

A Sampling of Information from

Over 50 and Motivated!

A Job Search Book for Job Seekers Over 50

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Virginia

Over 50 and Motivated!

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Introduction



Don't bunt. Aim out of the ballpark. Aim for the company of immortals.

David Ogilvy¹

This job-search book is written for professionals over fifty years of age who desire to take control of their job search and commit to the work necessary to succeed. Tenured professionals over fifty face unique job-search challenges. Stereotypes, biases, and age-related perceptions make finding a fulfilling career position more difficult. This book tackles those issues head-on and provides a proven methodology to get you a job (the job you want) in the shortest amount of time possible.

There are several advantages of your age, more of which will be discussed later in this book. For now, keep in mind that if you are like most over-fifty job seekers, you are:

Stable—emotionally balanced and even-keeled.

Experienced—you have done and seen things that only time and living can bring.

Accomplished—you have achieved and brought ROI (Return On Investment) and value to previous employers.


¹ "David Ogilvy Quotable Quote," Goodreads, <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/262108-don-t-bunt-aim-out-of-the-ballpark-aim-for-the> (accessed March 28, 2016).

Loyal—you know what it means to stick around. Job seekers over fifty stay in positions up to three times longer than their younger counterparts.² This is valued by employers because it saves time and money.

This makes you a **SEAL**—stable, experienced, accomplished, and loyal. We will use the acronym SEAL throughout this book when referring to job seekers over the age of fifty.

By loose correlation, the US Navy SEALs—a premier special forces unit—also have these qualities of being stable, experienced, accomplished, and loyal. Consider adopting the attitude of being a premier job seeker—a SEAL!

As you read this book, have a highlighter and a pen available. Highlight concepts you want to remember. Write in the margins. Dog-ear or electronically bookmark pages. Use a notepad to write down thoughts and to-do's as they occur to you. Then, after your job search is underway, review this book to stay motivated and on track. Be careful! It is easy during a job search to cross the line from being productive to just doing busywork disguised as being productive. Ask yourself: Am I being productive with my time and effort, or am I just doing busywork, thinking that I am being productive? You'll know the answer.

Pay particular attention to the  SEAL Icon throughout this book. These useful insights, powerful job-search concepts, and techniques are specifically designed for you, as a SEAL, to combat the stereotypes and age biases you may face in your job search.

Above all, remember that a successful job search is all about presenting yourself in a professional manner, engaging in conversations with those who can help and hire you, and providing real-life examples of your skills and accomplishments.



What You're Up Against

Well . . . here you are. You're over fifty and engaged in a job search. You might be unemployed, anticipating a company change that could affect your job, or needing to make a career move. Either intellectually or intuitively, you know that finding new employment as a SEAL (job seeker over fifty) poses new job-search challenges. And you would be right. There are stereotypes, biases, and age-related perceptions that could be held against you. Ageism is real in today's job market.

According to US government studies, job seekers over fifty are penalized for their age

² Dugan, Dawn. "10 Tips for Job Hunters Over 50: How Older Workers Can Better Overcome Obstacles to Getting Hired," Salary.com, <http://www.salary.com/10-tips-for-job-hunters-over-50/> (accessed March 28, 2016).

when looking for new employment. A SEAL “is likely to be unemployed for 5.8 weeks longer than someone between the ages of 30 and 49, and 10.6 weeks longer than people between the ages of 20 and 29.”³ And here’s something more disheartening: “the odds of being re-employed decrease by 2.6 percent for each one-year increase in age.”⁴ What are the underlying causes of these statistics? Here is a list of the ten major biases that SEALs most commonly come up against during a job search:

A bad attitude—No hiring executive on the planet wants to hire “an attitude problem.” Poor attitudes can spread like a cancer in a department or company and destroy productivity and company culture.

The perception is many job seekers over fifty are bitter, resentful, and have a chip on their shoulder as a result of their current employment situation. They hold a grudge, are cynical, and don’t trust management or the ownership group.

