Code

001: Go freelance! Freelance is freedom. It took seven years to develop relationships within a professional network before a position on a national board (in my industry sector) was offered. A supportive partner helps.

002: The boutique recruitment agencies were helpful...in the meantime – go freelance! Learn to value yourself with a dollar sign. A supportive partner helps. Stay connected with friends and family. Practice healthy living [eat, sleep, walk].

003: Be selective in what you apply for. Use filters to narrow down the search field (SEEK – online job search). Let people know what you are looking for including friends who may not know what you actually do! Don't get discouraged. It is hard to sell yourself. In the old days, the application process was more measured, personal, and person focused than it is today.

004: Ask mentors for help with contacts. Coach yourself and get a mentor. Mentoring is about asking questions, drawing out what concerns you may have, how you managed to gain experience in the past, your goals, and who and what you bring to a work situation. Volunteering is a good way to start learning and networking. Face it – it is hard. Put yourself in an environment where you have nurturing and mentors.

005: I sat on over 100 interview panels and watched the way resumes were sorted and chucked out. Sort out your Resume so it stands out in relation to the job. Get an interview – face-to-face communication is what gets the job.

006: The focus in Canberra is on the Federal government. I used self-analysis to understand my strong family value on the work ethic. Keep up with your industry sector and subscribe to newsletters. Read!

007: As a mature age student, I retrained and had an internship that led to a job. Volunteering helped develop the skill that got me that job. Prior experience in the Public Service boosted my confidence. Be canny about what job you want and that it actually suits you. [See: *Issues* re: experience with younger EL1 & 2 managers]

008: [See *Issues* re: experience as a younger EL1 or 2 manager].

009: Retirement or redundancy is not the end of life – people go back to work on contract. I've had twelve years as the director of a boutique recruitment agency and suggest you get a copy of a research report published in 2005 by CPA Australia titled *A Mature Solution: Focus on Barriers to Re-Entry and Mature Age Workers*.

010: Having a lot of experience works to my advantage. Canberra is all about the government sector and it has been difficult due to the freeze and then loss of 7,000 staff. Question yourself – Can you make a contribution? Would you enjoy the job? Could you pass it by? Treat people with respect – up, down, and all around.

011: Structure your Resume to keywords that stand out – you want your Resume to stand out. Keep physically fit, look after your health and eat properly to keep energy up. Age gracefully and be proud of it.

012: It does get harder as you get older – you see similar things happening, same old track! [See *Issues* re: experience with younger EL 1 or 2 managers].

013: The recruitment agency was very positive during the 18-month process looking for a job. During the down time, repaired the house, had a holiday, and time with friends. Work hard and go until the job is done. Don't think anything is beneath you. Age is not a barrier for contracts. Walk everyday, keep positive, see friends, and keep up with your social life.

014: [See *Issues* re: experience as a younger EL1 or 2 manager].

015: List yourself with several recruitment agencies. Target roles you want. Keep your Resume up to date. Have strong referees. Canberra is a hard place to break into unless you have been living and working here. In lieu of that, join community groups to develop networks. Accept that security clearance and citizenships requirement will always be barriers with the Public Service. To get around that, get a basic entry-level job and work your way in from there so the security clearance is not so intrusive.

016: Get your Resume rewritten by a professional. I took an APS 3 job to get in the door. Don't try to be part of the younger crowd – be confident. I learned to big note myself a bit with the younger crowd by talking about my work at the US Embassy and in strategy to show them I had experience and am worthy of respect.

017: Have your CV or Resume written by a professional who can reduce the pages and focus on the business. Don't be disappointed if you don't get the job – need to be resilient. Knock backs are the nature of the beast. Get your resume professionally written – I got more interviews after I had it done. [See *Issues* re: experience with younger EL1&2 managers].

018: Use recruitment agencies because the Public Service goes to agencies who nominate names and send Resumes to the PS. Remember – selection is a process of elimination, not selection – it all starts with the Resume and it will be eliminated if it does not reflect the selection criterion.

019: I am not a networker so I built my reputation instead and that has put me in good stead.

020: Build a reputation and then rely on your good work record. Get along with people – build relationships rather than 'them and us'. [See *Issues* re: younger EL1&2 managers].

021: Canberra is a funny place. Departments have urgent needs for three-week tasks or twelve-month tasks. They go look for 'greybeards' – people they know can hit the ground running and can be relied on. [Participant admitted it was difficult for women to be

‘greybeards’ – the gender bias was acknowledged]. Be reliable, available, and adaptable. Build a good reputation. Once an organisation gets what they want then they'll ask you again!

022: As the regional director of a recruitment agency, age does not matter... In my experience, it would be discriminatory to have a Job Board for mature age workers. It would be a complete waste of time. Every recruitment agency has their jobs online and they all believe – age does not matter. To succeed? Be bloody persistent and you need resilience. You may have been an EL 1 and re-entering as a Grade 6 on 3-4 days a week on contract. You'll have that flexibility with time and energy you did not have before and you'll still be able to use your skills and experience.

ISSUES

Team Diversity

One of the consequences of an ageing workforce is managing teams of people of different ages. Younger people may be in positions of authority over older people.

In theory, mixed aged workforces should be good for business, regardless of the workforce size or sector. There are many advantages with a mixed age workforce: the positive influence of older workers who appear to have strong work habits and self discipline, diversity is good for customer response, the rich mix of experience and skills, continuity of and retention of knowledge.

In practice, participants in the COTA ACT research described a range of issues:

Interview Code

007: Age 61. Permanent three day a week job. The EL1 & 2s – fair amount of focus on management training but it is not really effective. As an EL2, I noticed very young people with accelerated promotion without any management experience or experience in the subject area. Some had natural team skills and others were appalling. Training is inadequate for management skills.

008: Age 33. EL2. In the ACT government, it is harder to work with mature age workers...they seemed to have a problem with the supervisor by not doing what they were asked to do. I didn't feel respected. They questioned why I had the position. In the Federal government, mature age workers were all delightful, willing to take on suggestions, and to be part of the team. I did a three day course called “Transition to Management” with an external provider that made reference to team diversity. It was useful. We have not had selection and interview training although I have sat on interview panels. Sought out a mentor to help me. Mature age workers need to be open to suggestions. There can be a problem with superiority complex and attitude that there is nothing new to learn. Be adaptable and flexible.

012: Age 64. EL1 and EL2 are bright young people but there is often a missing aspect to management called EQ or emotional intelligence – EQ is important – whether you are working with young or older managers – EQ is not appreciated – how well you are protecting the minister is appreciated.

014: Age 29. EL1. Three years ago the majority were over age 45. I felt they felt threatened although we were the same level but I was not treated as an equal – treated like a receptionist. I, too, need respect. When I was an acting-EL2, older people treated me like I was an upstart, it was not verbal behaviour but they wouldn't action work I asked them to do. Office politics, it's a different kind – passive / aggressive. Either they (older workers) care too much or not enough. They weren't looking to move up and were wary of being displaced within their level. There was a managing diversity course recently run by an external provider called Yellow Edge but it did not have what you do for Gen Y. It didn't have anything about diversity of age. Selection and interviewing – have had no training and no experience. Have had people thrust on me and would like to know how to do selection and interviewing.

