



## 4 Keys to Finding Work over the Age of 40



When looking for satisfying and financially sustaining work, what can people age 40-75 do to improve their chances of success?

In every community, there are certain individuals or groups whose **specific practices** enable them to find **better solutions** to intractable problems than their neighbors or colleagues, who have access to the **same resources**. We interviewed 22 people from the ages of 40 to 75 who found "satisfying and financially sustaining work" to determine what they did that was different than those who had not found work.

In addition to the interviews of those who did find employment, we interviewed nine members who were still looking. They spent between 35 and 40 hours per week in their job search.

### Use of LinkedIn -

- 8 of the 9 edited their LinkedIn profile to help their job search.
- Used LinkedIn to research target companies 7 of 9
- Identified prior work contacts for networking 6 of 9
- Searched for job postings 6 of 9
- Used their personal network 7 of 9
- Only with people they knew directly (1st level) 5 of 9 or with people they introduced by people they already knew 2 of 9.
- Responded to job listings on Indeed or other consolidators 8 of 9
- Worked with retained recruiters 5 of 9

### Recommendations

- Plan for the long haul
- Develop a support team that can help when the process gets difficult
- Motivation and morale frequently mentioned as the hardest part of the process



**Quantitative Results** for those who found satisfying and financially sustaining work: - The 22 people interviewed ranged in age from 40s to 70s. Eighteen found jobs – four others were starting a business.

- 4 were in their 40s, 11 in their 50s, 6 in their 60s, 1 in their 70s

**Satisfaction:** 16 were satisfied or very satisfied, 4 were somewhat satisfied, and 2 were non-reports

**Financial sustainability:** 9 were on the path to financial sustainability, 12 were in a financially sustainable position, 1 was unclear

### **Critical Insights from our interviews:**

For people in their 40s to 70s, **looking for a job is a long process**. The twenty two people interviewed took from 3 to 18 months to find a job, with **the median of 10.5 months**.

- Plan for the long haul
- Develop a support team that can help when the process gets difficult
- Stay motivated - motivation and morale are the most difficult part of the process
- Stay energized - identify which parts of the process give you energy and emphasize those
- One interviewee said she gained energy from meeting people face-to-face. As a result, she started reconnecting with people in groups and individually.

"Staying Positive" is frequently seen as the one of the largest hurdles to overcome.

### **Rely on strong relationships** with either first or second degrees of separation<sup>[1]</sup>

- Connect with people to find opportunities
- Join industry associations: for example Boston Product Management Association or the Human Resources Leadership Forum.
- One person identified an ex-boss from 20 years ago, *"He passed my resume to a retained recruiter who was filling a job."*
- Connect with those who know your abilities and experience first hand. The group found that a strong recommendation was needed to overcome what they perceived to be a persistent age bias.

*"In my case the key was, **concentrating on people who knew the quality of my work.**"*

- Leverage relationships to assist you emotionally. It requires a lot of effort and a change in mindset about how to measure your progress. Associate with people who can help you remain positive and keep you from becoming discouraged.
- Network in groups where people are employed. *"I concentrated on events, meetings where the people were employed—not those looking for work. I got more leads from people already in the workplace, and found that their contacts would yield better results."*



*I'm not used to the constant outreach that a job search requires. However, I found that being willing to do this paid off."*

**Target Companies, Not Jobs** - By targeting companies, there may be more than one job that fits.

*I identified the companies in the area I was interested in.  
Kept looking and found a job description on company site.  
Then I contacted a friend who knew someone in the  
company.*

Build a network of people within the targeted company or companies.

- Use LinkedIn or Google to track the target company.

**Consider switching Industries:** Analyze your industry and trends to evaluate what's available now and in the future. Other industries may be growing, even if yours is not.

- Be honest with yourself. Do you need to change industries or move?
- Leverage your existing network to make contacts into the new one. Then focus on building and improving your network in the new industry.
- Volunteer if possible to help build contacts in the new industry. Non-Profits: for example hospitals or museums are especially open to volunteers.

Identify a gap in new industry

*" I realized that one area of strength that could combine my interest in clean environmental work and my technical skills was in reducing emissions and energy waste in the manufacturing, marketing and sales/deployment of better lighting solutions for commercial facilities. There are miles and miles of inefficient, toxic fluorescent lighting in America and around the world. So I focused on bringing LEDs products to market."*

**Caveats and Time Sinks**

- Networking - effectiveness of networking depends on the industry—whether it's growing or dying—how many openings exist for one's profession.
- Blind applications via Indeed or other job opening aggregators were not seen as productive, by the twenty two members who found employment
- Recruiters – were also seen as not very effective by the twenty two interviewees. Fewer companies are using recruiters for regular employment. Remember recruiters need to make money.



In summary, the difference between a job search in your 20s and one when you are 40-75 is the relationships, reputation and knowledge that you have gained during your years of employment. You need to take advantage of this experience to not only find opportunities that others may miss but also to differentiate yourself from others and demonstrate your value to potential employers.

- Leverage your own network and leverage your experience and interests to expand your network
- Network in organizations, especially those made up of people who are employed, not looking for employment.
- Contribute to organizations to demonstrate skills and/or knowledge

One interviewee became President of the Boston Product Management Association, and used this as a great way to demonstrate his management skills and network with people work in his target companies.

One person we interviewed did research and wrote a useful paper about LED lighting. As a result, people in the company where he wanted to work saw him as an expert. Stay positive and energized and leveraging our personal relationships to keep your spirits up

We all have to find our voice, our own way. As one person said,

*“It took time to prioritize tasks and get comfortable with all the meetings and the whole process. Finally, I had my own unique workflow that I felt comfortable following.”*