

Brains, Brawn and Bravado: Employing Your Endurance and Experience to Overcome Ageism

by Gerard Francis ...

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If you are a seasoned executive in today's job queue, you are no doubt being sensitized to the quandary of age discrimination. From the lunch lady in Springfield, Illinois to the CEO of a men's haberdashery, companies are betting on youth to preserve their vitality and inject new blood to ramp up their corporate circulation. A recent Google web search on "Age Discrimination" yielded 15.5 million results while the news category alone showed 753,000 hits. I suspect that the topic will continue to be one of great concern and importance as Baby Boomers, (those born between 1945 and 1964) and Gen X'ers (born between 1960 and 1980,) come face to face with their mortality and the trend to jettison old cargo.

Quoting a New York Times article on the topic, "At a time when digital skills are prized and businesses place a premium on youth, some employers subtly seek to push out older workers. They deny them raises once awarded routinely, reduce their responsibilities or give evaluations that are cold and complain of waning productivity." And despite the fact that some firms are stepping out to retain older workers, the issue remains a thorn in the sides of those waiting in unemployment lines.

The fact is that employers who take the stance that "older is obsolete," are missing a grand opportunity to harness brains, brawn and bravado to grow their businesses with experienced, seasoned people who know and understand the pain points of the business and can contribute solutions to alleviate the suffering.

Despite the lack of action by the nation's lawmakers, there seems to be agreement on the value of older workers. A survey of some 40 articles on reasons to hire people who have been around the horn a few times yielded some important insight. Herewith are ten tactics that can and should be employed when you are casting about for your next executive adventure.

1. **"Bold and Beautiful."** Don't be shy about social platforms. Employ them all in showcasing your youth, experience, energy and endurance. And it's not just about LinkedIn. Platforms like Facebook, Quora, About.me, VisualCV, Twitter and Pinterest, just to name a few, should be used to highlight who you are, what you have done and what you bring to the table. Their use also shows you are current with today's trends and social skills.
2. **"Locked and loaded."** Emphasize in your outreach materials, like your resume/CV, your ability to be a quick study and have a short learning curve. Chances are that companies are desperately seeking, in real time, a package of abilities that fit your requirements like a glove.
3. **"Up and running."** Strongly convey how your track record closely aligns with the company's position specifications, allowing the organization to implement solutions faster because of your experience and transferable accomplishments. In that vein, tailor every resume to the job spec. The trend to "one size fits all" has long passed.
4. **"Coach and conquer."** Senior folks often make great coaches and mentors; and can help drive culture, camaraderie and consistency throughout the organization. Give active examples of how you have driven culture change, improved results to the bottom line and helped younger staff excel in their jobs.
5. **"Patience is a virtue."** Because of your tenure in the workforce, you likely have more endurance and forbearance to withstand the highs and lows of successfully running a business and its components. Provide vivid examples of your patience, tenacity and endurance to bring to light how they can benefit a potential employer.
6. **"Timely and temperate."** Experienced employees are prompt, courteous and even tempered. Experience has made you wiser and highly aware of deadlines and commitments. Let the record show your track record.

7. “Low maintenance.” By virtue of your tenure, experienced workers, particularly those in the unemployment queue, do not have unreasonable demands. They have seen the good, the bad and the ugly of working life, are more accommodating and have greater levels of fortitude. Should you make it to the offer stage, make your demands minimal and easy to accommodate.

8. “Loyal soldiers.” Experience often engenders great loyalty. And according to studies like MetLife’s research project in 2012, Boomers have higher levels of loyalty than other generations. Furthermore, Boomers grew up in a time where loyalty was both valued and rewarded and a team sport. In telling your story, weave in examples to demonstrate your legacy of loyalty and your adeptness at assembling teams able to scale tall buildings and walk through walls.

9. “Distracted driving.” Boomers have less diversions and disruptions than later generations. Chances are the kids are grown and the daily pressures of youth have abated and there is more time to devote to one’s profession and passions. Let your passion show through in interviews and how you respond to questions.

10. “Knowledge and network.” Networks are growing ever important to the sales process. It no longer is simple enough to run advertisements to sell a product. Influence and knowledge are growing as drivers of purchasing. Boomers are ready made for the task because of their experience, knowledge and tenure and they don’t require tons of training. Use your network liberally in spreading the word about your good work, passion and experience. Don’t be shy about asking for a helping hand.

About the author

Gerard F. Corbett, Chair and CEO, Redphlag LLC

Gerard F. Corbett is Chair and Chief Executive Officer of Redphlag LLC, a strategic public relations, marketing management and executive coaching consulting firm, a position he has held since January 2008. He also serves as Immediate Past Chair & CEO of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA,) the world’s largest member organization of public relations practitioners. He is accredited in public relations (APR) and a member of the PRSA College of Fellows.