

Resume Guide for Job Seekers Age 50+

If you are approaching (or have already reached) retirement age, and you're not ready to disconnect from the workforce, you are not alone – thousands of professionals 50 and older are embarking on second-act careers.

The phrase "encore career," made popular by Marc Freeman in his book *Encore: Finding Work That Matters in the Second Half of Life*, refers to a new stage of work between the middle years and true old age.

To support an encore career, many professionals are re-purposing corporate skills to support non-profit groups. Others are taking on part-time jobs to pursue new or long-time interests. And still others are pursuing a passion – while simultaneously filling a market niche – by starting a small business.

Is Age a Concern?

Yes, age discrimination is real. Two out of three workers between the ages of 45 and 74 say they have seen – or experienced – age discrimination at work.

No doubt there are employers who can't look past a candidate's age. However, there are many traits associated with "old" that are within your control. These assumptions might include:

- Being inflexible and unable to manage change
- Resistance to new ideas and business approaches
- Being unwilling to accept new challenges
- Ceasing to learn and upgrade knowledge and skills
- Resistance to computers, smart-phones, email, social media, and other technology
- A belief that they deserve special consideration because of their status in life

How you present yourself on your resume, during the interview, and on the job, can help sway prospective employers' perceptions about age. To start, a strong resume is required to get your 'foot in the door'.

Resume Strategies

It's quite possible you never had a resume—or the one you do have is not up to date. Career document standards and formats have changed significantly over recent years, and not adhering to these changes may raise red flags about your age.



Does the content and format of your resume shout, "I'm old fashioned" or "I have a lot to offer, and I'm ready to take on new challenges."? Whether you hire an expert to write your resume (highly recommended) or DIY, following are several recommended strategies to improve the *vitality* of your resume:

Pay attention to modern standards for resume content and design:

- Avoid using computer templates – these are outdated and ineffective.
- Don't tell your life story. A strong resume is not a long-winded career obituary. It is a marketing brochure that sells a person's unique brand and value. A modern resume summarises offerings in alignment with position requirements and shares supporting metrics and impacts.
- Focus on the last 10-15 years of career history, eliminating age-revealing information such as graduating from college in 1974.
- Use words that portray energy and enthusiasm. Instead of "seasoned professional" (aka "Old Professional"), substitute with "business professional or leader" who "transformed operations, ignited sales, pushed through new initiatives..." You get the idea.
- Begin the resume with a strong overview of your experience and all you have to offer. Start strong. Position some of your greatest (related) career achievements near the start of the file for immediate hook-and-grab.

- Summarise job responsibilities in two or three sentences and hit hard with bulleted achievement statements that illustrate how you saved companies time and money and positively impacted the bottom line. Results are key!
- Show that you are flexible, manage change effectively, and accept challenges. Highlight projects you initiated, problems you tackled and resolved, and cross-functional teams you collaborated with or managed.
- Focus on achievements instead of tasks. A play-by-play of job responsibilities will earn you no distinction. With plenty of experience to draw from you should have a wealth of stellar examples to back up your acclaimed skill sets.
- Don't just *tell* an employer you are good at something... i.e.: "I am a strong leader"... PROVE it: "Directed a team of 50 through the creation of the first 5-year business plan".
- Keep "fluff" to a minimum: *outstanding communicator, excellent team player, hard-working professional* are weak words with little value.
- Demonstrate your value with results-focused accomplishments, quantifying how much, how many, and how often to drive home your talents.
- Modernise the resume look and pair effective content with innovative design. A reverse-chronological resume typed in black Times New Roman font screams old-school... not up-to-speed savvy professional. Consider adding testimonials, graphs, charts, or a splash of colour for greater visual appeal.

Show the employer that you embrace technology:

- Include your email address (not your family's or spouse's) and don't use silly account names such as "golfgeezer@yahoo.com" or "bestgrandma@gmail.com."
- Include your mobile phone number. Don't have a mobile phone? Get one!
- List your computer skills (at a minimum Microsoft Word, Excel, and/or PowerPoint). Don't have any computer skills? Learn some!
- Include the vanity URL to your LinkedIn profile. Don't have a LinkedIn profile? You need one!

Prove that you are committed to continuous learning:

- Include a section for professional training and development – and list things that are current and relevant to your targeted job: classes, company-sponsored training, conferences, workshops, and e-learning modules.
- List the professional associations of which you are a member. Don't belong to any associations? Join some!
- Include links to articles you have published or to your professional blog or LinkedIn. Don't have any? It is never too late to start writing posts to position yourself as a thought leader.

Adrienne Tom is an award-winning resume writer with Career Impressions, where she partners with executives and top professionals from around the world to create compelling career tools.