017: Age 57. Young EL1 and EL2's – it's a case-by-case situation – if you manage them there is more clarity in your roles and responsibility so they know what they do and what you do. You can provide a mentor / coach role with them if they'll let you stretch them. Let them suggest ideas and you be the guide of the discussion – get them involved. Everyone brings something to the table that is valuable – figure out what that is.

020: Age 60. I have concerns with Gen. X, Y, and Z and their behaviour because there is no knowledge transfer happening with or for them. When voluntary redundancies are offered, they move because they have no sense of longevity or loyalty. This makes it hard to manage knowledge transfer and values.

Government Efficiency Drive

The other issue described by the research participants in the Canberra labour market was the ruthless 'smaller government agenda' driven by the current government.

Politics aside, the Smaller Government Initiative is about clarifying lines of accountability, cutting waste and duplication, improving efficiency and focus of the public service. While this appears to have saved an estimated \$1.4 billion dollars to date, the number of government bodies will be further reduced by 286 through consolidation, abolition, replacement, and in the case of Medibank Private, privatisation (Towell, 2015: 7). For example, in June 2013, the Tax office had 6,154 EL1 and EL2 staff but on August 11, 2015 there were 4805. The new round of redundancies will bring the reduction to 1800 and the recruitment focus will shift to graduates and entry level hiring (Towell, 2015: 5).

What's the moral to this story for mature age workers in Canberra? The job market will continue to get smaller in Canberra. According to participants in the COTA research, the reduction in APS staff has not reduced the workload. The load has increased along with feelings of frustration.

Staff on contract without job continuity are still expected to produce and implement policy. Participants described working into the night and on weekends with reduced staff and increased workloads, often without pay due to contract terms. Participants voiced concerns about loss of expertise among experienced EL cohorts in Tax, Finance, Immigration, Defence, and Health. They asked, "How will the federal government provide the services taxpayers are funding them to provide?"

The head of the 22,000 strong ACT Public Service, Kathy Leigh, said, "Our ministers are elected, they're accountable to the population. It's their role to explain to the population how

they're delivering on the things they promised to deliver. It's our role to give them the best advice we can and to actually implement the things they've undertaken to do." (Doherty, 2015: 7)

CONCLUSION

Based on the interview data (Appendix 2), the following conclusions may be drawn about success factors for mature age workers. It helps to have:

1. Experience in the public service if you are working in Canberra.
2. A supportive network of colleagues who know what you are capable of doing.
3. A can-do attitude, a firm belief in the value of your own experience, and knowing exactly what skills you want to use for this part of the working journey.
4. Investment in a professionally written Resume and referees who are right behind you.
5. An ongoing relationship with a recruitment agency; one that feels 'right' for you.
6. A supportive partner.
7. Resilience; it can be tough and you need to be able to bounce back after setbacks.
8. Energy and fitness through taking care of your self [eat, sleep, walk].
9. An impeccable reputation and enough flexibility to shift directions if need be.
10. Emotional intelligence...treating everyone with respect – up, down, and all around.

In a July 2015, the Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Susan Ryan, said there was a negative perception that anyone over age of 50 did not have current nor up to date skills (Ryan, 2015B). Her suggestion was to refocus on training opportunities from mid-life onward e.g. everyone should consider retraining for a new 20-year work cycle. Ryan suggested the 'skills checkpoint' at age 50 could be conducted by TAFE and CIT with an analysis of skills and referral for training if there was a skills gap.

Although these are good ideas, the COTA ACT research participants would probably not seek out these resources. They were already on track with their working journey. They described the need for self-analysis and had already conducted their own skills audit to make sure there was a match between what an organisation wanted, what they wanted, and whether they could hit the ground running (on contract work).

Ryan also suggested intergenerational job sharing and gave an example of an older female accountant sharing a job three days a week with a young mother who worked two days per week. Younger workers benefit from the experience of older workers who, in return, experience a sense of purpose helping younger people grow and develop. Ryan said employers need to be open to flexible work places and part time work across generations.

Some of the COTA ACT research participants described fulfilment as mentors with younger workers (dependent on personalities, available time, and relevant skills match). They regarded the investment in younger workers as a skills transfer to keep their organisations alive and viable rather than having -- skills and knowledge walk out the door with volunteer redundancies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Resumes:

Most of the participants in the COTA ACT research project said the most important investment a mature age worker could make in the success of their work journey was to have their Resume professionally written.

Research:

Canberra needs targeted evidence based research, which shows that people who stay in their jobs over the age of 50 are worthy of the employer's investment. Anecdotal evidence suggests mature age workers are loyal, stick with the organisation longer, and are more productive over the long run due to the length and breadth of their experience.

Skills Checkpoint:

TAFE has the staff and experience to conduct a skills checkpoint program at key stages along everyone's working journey. This includes a checkpoint at age 30 and age 40 regarding the need for management development training, team development, diversity training, and selection and interview skills. The checkpoint at age 50 is critical for mature age workers who need to plan for the 'encore career' e.g. the next 20 years on the working journey.

Mentoring:

Develop a mentoring program for mature aged workers through collaboration between interested participants and possible sponsors: the public service (Federal and ACT), recruitment agencies, U3A, and COTA ACT. This needs to be a professionally developed and managed Mentor Network.

A template for a mentoring program is offered by the Australian Institute of Management in Canberra who run a Mentoring Program for their members to build skills toward future goals. It is seen as an effective method for sharing knowledge and experience in management and leadership. The AIM Mentor program outlines benefits to Mentors and Mentees through a carefully articulated and documented program, specific requirements, guidelines, responsibilities, ground rules, and contracting.

EL1 & EL2 Management Training:

Managing cross-generational teams more effectively starts with timely training. These recommendations are directed toward human resource managers in the Federal and ACT governments. There is a need for more effective selection and recruitment training. This needs to be preceded (or followed) by training in team development, which includes diversity management (age, gender, cultural, race). The beneficiaries for this Recommendation are young EL1 and EL2 staff who said they had been promoted without the benefit of effective training.

There are a number of service providers in Canberra who could meet this need. For example, CIT Solutions offer programs specifically targeted to the need: *Respect, Equity, and Diversity General* and - *Respect, Equity, and Diversity for Contact Officers*. Other relevant programs include *Coaching in the Workplace, From Specialist to Leader, The New Supervisor*, and *Behavioural De-escalation*. The Centre for Public Management and the Australian Institute of Management (AIM) offer targeted Leadership and Management programs: *Performance Management, Manage People Effectively, Coaching and Mentoring*, and *Leading Self*.

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APPENDIX 2 – Interview Transcripts

Code: 001

Age: 63

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Applying for but couldn't get jobs. Aware that other applicants didn't have the same qualifications (PhD) or experience. I was aware of threatening younger managers who were doing the selection.
- My experience includes 11 years at SBS plus 11 years at the Art Gallery of NSW as a curator and researcher.

Strategy for Success:

- Go freelance – it gave me the freedom to use my own experience.
- Word of mouth contacts resulted in contract jobs with SBS commercial arm on translation projects. Appointed to the Board of the Australian Japan Foundation based on connections with the Australian Embassy in Tokyo. A cultural attaché who was a friend from school let AJF know that I was available – I have a network of friends who know and recommended me.
- It took seven (7) years to develop the relationship with the government exchange programs between Japan and Australia and various museum contacts before the Board position was offered.
[Relationships take time to grow.]