Not only will a bad attitude make your job search more difficult, it can seriously damage your employment tenure when you do get a job. According to research reported in *Forbes*, of twenty thousand new hires, 46 percent failed within eighteen months. Of those who failed, 89 percent were not terminated because of skills, but rather their poor attitude.⁵

Inflexible—This is the perception that you are stuck in your ways, stubborn, intellectually closed-minded to new ways of thinking, not innovative, and resistant to doing things differently—because of what worked for you previously, or another reason.⁶ This can be especially true if you were in your last position for a long time or with the same company for a long time.

Tired—The perception here is after twenty-five-plus years in your career, you have low energy, have been beaten down, and lack the enthusiasm to do the job.

On cruise control to retirement—Closely related to low energy is the bias that you are only willing to work long or hard enough until retirement arrives. The perception here is you are not fully committed to succeeding in a position, won’t give it your all, and will just draw a paycheck and do only the minimum (or a little more) to keep your job while you pass the time.

3 Brenoff, Ann. “Older Workers Stay Unemployed Much Longer Than Younger Ones, Study Says,” *Huffington Post*, June 17, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/17/finding-a-job-after-50-study_n_7603590.html (accessed March 28, 2016); See also, US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Displaced Workers Summary,” news release, August 26, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/disp.nr0.htm> (accessed March 28, 2016).

4 Brenoff, *ibid*; See also, US Department of Labor, “Displaced Workers.”

5 Murphy, Mark. Interview by Dan Schawbel, “Hire for Attitude,” *Forbes*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2012/01/23/89-of-new-hires-fail-because-of-their-attitude/#425a5f366742> (accessed March 28, 2016).

6 See also, Dugan, “10 Tips.”



The Advantages of Your Age

Now for the good news. There are far more advantages than biases related to your age and experience—not only in number, but also in the depth of their value to an employer (despite negative statistics). In fact, according to one study conducted by Adecco, an international firm specializing in employment consulting and research, if an employer was given a choice between hiring a millennial (someone born between 1981 and 2000) or a job seeker over fifty, 60 percent would hire the SEAL.⁷ Below is a non-exhaustive list of advantages your tenure provides you that far outweigh any age biases:

Judgment—One of the advantages of tenure is the ability to judge and evaluate situations. You keep your cool during a crisis (perceived or real). You have insight based on experience. Employers value a cool head during stressful times.

Reliability—Job seekers over fifty tend to be more reliable than younger employees. You are more punctual and have less absenteeism. Employers value someone they can count on.⁸

Work Ethic—A growing number of employers are discovering that SEALs demonstrate a “stronger work ethic” than their younger counterparts.⁹ This trend flies in the face of the previously accepted bias that SEALs are tired and on cruise control to retirement. You don’t need someone looking over your shoulder, because you require less supervision and know what’s expected—results. Many SEALs (especially those who went through challenging job searches) have also learned to be appreciative when they have a job and don’t want to risk losing it.

Critical Thinking—Hiring executives often experience that SEALs are good at problem solving.¹⁰ This is closely aligned with having good judgment. Having frequently “been there, done that,” you know how to take apart problems, analyze options and solutions,

7 Adams, Susan. “Older Workers, There’s Hope: Study Finds Employers Like You Better Than Millennials,” *Forbes*, September 24, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2012/09/24/older-workers-theres-hope-study-finds-employers-like-you-better-than-millennials/#658b87014aa6> (accessed February 4, 2016).

8 Ibid., and Society for Human Resource Management, “Executive Summary: Preparing for an Aging Workforce,” <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/14-0765%20Executive%20Briefing%20Aging%20Workforce%20v4.pdf> p. 6, (accessed February 4, 2016).

9 Society for Human Resource Management, “Executive Summary,” p. 6.

10 Ibid., and Adams, “Older Workers, There’s Hope.”

and implement a plan of attack. This gets problems solved quicker and more cost effectively. SEALs are confident in the decisions they make and don't need unnecessary guidance. They focus and execute to move projects forward.

