

## So you want to keep working

If 40 is the new 30, then surely 50 is the new 40 and so on, till we can look at ourselves at 80 and say “Why would I want to stop working, if I still enjoy contributing?”

I can think of only a few reasons to stop working once you hit ‘mature age’:

1. ***I can afford to retire and do the things I want to do, not what some boss tells me to do. So travelling, community work or recreational pursuits and so on.***
2. ***I have some health issues that are really impacting on my ability to contribute to the work place. So I need time to deal with that.***
3. ***I’m just over the whole work thing – I can afford to stop work and reward myself with relaxing and enjoying more time with my extended family – the kids, grand kids, whoever...***

All of these are legitimate reasons to stop working, but what if you want to keep working, or if unfortunately, you need to keep working to maintain a reasonable lifestyle? What are your options?

The work place has changed dramatically in the past 50 years or so, career management has been affected by that and the

mindset of employers has had some shifts along the way. 50 years ago a few facts held true:

- *If you did your job well, you had a job for life. 40 plus years with the same company was the norm, and your kids might follow you in under a company scholarship.*
- *Age, maturity and experience was revered as the source of wise or sage advice to young people and sought after by companies*
- *Job hopping to get ahead in your career meant about 3 – 5 years in a job to prove you had learnt all the ropes and could step up to the next level*

But then, in the last couple of decades of the 20th century, western society particularly discovered materialism, youth, enthusiasm and new ideas (mostly courtesy of the Baby Boom generation who were the youth of the day). We brought with us the brash post war optimism and opportunism that became our creed “You can do anything you want in life, if you want it badly enough”.

We forged new horizons, tested all the boundaries and created a new workplace that worshipped the bright ideas of the young and undaunted minds. Anyone over 40 years of age was an ‘old dog who could not learn new tricks’ so it was out with the old and in with the new!

As a result we had some spectacular booms and even more spectacular crashes (hello dot coms), but slowly some people realised we had ‘thrown the baby boomer out with the bath water’. Yes we had ignored our sage and experienced ‘elders’ in that fervent worship of all things new.

And these young whipper snappers also changed the landscape with a burning desire for a better ‘work/life

balance' than the boomers who had slaved away before them. So what does all this mean at the end of the noughties and another decade beckons?

### Skills shortage

Yes we've all heard and recognised the drastic skills shortage in the past few years in Australia, which was temporarily alleviated by the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). With so many people losing jobs and companies going under, all of a sudden there was no shortage. But with the economies of the world recovering, we will still encounter a skills shortage.

The Government is often seeking overseas workers to fill these shortages, yet in many cases we have in our mature age talent pool, many of the needed skills that companies are looking for. So we need to market ourselves better and maintain current skills at the best possible level. *Write a list of your skills so you know exactly what you have to offer your current or future employer.*



### Tip No 1

#### **Maintain, update or gain additional skills**

Older skills are still required though, due to the top end of the workforce retiring and taking their skills with them. There are certain key areas where skills seem in perennial shortage. At the time of writing, February 2010, we still don't have enough accountants, bakers, engineers – civil, mechanical, mining, structural and hydraulic, nurses, teachers, agricultural scientists, fitters, welders and so on. So, brush up your vocational skills or perhaps get a new trade or profession and importantly, be computer literate to increase your employability.

### Work options

Funnily enough, the Generation X and Y focus on work - life balance has worked in everyone's favour, as all employees seek a better balance of "working to live, not living to work". Better balanced employees make better workers anyway, so many small to medium enterprise (SME) owners are offering better work conditions all the time. Not quite on par with Government Departments or some mega multinationals, with deep pockets and deeper HR departments, but looking at the different options they can offer their team to create a less pressured work place.

In reality, the choice is now yours to work full time, part time or casually. Most employers are now serious about offering different, flexible work options to productive employees. So you can choose to work full time or part time or job share or casually with hours to suit your lifestyle or financial needs. You can usually negotiate with a longer term employer, the option to 'transition to retirement' where over a period of years you move from full time to part time to casual and slowly phase yourself out of the organisation.

This helps the company retain your skills and experience, offers them the possibility of you mentoring younger staff and transferring your skills and (often desperately needed) work ethic to the more junior workers.

### Presenting yourself for a job

Whether you are already working and looking to improve your employment status, or looking to return to the workforce as a result of stopping to raise a family, or through redundancy or retrenchment, the preparation and presentation

tasks are the same.



## Tip No 2

### **Be Flexible in your approach to employment**

Whilst you need to be realistic here, work out how you'd like to balance your work with your leisure, recreation and personal needs. Many SME employers will be glad for the opportunity to employ someone part time or casual, as they may need extra capacity, but not be able to afford to hire a full time staff member. Job sharing is a brilliant way to increase productivity and motivation and the employees are not so stressed and therefore are more productive.

Often 1 plus 1 = 3 in these situations.

Ensure you have a current and professional resume which focuses on the last 5 years of work in moderate detail. Then list ALL the things you've done before that in bullet points – the period of time, the company name and the job title. That's it. This way you achieve a couple of important targets like keeping the resume brief whilst providing enough information to spike the interest of an employer. If they want to know more, they will call you and if you play your cards right – get you in for an interview. Oh and only offer references AFTER you've been interviewed and if the employer seems keen to progress your application.

Remember, you bring to any job all the skills and experience you learn in the jobs you do in your career, so as a mature age candidate, it is important to list them all. This is best done in a bullet point list or table, highlighting not only professional skill, but some of the soft skills like communication, people

management, time management and ability to prioritise work. When you go for an interview, prepare yourself as fully as possible. Research the company – its operations, values and results. List your strengths and weaknesses and take the list with you, because you know they're going to ask that question. Prepare any questions you have for the company so you don't forget them in interview.

Dress appropriately to the role you are interviewing for. If you're not sure fellas, if you should wear a tie, ring and ask. Be clean, neatly presented and BE ON TIME!

Early is so much better than late, but even if you fall foul of an unavoidable delay (vehicle breakdown etc) use your mobile phone and call to let them know.

Make eye contact during the interview, and only answer the question you've been asked. Don't offer too much extra information. Again, less is more here. If the employer wants more detail – let them ask. And remember; avoid asking about the pay till the very end.



## Tip No 3

### **Prepare for your interview**

Provide a professional resume of no more than 4 pages. Advise referees are available upon request. Research the company and prepare any questions in advance. Take a list of your strengths and weaknesses with you. Don't talk too much, talk slowly, make good eye contact and only answer the questions you're asked. Be on time, be clean and well presented.

Finally, be persistent. You may not succeed at your first interview. And you may not get past the recruitment consultant every time. But the only way you will succeed is to just keep calling and knocking on doors and chasing up consultants and employers alike. But don't overdo it and become a pest – it's a very fine line to tread, but an important one too. Contact them regularly to check on progress, but more often than weekly would usually be too often. Again, just ask at interview "When should I check with you about the progress of my application?" The consultant or employer will give you a guide, stick to it and you'll stay fresh in their mind and this too can help with the process.



## Tip No 4

### **Stay Positive**

Always keep a positive attitude to the job search. Even when you get a few rejections, remember that it is the employer missing out on a great employee – You! Keep calling and following up, without becoming a pest. Talk to the employer if appropriate or stick with the contact of the employment consultant.

### **Ron Browne**

*Plus 40 – Mature Age Employment & Training* [46]

## Resources

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*Video interview with Ron Browne*

[www.mylifechange.com.au/forward.php?link\\_id=1235](http://www.mylifechange.com.au/forward.php?link_id=1235)



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