Current Work:

- At the present time, doing contract work and engaged on a long-term creative research project.
- Previous supervisor for my PhD recommended me for a three (3) month fellowship in Japan. I was invited to give talks at various universities in Japan about my work with an exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW. My specialist skills in catalogues for exhibitions expanded my network.
- Applied for and got a placement with the National Library in Canberra which helped my research project.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Use your networks. Respond to any and all invitations.
- Initiate research projects that keep your own interests going.
- Build on what you have done before.
- Be grateful if you have a partner who believes in you and wants you to be happy.
- Spend time in Nature.
- Use investment income to support yourself in between contracts.
- Meditation -- learning to accept who I am and that I can't control things; things come. Thoughts don't fight with each other when you make space for them to be, to come and to go. You don't need to control your mind or struggle with thoughts. Be still. Make space. Breath. Let thoughts come and go.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- It's just so nice to be able to keep doing what I love!

Code: 002

Age: 63

Job Application Process:

- Looking widely. Applied for a position with a national organisation. Got an interview and employer was good – respectful. Provided feedback on why I didn't get the job. The woman who got the job had four degrees and experience in the area.
- Have looked at government jobs but they all want relevant recent experience. Still have an application outcome waiting with government (long wait). Federal government jobs in Canberra all required security clearance, which I have not had before.
- The boutique recruitment agencies were more helpful; the big ones were more like warehouses. It takes one week to do an application; it's a lot of work.

Strategy for Success:

- Go freelance in arts administration. I already had my own company so took on a contract with an arts organisation. Withdrew from my superannuation account to support myself. Had an unexpected redundancy from the previous job. Talked with a financial planner about how to handle the situation financially, which helped. Have ideas about inventing another business with my partner.
- To secure a role with an organisation need to activate your network in Canberra – I've built a network over the ten years we've lived here.

Current Work Situation:

- Have always worked in the arts sector and have come full circle – back to my original business plan representing artists to develop production lines. Now, it is about selecting the right artists and developing different income streams (royalties, commissions, introduction fees).
- Work is part of life; don't work for the money. Have had to learn to value myself with a dollar sign.
- Currently working on contract with the director of an arts organisation who has vision. My background is in retail, import-export, and I've blended this experience with community engagement for this client by drawing on the past. Helps to have a director who believes in you.
- We are working on various funding applications for projects that are designed to encourage senior citizens to get out and about and produce something (creative).

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Create value in yourself for your client. My partner supports and values what I do; he helps me look at billable hours because he has a more commercial perspective.
- Support the enthusiasm of others who might want to collaborate with you on projects. Stay connected with friends and family.

Conclusion / Suggestions for Others:

- Keeping positive can be a challenge.
- Look at E-Boards such as Probono Newsletter, Arts Hug, Ethical Jobs.com, and Creative Foyer.
- Strengthen your networks.
- Practice healthy living (eat well and walk).

Code: 003

Age: 55

Job Application Process:

- Felt I was in a secure job but it was restructured. Went on-line and used SEEK – decided to be very selective. Read the position descriptions and downloaded 12 positions. Applied for 3 of the positions – Administration jobs. A lot of time involved with the application process. Received one interview. Showed my applications to others who applied for similar positions (younger applicants) and the feedback was positive. One interview looked positive but the organisation decided to redesign the job. Felt I had the job but the organisation was awkward about the pay – they wanted someone of my calibre but didn't want to pay for the experience.
- My background is in public service, education institutions, community, and private sector. Current job starts soon – the application process was more informal – job came via friend at a different but similar organisation to the one I was working for. Both jobs are admin roles.

Strategy for Success:

- I felt ageism from age 45. I retrained as a librarian at age 41 and started to look for work. Word of mouth helped me secure several library positions. I was known in the library field through my fieldwork and internships while doing the degree. People saw my work and I knew people so was able to start part time paid work based on being recommended by others.
- My strategy for success? Be selective in what you apply for – there are so many jobs in Admin – have to be selective. I narrowed it down to what I wanted that was more fulfilling. SEEK has filters to narrow the search field. Use them. Have to sit and read all of the position descriptions and selection criteria.
- I feel mature aged workers are more inflexible about jobs – they don't want to work full time as long as they can manage financially. I made the lifestyle decision not go for a 5-day a week job as I valued my time and freedom more than the finances. I am a woman who has been on her own for 15 years and want autonomy in my job.
- Look at your skills and life experience and what makes you a good fit for the job. Hard to get that experience valued against the focus on 'up to date technical knowledge.' Organisations need to remember that work is not just tech skills; it's the value of the whole person and what they bring.

Current Work Situation:

- Admin job with fewer hours per week. Will focus on accounting and bookkeeping. This job reduces the commute time again, which is why I moved from Melbourne to Canberra. Happy with the reduced hours and finances so I can walk to work – short commute vs. 3 hours per day in Melbourne. Time is precious.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Let people know what you are looking for – be selective – let friends read your Resume. They may know you socially but not professionally. They need to know what you actually do. For example, Library Technician and Manager jobs in libraries are not about handling books. Have to educate others about what you are trained to do. The librarian skills set is focused on digital collections.
- There is a real issue with the perception in the community that older people are not computer savvy – real insult! We are not being given credit for what we already know and our ability to learn computer software. I was never asked what else I could do or know – Need to encourage recruitment consultants to ask more questions of the candidate. If they don't, then you need to say, "I CAN DO XYZ!!"

Conclusion / Suggestions for Others:

- Don't get discouraged. You can feel down about the transition; it is harder to start again. How can you feel enlivened by the transition process? Have to have a support system that makes you keep trying and not doubt yourself.
- Insulate yourself from rejection – its about right time / right place –not you. Keep your spirits up over the six-month job application process.
- Have to know yourself and your limitations without getting worn down by the process. Mature age workers are often private people -- it can be hard to 'sell yourself'. We also feel nervous about having all facets of our private and professional lives all out there on the Internet.
- In the old days, the job application process was more measured, personal, and person focused than it is today. Finally, don't be put off by the recruitment agencies – it can be depressing. I didn't feel like they respected mature aged workers.

Code: 004

Age: 66

Job Application Process:

- Remarkable. Had been looking 3-4 months for a 3-day a week research job as an occupational therapist. Hard to connect with the OTA (professional association). Realized I had a contact in the OTA and decided to email her. This led to a mentoring session. I asked and she agreed to provide five contacts in the field. I emailed them with my research wish and got offered a position. I've been in the position 2.5 years. The contract finishes the end of June and I have something else in the pipeline.
- I liaised with someone who has experience with sensory loss after stroke and evidence based practice. I met them when I attended one of their workshops and offered to volunteer for the organisation if they could use my clinical skills. Will be working with her at the organisation and at a university.