Reading People—During the course of your twenty-five-plus-year career, you have probably encountered thousands of people. You know that people's attitudes and behaviors are motivated by something. Your experience often tells you what that "something" is, and you use that insight to make business decisions.

Networking—If you have been active in your industry and kept up with your network, this can be a big advantage. You can reach out, likely to other tenured professionals, and get information far more quickly and effectively than others, including younger job seekers whose network may not be as broad, deep, or knowledgeable.

Market Knowledge—Hiring executives often come to realize SEALs have superior knowledge and skill compared to younger workers.¹¹ This comes in two forms. If you remain in the same industry, you understand the products, services, processes, and competitors within that industry. You have market insight that only experience can give. The other form of market knowledge is business acumen. You know how business works. You understand that you must provide value to your employer¹² or you risk losing your job.

Commitment to Quality—Most SEALs want to do the job right; they want to achieve quality results the right way. This is highly valued by employers.

Professionalism—Due to your experience and tenure, you know how to conduct yourself as a professional more so than younger workers.¹³ This includes the use of your knowledge, integrity, image, and more. It is the totality of all things in your career used and presented in a visible, professional way.

Wisdom—Setting aside the dictionary definition, SEALs have a unique combination of knowledge and experience. Knowledge without experience is just facts (book learning). Experience without knowledge is just time. But together, that's wisdom. Enlightened employers value that in the workplace.

Stable—Being over fifty often means your personal life is more settled. You tend to

¹¹ Society for Human Resource Management, "Executive Summary," p. 6.

¹² Whitcomb, Susan Britton. *Job Search Magic: Insider Secrets from America's Career and Life Coach*. (Indianapolis, IN: JIST Works, 2006), p. 274, 289.

¹³ Society for Human Resource Management, "Executive Summary," p. 6.

A STORY OF INSPIRATION

Getting Started

For thirty-eight years, I worked for one company. It was a monumentally emotional challenge coming to grips with leaving the only company I had ever worked for. I was fifty-five years-old, youthful minded, in great shape, with plenty of gas left in the tank. I was high on the organizational chart with a multi-national corporation but swept aside from the succession plan due to tenure/age. So, with my wife and faith by my side, I resigned, moved back to my hometown, and started a job search.

I started talking with people about the challenges of getting a job while being in my mid fifties. I had zero experience in finding a job and never had a resume in my life! It was recommended I get a career coach. After my first meeting, I was amazed with his depth of knowledge and how much I didn't know.

The initial hurdle in my search was I did not know what I wanted to do. The only thing I did know was what I didn't want to do. I used this reverse engineering to profile my "target employer" in a small to medium sized business community.

Trust the Experts

I originally thought I could put a resume together and easily find work based on the nameplate of my previous employer. I found this simply not true!

Finding a career coach was a very smart move for me. He connected me to others, especially a resume writer who helped tremendously. This team took me through the rigors of understanding my accomplishments, who I was professionally at this point in my career, and where I could possibly go.

If you are not absolutely positive you know what you're doing in a job search, get expert guidance. Find them, trust them, and allow them to be critical.

Network

I spoke with many people who exited a company after long careers who expected doors to fly open, which will not happen! You must network, network, network!

Having worked in a very closed corporate culture, I had to re-learn how to meet people who could help open doors and learn how the real business world worked in contrast to the closed culture of a big multi-national corporation.

I spent a tremendous amount of time attending networking and social events of all kinds to meet as many people as possible while being astute to protocols, social mores, and sharpening my communication skills.

Some Final Advice

Embrace the change that is happening or you will not survive. Sharpen your technology skills. Read as many books and local business publications as possible to understand what's going on in the business world. Even humbly change your swagger to align with local business culture.

Battling the emotional highs and lows, dealing with self-doubt as an over fifty year old are all part of the process and part of the journey. You'll be okay.

When you do find work, whether in consulting or a job, it is very easy to expect entitlements because of your vast experience, past level of authority and degree of age/maturity. This is quite the contrary. You are the low person on the totem pole with zero tenure or experience with the company. They might have hired you for your experience, but once you are in the door, you must sweat to prove your worthiness.

