

EMPLOYMENT

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Older Worker

Rationale

In the United States, it is not legal for an employer to ask a job candidate's age, birth date, date of high school completion, or any other question designed to identify how old the candidate is. (An employer can, however, ask if the candidate is either under 18 or over 70 years old.) However, surefire signs that a candidate is out-of-date include using out-of-date vocabulary, having a network of business associates who are retired or no longer in the field, and having limited knowledge of current technology. The older candidate must address employers' concerns that he or she is not current, is unable to learn, is not used to the pace and expectations of work, lacks stamina, won't fit in, or won't stay at the job for long.

In some industries, the demand for older workers' specific skill sets might be waning. Some of their skills may be outdated. And the number of jobs in their specific field may be decreasing. However, this does not mean that older workers cannot find worthwhile, meaningful work.

Objective

Help older Deseret Industries associates prepare for a successful career.

Potential Discussion Items

- Discuss with the Deseret Industries associate his or her willingness to:
 - Change career fields.
 - Change specialties.
 - Relocate.
 - Retool (learn new technology).
 - Move into a sales position.
 - Take a position for which he or she is overqualified.
- Review the Deseret Industries associate's résumé with him or her, and revise it as needed. (Note: Most employers require a candidate's work history only for the last 10 years or the last four positions.)
- Practice with the Deseret Industries associate how he or she will address the age issue, if it arises.

First, the associate must anticipate the employer's possible concerns about his or her age and may want to bring up those concerns himself or herself. Acknowledging the concerns in a positive way will help take the edge off the issue. Help the associate maintain relaxed and engaged body language, including a pleasant facial expression and good eye contact, while also adding a touch of humor, when appropriate.

Second, if the associate learns of a concern, he or she must minimize the employer's concern. Help the associate briefly explain why the concern isn't valid by mentioning steps he or she has taken to ensure that his or her age would not hurt business. He or she should offer specific proof that the concern is not valid.



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- Strategize with the Deseret Industries associate on how to answer interview questions.

First, help the associate dispel the myth that he or she is out of date, too slow, or unable to learn. The associate can do this by talking about current trends in the industry and showing that he or she has up-to-date skills and ideas.

Second, help the associate to market himself or herself as one of the team: someone who is ready to continue learning and growing, is an expert in the field, and is able to teach others so that the entire company benefits from his or her experience.

Third, help the associate capitalize on the positive perceptions about older workers by promoting his or her experience and knowledge, great work ethic, and reliability.

Suggested Resources

- No One Is Unemployable: Creative Solutions for Overcoming Barriers to Employment, by Debra L. Angel and Elisabeth E. Harney (1997).
- The 6 Reasons You'll Get the Job: What Employers Look for—Whether They Know It or Not, by Debra Angel MacDougall and Elisabeth Harney Sanders-Park (2010).
- "You're Old, So What!" LDS Employment Resource Services: <https://www.ldsjobs.org/ers/ct/articles/youre-old-so-what!>