Strategy for Success:

- Gestalt what you really want to do. Think of all of your best contacts. Coach yourself. Find a co-mentor or a mentor – this means you can open up to someone who has experience and who is on your side.
- Mentoring is about asking questions, drawing out what concerns you may have, how you managed to gain experience in the past, your goals, understanding who and what you bring to a work situation.
- Volunteering is a good way to start learning and networking. Volunteering means you get experience in new areas of work.

Current Work Situation:

- I am an occupational therapist and researcher/recruiter on a project with people who have severe brain injury, trauma, or stroke. Measures are clear – how many times does the client have to go back from rehab to an acute situation; how do we assess support for the rehab journey; can clients participate in the community where they live.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Set a goal and a step-by-step process. Break the goal down into smaller goals. Determination.
- Be flexible and open to new ideas and input from other people.
- Practice fellowship with one's self – be kind to self and open to what is being presented. Try not to make assumptions about anything. Change is the only constant.

Conclusion/Suggestions for Others:

- Concentrate on continual learning and courses to access what you are looking for on the work journey. Read widely. Look at YouTube seminars and TED talks.
- Be inspired by others. Seek and create a supportive environment of friendships, libraries where others are learning, free talks on a range of topics.
- It is hard looking for a job as a mature aged worker – can't beat that – but you don't need to beat yourself up about it! Face it – it is hard.
- Put yourself in an environment where you have nurturing and mentors.

Code: 005

Age: 69

Job Application Process:

- I sat on around 100 interview panels while working in the public service as an industrial mediator. I watched selections panels turf out hundreds of Resumes without actually reading them.
- If someone can actually get an interview, that's what gets them the job – fact to face communication gets the job.
- My daughter is an EL2 in a government department. She said mature aged workers are intimidated by younger managers rather than younger managers being intimidated by older workers.

Note: Code 005 asked to be included in response to the Stage 1 Research Report on Mature Aged Workers where recruitment consultants said EL1 & 2 managers were discriminating against mature age workers because they had been rapidly promoted without the benefit of leadership training and team development skills – managing people is a skill that isn't developed with rapid promotion.

Code: 006

Age: 68

Experience with Job Application Process:

- In 2011 I was full time and the company didn't win a tender for ACT government – four staff were let go. Had been in the work force for many years. Missed the social side and sales communication with customers.
- Applied for sales management positions in the IT industry. Did accept the offer of one job and wondered if age made a difference. Worked with a company 15 years ago as a brand manager and team leader. The person who interviewed me knew me so this worked in my favour.
- Age discrimination is hard to identify. Feedback on why I didn't get a job was couched in euphemistic terms.

Strategy for Success:

- Worked in IT in the ACT – small industry, small town. Over 20 years build many contacts and kept in contact. Asked colleagues what was happening. IT industry people move around a lot.
- Recruitment agencies used by government – Angela Power at Hudson's is my primary contact on a regular basis to see what's happening.
- Had a group of friends who employed me on short-term contracts (4 weeks) in their businesses.
- Registered on SEEK – created a profile and sent to various employers.

Current Work Situation:

- I have a simple sales role with the government – 170 staff nationally – the focus in Canberra is on the Federal government. My role is to create sales of product and services and to meet agreed targets.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- My wife worked for a recruitment agency and had a group of contacts that helped.
- Self-analysis – work is an important part of life – strong family work ethic – part of whole existence. But – comes to a point where worry about values in the workplace – may feel you are no longer valued and critical to have a support mechanism to bolster your confidence and – it is not critical to work full time – part time will do.
- Resilience – I am a people oriented person – enjoy selling because it is very social and keeps me in contact with others. Some people suggested volunteer work but job came along.
- Keep up with your industry and subscribe to newsletters.
- Keep occupied and keep reading!

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Hudson's recruitment was a good agency for contract work. Face2Face and Clicks IT were also helpful.

Code: 007

Age: 61

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Applying for Public Service jobs is full on – selection criterion, referees. It's not that difficult because I've worked in the PS and familiar with the process.
- Found the job through three months of work on placed as a student at University of Canberra. I was offered a contract then the job was advertised. Eight people applied – competitive field and I did well. Bit daunted and though age might be an issue and being a recent grad.
- Did lots of prep for the interview and focused on my experience in the job already.

Strategy for Success:

- Having the placement and demonstrating my capability, as a student followed by the contract was successful.
- When I retired I worked as a volunteer Lifeline counsellor for four years talking with victims of crime so experienced with client containment.
- While on placement and in the contract I was very focused on the work.
- The industry of counselling values experience e.g. older counsellors. I felt very respected.

Current Work Situation:

- Permanent three day a week job. Want to work part time as I have an elderly partner. Head of the team is much more junior. I used to be an EL2 with million dollar budgets and have to pinch myself not to give advice on what can be improved. I have more management experience.
- Physically, I get back pain sitting a desk for long periods of time – had a workplace assessment and got a special chair.
- Really enjoy going to work now. Before, I had a mortgage and mouths to feed.
- I've been in the job since July 2014 and have attended several internal training programs – Trauma Counselling, Single Session Counselling, Family Counselling Course, ACT counselling course. Have good internal supervision and on the job peer coaching.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Retraining at university and volunteering helped.
- Struggled not to listen to self-doubt. Managed it by hanging out with older women at UC who were also doing a degree – peer support plus support from academics helped.
- Prior experience in the PS helped boost my confidence. At my age, if I don't make it, I just think what heck and gave it a go. PS is unique. Getting any experience at a lower level would be helpful or repackaging your experience to the panel with what you can bring from the outside.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Focus on giving it a go.
- Be canny about what job you want and that it actually suits you.
- Balance excitement, growth, experience, and respect and be realistic about being realistic.
- EL1 & 2 – fair amount of focus on management training but it is not really effective. As an EL2, I noticed very young people with accelerated promotion without any management experience or experience in the subject area. Some had natural team skills and others were appalling. Training is inadequate for management skills.

Code No: 008

Age: 33

Do you have mature aged workers in your team (aged 55+)?

- I work with Department of Education and we had mature age workers until June 30 when contracts were finished due to end of financial year.
- Contractors are for specific jobs and usually twelve months.
- In the past, we had a mature age worker, one who was permanent.
- There were more mature age workers with ACT government.

What unique characteristics do they bring to your team? Research suggests reliability, wisdom, depth and breadth of experience, judgment, & no office politics.

- In the ACT government, it is harder to work with mature age workers. For example, when I was a 26 - year old supervisor, they seemed to have a problem with the supervisor by not doing what they were asked to do. I didn't feel respected. They questioned why I had the position.
- In the Federal government, mature age workers were all delightful, willing to take on suggestions, and to be part of the team.
- Some staff may be at the end of their careers and using up all their sick days. Others don't take sick leave at all. Different value systems.
- Over age 55 is not the end of one's career – we have a Branch Manager who is over 55.

Has your workplace offered training in Managing Diverse Teams or Selection and Interviewing? Was it useful?

- I did a three day course called 'Transition to Management' with an external provider that made reference to team diversity. It was useful.
- We have not had selection and interviewing training although I have sat on interview panels. Sought out a mentor to help me.
- Over the last five years, the ACT government had a panel for ASO 4 & 5 and both candidates were over age 55.
- A Commonwealth government panel two years ago had 100 applicants and fifteen interviews. Four of the candidates were over age 55. The chair of the panel reviewed the resumes and reduced the field to save money by not using recruitment agencies.