For me, I secured a senior sales and operations position with a mid-sized company. I am extremely happy with this position. If I can make this transition, so can you!

R.D.
Age 55

Part X

Proactively Marketing Your Professional Credentials



Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to take rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.

—Theodore Roosevelt²³⁶

Networking will generate job-search activity. However, there is another technique that you should also use to maximize your exposure to the job market—proactively marketing your professional credentials.²³⁷ When you use both networking and proactive marketing, you will be utilizing what are generally viewed as the two most effective job-search techniques available. Earnest and properly executed use of both approaches will significantly shorten your job search.

Proactively marketing your professional credentials will differentiate you from the vast majority of other job seekers regardless of age, but it requires initiative and perseverance.

These proactive marketing techniques will create activity in your job search in the form of conversations, networking, referrals, leads, and interviews by diving straight into the heart of the Hidden Job Market.

We are about to discuss two techniques for proactively marketing your professional

²³⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, “The Strenuous Life,” (speech, The Hamilton Club, Chicago, IL, April 10, 1899), <http://www.bartleby.com/58/1.html> (accessed May 28, 2015).

²³⁷ Claycomb and Dinse, *Career Pathways*, portions of Part 5.

credentials (which will also aid your networking efforts). The first is a cold call. It involves you calling a prospective hiring executive and presenting yourself as a well-qualified job seeker. You will then, as needed, make follow-up communications through additional calls or email correspondence. This approach requires courage, perseverance, and the emotional strength to accept some verbal rejection. However, it is arguably one of the quickest ways to get interviews in the Hidden Job Market. Why? Because you are presenting yourself as a solution to a hiring need before an opening is advertised.

👉 Proactively marketing your credentials directly to hiring executives works to defeat age-related biases by showing your energy and passion toward your career, that you are not “above” calling an executive, and that you’re willing to do the work to achieve a goal (defeating the biases of low energy, entitlement mentality, and lack of commitment/poor work ethic, respectively).

For some, the idea of making cold calls as part of a job search is very uncomfortable, too pushy, or too aggressive. This technique is not for everyone. There is an alternative.

This second technique can be equally effective and initially easier to execute. It requires that you create and send an impactful email to a hiring executive, *followed by telephone calls* and *additional* emails. The follow-up calls are more of a warm call since you have reached out to the hiring executive after an email correspondence.

Regardless of which approach you take, it is absolutely necessary that you pick up the phone and call executives who could potentially be hiring! At the outset, make sure your voicemail message at home is appropriate and your cell phone greeting is professional.

Taking full advantage of these techniques and tapping into the Hidden Job Market requires that you identify employers of interest, identify the hiring executive, and communicate a compelling message about your abilities and how you can benefit the employer’s organization.

Here are the steps to creating and executing an effective proactive marketing plan:

1. Identify your target companies (your short list of companies, to start with).
2. Determine the hiring executive’s identity.
3. Research the hiring executive’s telephone number and email address.
4. Write a compelling call script and email cover letter about your credentials.
5. Execute, starting with either a call or email.

The Work

The technique of proactively marketing your professional credentials is an effective method of identifying job opportunities and can significantly shorten your job search once executed. This method strikes straight into the heart of the Hidden Job Market. Proactive marketing takes effort, but it is one of the most effective ways to uncover opportunities that may not even exist *except* in the mind of the hiring executive or in confidential conversations among senior managers or even board members.

Your proactive efforts could represent the most labor-intensive commitment of time you invest in your search. It may take three to five days of solid research time for you to identify target companies, the right (or probable) hiring executive, and his or her current email address and phone number. It is recommended that you make the commitment of time to do this work early in your job search (and do it early in your day).

The proactive method requires a shift in your thinking. You are now looking for a company you want to work for, instead of a job . . . so to speak.²³⁸ As you discover and learn about interesting companies, put additional marketing effort toward these companies, perhaps a drip email and call strategy (discussed later).

