

The

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Too Old to Get a New Job?

Think again! Older workers rock!!

By Renée Lee Rosenberg, Certified Five O'Clock Club Master Coach

In September, 2010 the *New York Times* carried a front-page story titled, "For the Unemployed Over 50, Fears of Never Working Again." The article featured a 54-year-old job seeker who had been looking unsuccessfully for a job for several years. As a seasoned career coach with The Five O'Clock Club and author of the book, *Achieving the Good Life After 50: Tools and Resources for Making it Happen*, I was greatly disturbed by the inaccuracy of the message conveyed. I found the

article depressing and misleading and felt obliged to respond. Here is a copy of the letter I sent:

Letter to Editor:

It was with great sadness that I read Motoko Rich's article "For the unemployed Over 50, Fears of Never Working Again." As a career counselor who specializes in working with those over 50, this article does not ring true. Discrimination is not necessarily the reason people over 50 can't find work. Ms. Reid's job search approach

may be the real reason she remains unemployed. She spends "most of her days ... in front of a laptop, holed up", "she browses the job listings that clog her e-mail in-box." This is a good example of job searching the wrong way. In my experience many jobs hunters in their 50s, 60s and even 70s land good jobs. They contact people and build relationships, even when job openings do not exist, rather than aimlessly sending out résumés online. The negative, hopeless and depressing tone of the article would discourage any job seeker over 50.

Because I have been a career coach with The Five O'Clock Club for over 20 years, I have

seen many clients, in their 50s, 60s and even 70s who embraced the Club's strategic methodology and achieved successful and satisfying job search results. I'd like to share some of their stories.



Renée Lee
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Case Study: Walter 25 Years with the Same Company

Walter, 64, worked for 25 years as a talent agent for the same entertainment company. He worked side-by-side with the same boss for the first 23 of those years. Then the company restructured and he was removed from the job he loved. Shocked by this unexpected change, he was offered 3 choices: a severance package, a floater assignment, or a new position that they would create for him. He opted for the new position, only to find himself handling "elementary, menial tasks in the back room." He felt his status and reputation were diminished. However, he refused to be discouraged and worked to enhance the position. He kept his computer skills up-to-date, even staying current with social media, so they would see he was not obsolete, but still a viable worker. After two years in his new position, he was



"I know you're good with computers, Smythe, but can you play the drums? A couple of us got a band together and we're hitting the road with Kid Rock."

In this issue: ♦ Older Workers ARE Getting Hired! ♦ Enemy #1: Discouragement

♦ Résumés, Online Applications, Answering Ads, and Having Your Own Website

♦ Weekly email newsletter on career development and job search. www.fiveoclockclub.com

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OLDER WORKERS ROCK!

told the organization was cutting back again and this was to be his last day.

A Five O'Clock Club outplacement package was part of his severance package. When Walter joined our weekly small-group strategy sessions via teleconference, he was fearful about his age being a detriment. As an active member of the group, he encouraged others and got his own confidence back at the same time. "The group and Renée taught me to see that the things I had done in my last job added value. There were skills that could be transferred to other jobs. I was marketable and had something to offer."

He reworked his résumé, making it "more contemporary to fit into the market" and continued to upgrade his skills with online tutorials. Realizing he was still marketable and had something to offer and, most importantly, coming to the conclusion that "age had nothing to do with it," Walter dug deep into the past reaching out to old contacts. He conducted a targeted mail campaign with follow-up phone calls. The response wasn't immediate, and although he was feeling frightened, he continued to keep his courage up with the support of the group, which continually reminded him that he had something to offer.

Walter ultimately landed a part-time marketing position and several short-term assignments. He feels the best thing the company did for him was to put him in touch with the Club. "I went from feeling devastated by the loss of my job and reputation to seeing that my experience and work ethic were desirable traits for many companies and that I could even serve as a mentor to younger work-

ers. The Five O'Clock Club helped me regain my confidence and stop worrying about my age."

Case Study: Denise From Corporate America to the Art World

Denise's story is a little different. At 62, her job as an executive assistant was eliminated. She was given Five O'Clock Club outplacement as part of her severance package. Feeling confused, let down and wondering if she would be able to find a satisfying job again "at her age," I asked her to complete the Seven Stories Exercise. This is the first step in the Club's assessment process and she discovered a reoccurring thread that ran through her life, a desire to work in the art world.

With the assistance of the group and private coaching, she researched her targets, found programs and opportunities for study scholarships, returned to school and made her dream a reality. Today, delighted in her career change after 60, she is finishing her certification for art appraisal. Through networking, she landed an opportunity to coordinate a major art exhibit in New York.

Case Study: Sheila From Operational Systems to Assistant Director of Lifelong Learning

When Sheila, 64, lost her job of 22 years in operational systems, she felt no one would hire her again. She was given the Club's outplacement package and regularly attended the weekly small-group strategy sessions. Encouraged by the group, she worked on her assessment exercises to identify her transferable skills, values and work satisfiers. She decided she wanted to move from the for-profit to the not-for-profit world. Sheila participated in private coaching sessions to develop her Two-Minute Pitch for her new target, and practiced it in the group.

After building her confidence, she started to develop and expand her networks. She learned of an opening for a position of assistant director of lifelong learning. It matched her skills and experience, but was an entirely different job and

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industry from her previous position. To convince the hiring manager that she was a good fit, she used The Five O'Clock Club's two-column approach in her letter, comparing their needs with her experience and skills. It worked and she was hired. Sheila gained courage and confidence by attending the group sessions and working with her coach regularly. She went from thinking she would never work again to landing the job of her dreams.

At The Five O'Clock Club, we believe that a person's age may not be the reason for a difficult search. Of course, age discrimination exists but so do all other kinds of discrimination (such as race, gender, education). For many older job hunters, success depends more on *how they perceive themselves* than about how other people see them. Yes, the job market is tough today but as you can see from the stories above, following the Club methodology, knowing what you want, being proactive and maintaining a positive attitude can lead to successful results.

Some other strategies to keep in mind:

- ♦ Avoid reading negative media stories and stay away from negative people who remind you about your age.
- ♦ Have a can-do attitude.
- ♦ Regularly attend the Club's weekly strategy groups.
- ♦ Follow closely the Club's strategic methodology.
- ♦ Target smaller companies.
- ♦ Continually develop and expand your network.
- ♦ Upgrade your skills continually.
- ♦ Pay attention to your image! Look good by keeping your body in shape and dress up.
- ♦ Believe you can do it.
- ♦ Keep a smile on your face and always display energy, enthusiasm and excitement when speaking about your skills.

As Carol Matthau once said, "There is no old age. There is, as there always was, just you." Think about the successful transitions you have had in your life, how marketable and terrific you are. Set your goals, implement your plans and don't give up! ♦