Any suggestions for mature aged workers to ensure they fit into teams seamlessly?

- They need to be open to suggestions. There can be a problem with superiority complex and attitude that there is nothing new to learn. Be adaptable and flexible.
- Younger workers are rising quickly because they are brilliant. They also experience ageism.
- Access to learning and development for younger managers depends on the Branch Manager. There are six-month performance appraisals for EL 1 & 2 and areas for improvement may be recommended with courses such as 'Transitioning to Management'.
- Younger managers need support from upper levels of management when dealing with resistance or inaction, which is an issue. Organisations are often afraid of being charged with 'bullying' so there is often inaction on performance problems.

Code: 009

Age: --

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Twelve years experience as a senior recruiter for a Canberra based agency.
- In early July 2015 there was an article in the Canberra Times about a recruitment tsunami – hundreds of mature age workers retiring or being made redundant. There was also an article about 100 new Public Service positions being released after a very long freeze on recruitment.
- The point is people may retire or be redundant but it is not the end of life. They go back on contract.
- Not for profit sector is moving more slowly and is quiet. There are fewer volunteer jobs.
- The market since September 2014 has been more positive. Government drives activity in Canberra as the commercial or private sector is quiet. And the government jobs are contracts.

Strategy for Success:

- Be experienced, flexible and have a positive mindset.
- Have financial freedom so you can explore variety of jobs.
- Be happy and willing to train others.

Current Work Situation:

- Ageism needs to be in context – the whole picture includes a balance of gender and age.
- A green new manager and a mature age worker won't be a good fit.
- Harder to progress career over age 55. If you leave work, it is unlikely you will step higher on return.
- There are some barriers but not major ones. One barrier is people stagnating without access to learning and development opportunities or not feeling personally motivated and progressive.
- Government is poor at adapting roles to meet people's wish for 3-4 days of work per week. There is an attitude of fear. We are honest with our clients about this.
- There is very little training on selection and interviewing. The usual approach is five questions about attitude but work experience is not explored in the interview.
- From SES2+ upward, appointments are not transparent.
- There appears to be very little discrimination except at the Board level, which is in the dark ages. Mates help mates at the highest levels – not an open selection process.
- There is a gap in the market for a recruitment service specializing in Board level appointment.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- We create a detailed summary on the candidate, a behaviour profile, and references.
- We provide advice to the client and guidance not just the paperwork.
- Our focus is on the top 15% of the market.
- Canberra is a progressive space for mature age workers (with government experience).
- Our candidates are competent and effective until they retire.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- In 2005-6 there was a research report published by CPA Australia called "A Mature Solution: Focus on Barriers to Re-entry and Mature Age Workers". Check this out!

Code: 010

Age: 64

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Have found it more difficult to get a job. Having a lot of experience works to my advantage. Depends on who interviews you and if they are mature. Younger people conducting interviews – you can see the shutters go down re: age.
- Would hate to try to get a job without a network in Canberra. Had 40 years experience with Defence both in uniform and in Public Service.
- Tried jobs with ACT government and didn't get any interviews. Others have also had trouble with a PS background and ACT applications.
- Longest period of time without a job is five months.
- Canberra is about government sector. PS workforce is a mess due to freeze and losses of 7,00 staff – still pass legislation but how will it be enacted without staff to implement, conduct, and maintain?

Strategy for Success:

- Looked for two months – found the job through a recruitment agency – putting in a management system – have done this before successfully – the interview panel knew I knew about risk management.
- Researched the job as much as possible even though I knew it and was up to date with information. Had to learn about organisation, the role – phoned the contact officer for information – used all the tricks to get information on real outcomes.

Current Work Situation:

- I feel motivated – having a job and knowing what Defence is trying to achieve makes it worthwhile.
- Defence has an antiquated system and updating scheduling software can cause problems.
- The organisation has become more bureaucratic over the last 20 years – too many Chiefs and not enough Indians. Lot of activity in avoiding decisions and being accountable. Chief of Defence is an effective leader but has to rely on layers in coalface. Have been in uniform and know what's required at certain levels -- and a university degree does not always cut it. Have seen deterioration and decline in standards, which has led to inefficiency.
- If you have values and standards, this can be detrimental to your standing if younger managers want to look good without actually doing good. Current manager is early 30's and I have concerns over her integrity – she does not know what's involved so shoots from the hip and then it is everyone's problem. Need to have team skills to work effectively.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Experience reinforces importance of research.
- Question yourself– can you make a contribution, enjoy the job, pass it by?
- Hard to ask questions about who you'll be working with but try and find out.
- Treat people with respect – up, down, and all around.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Research the jobs.
- If you have knockbacks then put them aside.
- Seek what help you can with writing up your Resume and personal appearance.
- Younger ones seem to think you should be a grandparent or stuck in retirement homes.
- Be yourself.
- Can't be too desperate or too laid back about the job.
- With maturity, you get a feel for content of the job and your manner counts with the interview panel.
- Lack of interview skills is a problem – an opportunity window for training and development.
- Be a member of a professional organisation and aware of current developments in the field.

Code: 011

Age: 65

Experience with Job Application Process:

- I took a redundancy a few years ago. Then, I went to a recruitment agency and was interviewed by a 22-year old with no outcomes. The second agency said they could only get me work as a scribe and again no outcomes. At the third agency, I saw a job, applied, and got the job. I just sent the resume off, turned up for the interview, and got the job.
- The first agency's attitude - they were shocked I got a job – I felt the 22-year old dismissed me as too old. I challenged the consultant about age, suitability, and resume.

Strategy for Success:

- Look at the job, the position description, language, and targets. Structure your resume to the job with key words so your resume stands out e.g. Program Manager. Resumes are scanned by agencies for key words and you want your resume to stand out.
- Contract work – keep in touch with agency about what's coming up and perform once you are on the job. Make a difference and work and be proactive. Help them out.
- I have built a reputation with Hays – they know I have can-do.

Current Work Situation:

- Have been working contracts now for four years. New contract and new managers means you need to get along well with a team which includes younger team members. Previous manager – we didn't click.
- I don't feel discriminated against because of my age. I keep physically fit, look after my health, and eat properly to keep my energy up.
- Contracts vary from six weeks to five months and one was twelve months at DSS. Disadvantage of contracts is that it is harder to add value.
- Prefer part time work - three to four days a week. If I take a full time job then I can't take a month off between contracts. The longest break has been six weeks, by choice.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Be reliable.
- Try to connect with the younger people – work with them in a respectful way – be tolerant and not a know it all – sit back and let them have a say.
- Be successful in the job and build your reputation.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Keep yourself fit by walking – feel good hormone – endorphins – eat, sleep, and walk.
- Draw on previous experience in your new contacts.
- Make yourself have a go at new tasks.
- Don't think about what others say.
- Keep your confidence up and believe in yourself.
- Age gracefully and be proud of it.
- Look back at all of your work and feel good about it. Be confident.
- Leave the job if it does not feel good. Leave sooner than later. The legacy of a toxic manager can taint you feelings in future work.
- If you are feeling down, reach out and get some counselling or coaching.