As you identify those “high-interest” companies, follow them on both social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, and so on) as well as more traditional news sources (press releases, Google alerts, and more). Connect with relevant employees and executives on LinkedIn. Consider asking for a research interview(s), which is another technique mentioned later. The more you can learn, the more you network, and the more you make them aware of your professional credentials, the greater your chances of getting an interview. Review *Getting Off to a Successful Start* to ensure you’re organizing your research properly.

Determine Your Target Employers

There are now a variety of methods and sources to identify target employers. They include:

1. Competitors of your current employer
2. Companies where your LinkedIn contacts work
3. Companies you can identify by reviewing profiles on a LinkedIn group
4. Association membership lists
5. Industry conference attendee lists and vendor lists
6. Clients, suppliers, and distributors of your current/past employer

²³⁸ Whitcomb, *Job Search Magic*, p. 273–274.

Part XII

Unique Tactics That Create Differentiation

Gather in your resources, rally all your faculties, marshal all your energies, focus all your capacities upon mastery of at least one field of endeavor.

—John Haggai³²⁶

Differentiation has been mentioned numerous times in this book. It is pivotal to your job search to persuade the hiring executive (especially during the interview process) that you are special. Creating differentiation in the mind of the employer is powerful because it taps into the persuasion principle of scarcity.

The following four interview techniques will help further differentiate you from other job seekers. Each requires time, effort, and thoughtful preparation. To be effective, each tactic must be a substantive, impactful, and well-presented package or document. Otherwise, they distract from your candidacy. Weigh how these tactics would be received by the hiring executive when deciding to use them or not. Well-timed and properly used, these tactics can catapult your candidacy to top-contender status for the open position.

Brag Book

One of the more impactful strategies to create differentiation is a brag book. It is a collection of bound documents supporting (and showcasing) the qualifications and accomplishments referenced in your resume. In a business context, think of a brag book as your marketing packet. It contains important information about your candidacy for the job. The brag book also differentiates you from other job seekers by demonstrating your initiative. And after you leave the interview, the brag book stays as a visual reminder of your qualifications and accomplishments.

³²⁶ Tracy, Brian. *Eat That Frog! 21 Great Ways to Stop Procrastinating and Get More Done in Less Time*, 2nd ed. (Buchanan, NY: Read-HowYouWant, 2008), p. 84.

While it takes some effort, creating a brag book also builds your confidence. There's something gratifying about seeing your accomplishments in print; it's a surefire way to boost your self-esteem.

The brag book should be bound in a presentation binder and can be discussed during an interview, left with the hiring executive to review afterward, or both. The brag book's length is up to you, but keep it to a maximum of fifteen pages as a general rule.

Here are some suggested key documents to include in your brag book: Cover Page—Include your name (in large print), the position you are interviewing for, and the name of the company giving the interview.

1. **Table of Contents**—There will be groupings of documents. You can either number each page in the book or delineate by sections (for example, Resume, Letters of Recommendation, and so on).³²⁷
2. **Resume**—When possible, customize the resume to the job you are pursuing.³²⁸
3. **Awards**—These demonstrate that you have been recognized for your ability and expertise.³²⁹
4. **Press Releases**—Press releases regarding any project or achievement that you were involved with or named in.³³⁰
5. **White Paper**—Portions of any significant business analysis or white paper you wrote.
6. **Graphs or charts**—Graphs or charts that demonstrate your performance.³³¹
7. **Job Performance Reviews/Summary**—Positive comments from job-performance reviews (be careful not to include references that could be considered confidential or proprietary).³³²
8. **Personality Profile Results**—Summary page or selected pages from a personality profile that you believe enhances your candidacy.
9. **Articles**—Articles written about you, especially from industry or trade publications. Articles (or portions thereof) that you have authored.

³²⁷ Matt. "Brag Book."

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Hallowell, *Million Dollar Race*, p. 184.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid.