Code: 012

Age: 64

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Retired at age 55 and went back to work part time then full time. Retired again at 60. Three years out of the work force then put my name down with Hays recruitment. Said I would do anything. Issue with organisations -- looking for current experience so being out of the workforce for three years was an issue.
- I was an EL1 for 15 years – not after that level of job but the social side and being able to use my analytical self.
- It took two years to get a job at DSS to do assessment work. Came in at the end of the process in 2014 as an APS 5 and then came back in as an APS 6.
- Three years out of paid work, I travelled, did meditation, read, have two kids at home, and it is expensive to retire with kids at home although wife works.

Strategy for Success:

- It has been difficult but in the Public Service you get used to being in situations where you are given jobs you don't know how to do – you get used to finding your feet.

Current Work Situation:

- Department of Social Services (DSS) – work in an assessment centre – centralized – we analyse grant submissions and make decisions at arms length from those who run contracts and services.
- Work full time in a small program that is ongoing – it is more like a normal job.
- Not keen on a permanent situation. Getting to the end of work life and get tired – come home feeling beaten up!

Summary of Factors for Success:

- You need to want to do a good job. If you are motivated to do something then be aware that large departments like DSS remove you from the client end due to probity issues. If you have a relationship with a client, it takes more responsibility.
- It does get harder as you get older – see similar things happening, same old track!
- EL1 & 2 – bright young people but there is often a missing aspect to management called EQ or emotional intelligence – EQ is important – whether you are working with young or older managers – EQ is not appreciated -- how well you are protecting the minister is appreciated.
- Public Service – to be of service to the public has changed —values have changed.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- As above.

Code: 013

Age: 64

Experience with Job Application Process:

- I left permanent work in 2011 as an EL2 after 23 years in the Public Service. Joined Hays recruitment in 2012 with a contract in 2013 for 9 months. There was no work for 18 months due to government freeze. In September 2014, current contract, which has been extended three times.
- My first interview with a client was relaxed – two people on the panel – positive about experience, chatted, and got hired.
- The second interview with a client - three people on the panel – more formal – the director (aged 30) had not employed contractors before.
- Hays were very positive during the 18-month process of looking for a job.
- During the down time, repaired the house, had a holiday, had time with friends.

Strategy for Success:

- Go in with a positive attitude.
- Be energetic about the job.
- Use the opportunity to expand on past experience.
- Work hard in the job. Be willing to do anything.

Current Work Situation

- Work is challenging – tight deadlines and increased hours.
- It is a good team – everyone helps – there are two EL 1 and two APS 6. We are working on a new model for vocational education and training – high profile project.
- Leadership above EL2 is not great – no decisions and no attention to the model until close to the deadline so we have to repeat and rewrite work done months ago – affects motivation.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- People and staff management are my strengths. Try to have a good working relationship with the team members.
- Work hard and go until the job is done.
- Don't think anything is beneath you.
- Keep resume up to date and don't include your age.
- Understand the Public Service – what's expected, code of conduct, experience with ministers, and stakeholders.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Don't put your date of birth on resume.
- Call all of the recruitment agencies and keep applying.
- Age is not a barrier for contracts.
- Walk everyday – keep positive, see friends, and keep up your social life.

Code No: 014

Age: 29

Do you have mature aged workers in your team (aged 55+)?

- I work in Department of Social Services in a policy area.
- Our team has new graduates and workers in their late 50's.
- Three years ago the majority of workers were over age 45, and in their 50's and 60's.
- Currently our Branch's Senior Advisor is age 70.

What unique characteristics do they bring to your team? Research suggests reliability, wisdom, depth and breadth of experience, judgment, & no office politics.

- They are experienced, wise, and the extent of sharing varies. As a new graduate worker I was shown and taught by mature aged workers. Older people have mentored me.
- Three years ago the majority were over age 45. I felt they felt threatened although we were the same level but I was not treated as an equal – treated like a receptionist. I too need respect.
- When I was acting EL2, older people treated me like I was an upstart – it was not verbal behaviors but they wouldn't action work I asked them to do. Got pulled up by an older woman who said, "Look at me when I am talking to you". The non-verbal behavior clearly indicated she was not impressed with me and that I didn't know what I was talking about.
- Office politics – it's a different kind – passive / aggressive. Either they care too much or not enough. They weren't looking to move up and were wary of being displaced within their level.

Has your workplace offered training in Managing Diverse Teams or Selection and Interviewing? Was it useful?

- Perhaps I am too accepting and just want to go with the flow, not asserting myself enough. I need to learn to be firm and fair!
- There was a managing diversity course recently run by an external provider called Yellow Edge but it did not have what you do for Gen Y. It didn't have anything about diversity of age. It was a 7-day course over 3 months and focused on developing your team, personality, how to coach, how to lead, motivation, and engagement for performance.
- Selection and interviewing – have had no training and no experience. Have had people thrust on me and would like to know how to do selection and interviewing.
- Would also like to know how to manage diversity. I am a sensitive person and pick stuff up around other people. Is it me being too sensitive or just not having the right skills?

Any suggestions for mature aged workers to ensure they fit into teams seamlessly?

- My father retired age 50 and he just wanted a job to be around people. If that is the case for others, then be open to younger people and their experience.
- Mutual respect – both ways.
- Younger people often feel they are more flexible – would be helpful if older people were also flexible.
- Want to show how positive and rich the experience is that people bring to work. I learned that from a woman aged 50 who listened to my ideas and I to hers. We were equals. We became friends.
- I would like to see positive outcomes with the COTA research because older people do get discounted at work. We need to create respect both ways for what we bring to work.

Code: 015

Age: 63

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Positive experience – in the Public Service for 40 years. Took a redundancy package in 1998 and sent back to work in 2013. Worked with the Dept. of Education and Climate Change, which was abolished by the Abbott Government. Recruitment freeze caused a few problems.
- Listed with several recruitment agencies and at end of twelve weeks got a job with Aus Aid for 14-month contract.
- Applied for other jobs through agency and got three-month contract and then a twelve-month contract with Attorney General's Department where I am now. Service role – property management.
- Process has been very structured with variable outcomes.
- Since 1971, I have worked for seventeen different departments in the Public Service.

Strategy for Success:

- Target the roles you want.
- Agencies are part of panel contracts; Public Service uses different agencies.
- Keep your Resume up to date.
- Have strong referees.

Current Work Situation:

- Worked in Attorney General's twenty-one years ago. Took one month to settle in with procurement software systems. Have to comply with financial management Acts.
- Strong, small team in property management. People are focused and flexible enough to fill in for each other. We work late and sometimes weekends.
- Team of six looks after five buildings in the ACT and sites nationally.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Keep up to date with systems, contractors, and service providers.
- Canberra is small so you will be remembered by your work.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Go for smaller government departments like Attorney General's who are friendly and warm or Education and Aus Trade.
- Public Service protects workers with a policy of equity. They are hitting a timeline with age of their workforce and are losing corporate knowledge.
- Depends on area you trying to find work but my wife (age 64) was made redundant and now does scribing. She is asked back to her old Department to do the annual report.
- Canberra is a hard place to break into networks unless you have been working here. In lieu of that, join community groups to develop networks.
- Accept that security clearance and citizenship requirements will always be barriers with Public Service. To get around that, get a basic entry-level job and work your way in from there so the security clearance is not so intrusive.

Code: 016

Age: 60

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Full time work until 2009 – now work part time on contracts. At first had problems with CV until rewritten by a professional (Katrina Howard) to highlight skills and experience.
- Looked in the ACT for 8 months – had previous experience as research assistance and then protocol officer with Defence – good admin and people skills.
- Took an APS 3 to get in the door. Have had five Executive Assistant contracts in various admin roles.
- Went online to read interview questions and read books about how to research, practice, and tailor your self. In addition, learned how to use Outlook Calendars and practised interview questions.
- Found some recruitment agencies more helpful than others – recommend meeting face to face so you.

Strategy for Success:

- Research the job and practice question and answers.
- Have an excellent routine, know your job, and be punctual.
- Be precise in any questions you ask in interview or on the job – think before speak.
- Keep the desk tidy, learn people’s names at work; be polite and professionals.
- Mind your own business at work (no gossip or office politics). Distance yourself.

Current Work Situation:

- In between contracts which is OK as caring for mother (age 90), settling into a new house, project manage some units, and completing a Certificate 3 in Fitness plus active social life.
- Last contract was six weeks; prior to a three-month gap then an eight-month contract (the longest).
- Prefer administrative and executive assistant roles.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Time management and professionalism – don’t do personal things at work.
- Know your job, learn from your mistakes and ask for assistance.
- Network – go to the lunches, farewell parties and don’t isolate yourself.
- Don’t try to be part of the younger crowd – be confident. I noticed treatment as an APS 5 or 6 – the young ones saw the ‘level’ not the ‘person’. I learned to big note myself a bit by talking about my work at the US Embassy and in strategy to show them I have experience and am worthy of respect.
- Unless you are desperate, decline what you can’t do e.g. IT.
- Respect your gut feeling if you are uncomfortable at the interview.
- Dress code – clean shoes; lose fitting clothes, higher necks. It is so difficult for men in the workplace to speak to a woman who is dressed like a Bondi Beach Babe – they don’t know where to look!

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Continue learning – Microsoft 2012
- Prepare yourself well – know the company, section, and department, have questions to ask, bring your folder with your CV and notes about the position.
- At work, be punctual and let them know ahead of time if you need any time off.
- Know your job. Brush up on people skills e.g. conflict resolution and different personality types. The Department of Infrastructure is good at people skills.
- There does need to be more Intergenerational Training – there is a two-day workshop on Conflict Resolution and Difficult Conversations but it may not cover the mixed generation teams.

NOTE: Would like to mentor others to help them get jobs.

Code: 017

Age: 57

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Was fulltime with the Public Service for 30 years. In 2013 took a voluntary redundancy and thought I was still able to contribute so went to recruitment agencies that matched my skills to various jobs.
- Worked contract for twelve month – two different contracts. One with National Disability Insurance and one with Defence Housing.
- Although currently between contracts, I am confident will get another contract as the work context has people moving around and on.
- I have an established network of contacts and a specific skill set: policy development, program implementation, project management, strategic plans, communication plans, and write briefs for Ministers.

Strategy for Success:

- Self-analysis – know that you want and play to your strengths.
- Have your CV written by a professional who can reduce the pages and focus on the business. Suggest COTA gets a grant from the ACT government so mature age workers can have their CV's written by a professional.
- Went to various recruitment agencies to see who was active in my field. Let them know your movements and maintain a good relationship with the agencies.
- Be flexible – things change. Your sponsor may resign, or your manager, so figure out how to be indispensable to meet management's needs.
- Don't be disappointed if you don't get the job – need to be resilience – knockbacks are the nature of the beast.
- Interviews – have a mentor role play with you and demonstrate your ability to produce results.

Current Work Situation:

- Actively searching lists with agencies that are also working on my behalf. One agency is large and the other is small. Looking for project management roles.
- Longest period between jobs has been two weeks. We have kids so use the time with them.
- Don't want to have a sense of desperation – be confident in your work history.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- You need a good CV or resume professionally written.
- Contact agencies and look their websites.
- Maintain resilience.
- Be confident in your own ability.
- Maintain a network of people you've worked with for references.
- Keep adapting and be flexible.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Get your resume professionally written – I got more job interviews after I had mine done. Ask the ACT government to give grants of \$500.00 per person for resumes.
- Register with agencies and know which does your skill set – maintain relationships.
- Young E11 and 2 – it's a case-by-case situation – if you manage them then there is more clarity in your roles and responsibility so they know what they do and what you do. You can provide a mentor / coach role with them if they'll let you stretch them. Let them suggest ideas and you be the guide of the discussion – get them involved. Everyone brings something to the table that is valuable – figure out what that is.

Code: 018

Age: 58

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Used recruitment agencies because the Public Service goes to agencies who nominate names and send resumes to the PS. Have not had to do any selection criteria but referees are checked ahead of time.
- Have a network of colleagues through whom I've gotten short-term contracts.

Strategy for Success:

- Maintain contacts in your work area. I was in the Public Service a long time and kept my network. Focus on whom you work well with.
- Work closely with recruitment agencies. The Public Service wanted me directly but I had to join Horizon One (and Hays) because they had the contract for filling the position.

Current Work Situation:

- Finished a contract and moved to Sydney. Have taken a break to get settled established in Sydney and will decide whether to commute back to Canberra for work or seek out Federal agencies in Sydney.
- The recent lifting of bans on recruitment will see more jobs coming up with government.
- Background is in Human Resources and Program Management – was an EL2 mid-level manager. Recently had a six-month contract at the same level to get a training program up and running. May backfill positions for staff that are on maternity leave.
- HR experience includes training and development, IR, remuneration, enterprise bargaining, senior leadership development, change management, security, and procurement. I have additional qualifications in HR. That plus broad experience opens up more positions.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Be able to demonstrate a range of experience and achievements to meet work's changing circumstances. Work may have a particular task in mind but then they find out I write well so direct me to managing ministerial and research reports.
- Feedback on my performance comes through referee reports.
- Senior managers who are around age 30-40 do value someone older who is not a competitor. They see me as a supporter and seek me out to mentor and advise on misconduct or performance management. I maintain their confidential information and relationships with them after I leave contracts. Others may see me as a competitor but I have to come to do the job and if others are obstacles then we make it clear re: task, action, results.
- When I lose energy at work, I dip out of the contract, go on a holiday or skiing or opt for a different kind of contract to replenish energy.
- I have the freedom to do what I want so I don't have to stay in the same job. I have financial stability.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Need to have discussions with your managers if work is not going well or if a department goes defunct or a project is cancelled or changed by the government. I told one manager a particular project was a waste of time due to imminent change and went on holiday and did not go back. Let go of the letter of law with contracts and know when to let go.
- Important to take time to do a stock take of your own qualifications and experience -- decide on new directions if you have broad enough field of experience.
- Repackage your resume to suit the selection criteria. As an HR manager, I've seen many resumes and it would be best to have one professionally written or customized to the selection criteria so you make it through the culling process. Remember selection is a process of elimination - not selection – it all starts with the resume and it will be eliminated if it does not reflect the selection criteria.
- When doing contract work, I am honest about meeting the organisation's needs and if I can't then we part company.