10. **Letters of Recommendation**—Letters from clients, former bosses, colleagues, and so on.³³³
11. **Endorsements and Testimonials**—Get together every positive thing anyone has ever said or written about you, such as emails with professional compliments or LinkedIn recommendations.³³⁴
12. **Professional Organizations**—A list of these demonstrates that you are involved in your industry.
13. **Civic Involvement**—Any documentation regarding your civic and philanthropic involvement.³³⁵
14. **References**—Provide a list of references who will attest to your ability, professional qualities, and personal character.³³⁶

👉 When you consider the contents of your brag book, think on two different levels. First, be sensitive to biases. You may choose to omit dates on some of the documents. You will want to include information that would help defeat or minimize perceived biases, such as any letters or emails that say anything about your dedication, hard work, problem-solving skills, or willingness to put in extra effort, for example. Secondly, consider what types of documents would impress the hiring executive.

A brag book is a great topic of discussion during interviews. It focuses the hiring executive's attention on skills, abilities, and accomplishments and not age-related issues. As a leave-behind, it reminds the hiring executive of your abilities and accomplishments.

When to Present the Brag Book

There is no right or wrong time, just perhaps a good or better time, to present the brag book. It is a matter of reading the situation and choosing the moment that feels best. However, it is normally best to introduce the book early in the interview so the hiring executive can be impressed (the majority will be), and possibly talk about its contents during the course of the conversation.

A brag book's primary function is to showcase your credentials and demonstrate your

³³³ Matt, "Brag Book."

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Neely, "How to Develop a 'Brag Book' for Job Interviews," Splash Resumes, July 25, 2013, <http://www.splashresumes.com/2013/07/25/how-to-develop-a-brag-book-for-job-interviews/> (accessed February 16, 2016).

³³⁶ Hallowell, *Million Dollar Race*, p. 184.

people voice to voice? And making a minimum of twenty outbound calls a day to current, but more importantly, *new* contacts? If you can get on a roll making calls, that's great! This requires planning and some research for telephone numbers. Do that later in your day and use the morning to generate calls. The more calls you make, the quicker your job search will end successfully. Remember to network face to face as well. Don't curl up in a ball—get out and meet people. Attend industry gatherings, whether local or national, or get together with friends and neighbors. This can be a bonanza of networking opportunities. People will help you if they can and if you give them the opportunity to do so.

Use job alerts more strategically. If you have not been using job alerts, do so now (Indeed.com, SimplyHired.com, LinkedIn, or job boards). If you have been using them, review them and include other jobs you are interested in and qualified for. Get a new flow of information on opportunities in the market.

Proactively market your professional credentials. The mantra here is: Don't think in terms of a job—look for a company you'd like to work for.³⁹⁰ Once you identify companies that are (or could be) interesting to you, hunt in the Hidden Job Market by reaching out directly to the likely hiring executive and presenting your professional credentials. This technique requires effort, but you will find jobs and job leads that you otherwise would not find.

Exercise. There are two reasons why exercise is a technique to reignite your job search. The first is it's healthy. As a SEAL, perhaps you have a few pounds you could live without. It can improve your appearance. Secondly, exercising routinely gives you a sense of accomplishment. When tough days happen, at least you got your exercise in.

Focus on differentiation. What in your background and accomplishments makes you different, unique, and /or valuable to an employer? Think hard about this. Are you making these factors apparent to employers? If not, showcase them. Now is not the time to be humble!

Seek out a career-transition coach. A coach is an objective source who can help you in many ways—to empathize with you, as well as challenge, educate, counsel, and encourage you. Simply having a professional to talk to (and be accountable to) who is experienced in career transition can open your mind intellectually, help you deal with the many emotions that accompany a job search, and more. If you choose to go down this path, evaluate a coach to ensure they have the insight necessary to benefit and guide you.

Think through these techniques. Find the ones that apply to you, then implement them!

³⁹⁰ Whitcomb, *Job Search Magic*, p. 273–274.

All it takes is one of these techniques (but more likely the combination of several) to reignite your search and land job offers.