Code: 019

Age: 56

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Took a redundancy in 2012 and since then have been on temporary contracts (admin. and payroll / computer).
- On the books with recruitment agencies for contracts separate from normal work.
- The longest gap between contracts has been three months. During gaps I look for jobs, travel, and relax.
- When my CV is submitted, I don't always get an interview.

Strategy for Success:

- Have built a good reputation at work.
- I am competent at my job.
- Good resume.
- Not a networker so built my reputation and that has put me in good stead.
- Produce technical tools used by personnel departments, which gets my name around.

Current Work Situation:

- Contract for the last two years (off and on) with Treasury.
- It is a mixed age team – age is not an issue.
- Contract goes until Christmas (six months).

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Work hard.
- Be honest.
- Get to the top of your game.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Concentrate on your strengths.
- I only move up the ladder when it is overdue so I feel competent when it happens.
- Went back to work because I needed the money. And, I do have a pension from the previous job, paid off the mortgage, and investing in superannuation.

Code: 020

Age: 60

Experience with Job Application Process:

- I took an early retirement in 2010 with a CSS pension. Since then I've had contract work through HorzoneOne. Background – 35 years as an accountant – budgets, tenders, end of year financial statements.
- Contracts are often 12 months four days a week or short contracts, which could be full or part time. Hours vary. Sometimes I am on salary or on hourly rates that HorzoneOne pays including sorting out the tax and super. Current contract is six months – until October.
- Government is losing their financial expertise through retirement and redundancies. There is not enough experienced staff with expertise to help new starters. With all of the public service cuts, roles are getting harder and its also harder to find work closer to home (Belconnen) so I commute to Woden.

Strategy for Success:

- Patience, tolerance, and honesty.
- Build reputation and then rely on your good work record.
- I was a Chief Financial Officer and when I had my exit interview, I made suggestions on improvements to the department. I dig below the surface - where there are problems I mentor staff to resolve them.
- If you feel distant from recent changes in accounting standards, then catch up!
- Network – I had wide experience and a wide network, which is getting a harder to maintain when working part time.
- Get along with people – build relationships rather than 'them and us'.

Current Work Situation:

- Currently have tight deadlines to ensure accounting practices are met and due diligence. Contracted to come in and clean up messes. Financial management could be done better and the financial systems are variable. Organisations rely on people to get their returns accurate and completed on time but there is no guarantee. The audit process is very thorough so I get called on to sort things out.
- Voluntary redundancies are being offered, which reduces the number of people available to do the job but not the workload. This creates increased pressure, tight timeframes with an expectation, bordering on bullying, for people to work long hours (7AM – 10PM) and on weekends often without pay.
- Preparing a financial statement takes time but we are given less time to produce the work than the actual audit process!
- Concerned for the future of the public service – all the fat has been trimmed with efficiency dividends. Government is now at the point where service is threatened.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Track record, dedication, worth ethic, and complete the task.
- Transition to contract work was not driven by financial concerns – I wanted to keep my brain ticking over. I work six months a year to fund travel.
- I had two different jobs over a 20-year span and now I have a different job every 6 to 12 months, which is hard to adjust to, but it gets easier.
- The recruitment relationship with HorzoneOne developed when I was still working full time and used them to find staff. They find me work and it's fairly easy to get contracts due to an existing relationship.
- I have concerns with Gen. X, Y, Z and their behaviour because there is no knowledge transfer happening with or for them. When voluntary redundancies are offered, they move because they have no sense of longevity or loyalty. This makes it hard to manage knowledge transfer and values.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Have a go! Know your skill set.
- Next move may be to not-for-profit and the community sector where I can use my financial knowledge to help others (theatre, sports, church).

Code: 021

Age: 64

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Retired at 55 in 2006 and since then have had 15 different contracts. I don't apply for jobs; people contact me directly. I have a Network of people who work in government who know my work.
- Work in communications – strategic, advertising, and issues management via media. Have been in communications since 1999. Responsible for the public info campaign for the GST then worked with ATO on strategic communications. I was the communications director for PMC and whole of government.
- I am at a stage where I can be choosy about what I do. Current contract is three weeks.

Strategy for Success:

- When I retired I didn't have a strategy. On reflection, my strategy is to over deliver. I do the best job I can.
- Canberra is a funny place. Departments have urgent needs for three-week tasks or 12-month tasks. They go look for what is called the 'grey beards' – people they know who can hit the ground running and can be relied on.
- [Q re: gender bias – difficult for a woman to be part of an on call group called 'grey beards'.]

Current Work Situation:

- Working with the Royal Commission on trade unions. Three week task to do the media management. Spent six weeks last year establishing a Royal Commission in Sydney on child abuse. The same group asked if I could help with this one. They will ask again for help in the future.
- Professional strategic communications and campaigns are my speciality. The job prior to this was establishing the National Preventative Health Agency, the anti-smoking campaign, and the obesity campaign.

Summary of Factors for Success:

- Be adaptable. The PMC job was to help them manage a departmental move to a new building with the fit out. I project managed that including the internal communications.
- Use common sense.
- Be reliable, available and adaptable.

Conclusion and Suggestions for Others:

- Be conscientious – deliver what people want.
- People prefer to go by their networks rather than interview. They take a risk with interviews on unknowns through recruitment.
- [Questioned about equity and equal employment opportunities if only the old boys get considered. Questioned about newcomers to Canberra who don't have a network but are good solid performers. How do they get a foot in the door to contribute their capability?]
- My suggestion is to build a good reputation. Once an organisation gets what they want then they'll ask you again. For example, the G20 Project wanted a report done and didn't want a recruitment process and the recruitment Agency have me on their books so I got the job. HorizonOne is a good agency.
- If the phone rings and it's an interesting offer than I'll consider it. At 64 I feel pretty relaxed about not working unless financial concerns evolve.

Code: 022

Age: -

Experience with Job Application Process:

- Regional director for a Canberra based recruitment agency.
- Age does not matter... here is my experience. As regional director for a recruitment agency, we relocated from Melbourne to Canberra in 2013. New to Canberra, I networked with BNI's weekly group, through our own company's social activities, footy, soccer, and the parents network group at my kid's school.
- The behaviour in Melbourne was friendlier with parks and shops where people could get together and be social. Canberra's design is too isolating; it is hard to make friends and hard to meet people.
- To build networks, I used online groups and Facebook, joined professional associations like CPA, Master Builders, and other industry forums.
- The Canberra Business Chamber would be a good place to position a COTA Mentoring and Network Service. Contact Cheryl Sloan.
- Mentoring is about a personal relationship. Ask someone you know for advice.
- Check out the mental health RUOK website and have a look at emotional coaching.
- In my opinion, it would be discriminatory to have a Job Board for mature age workers. It would be a complete waste of time. Every recruitment agency has their jobs online and believes – age does not matter.

Strategy for Success:

- Be bloody persistent and you need resilience.
- You may have been an EL1 and re-entering as a Grade 6 on 3-4 days a week as a contract worker. You'll have the flexibility with time and energy that you did not have before and will still be able to use your skills and experience!

AUTHOR

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