

BUSINESS

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Job-hunting a challenge for over-50 worker

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NEW YORK — Nobody will say it to your face — but if you're job-hunting and you're over 50, beware.

Many employers could be biased against you because of your age. Make an effort to battle their presumptions.

Their minds are filled with stereotypes — that "old" means you'll have health problems, miss lots of work, and be expensive to insure.

"Age bias is rampant," said Betsy Cummings, author of *How to Find a Job After 50: From Part-Time to Full-Time, from Career Moves to New Careers*, which Warner Business Books will publish this fall.

"Employers are sophisticated enough to know it's illegal to talk about the job applicant's age," Ms. Cummings explained. "Instead, they say things like 'You're overqualified.'"

Make eye contact if the interviewer is younger than you

Older people can get work. It just takes longer.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median time to land a job is 10 weeks. For job-hunters over age 55, it's 14 weeks.

"The biggest peril the over-

55s face is discouragement," said Richard Bayer, chief operating officer of the Five O'Clock Club, an outplacement and job-search organization.

Here are strategies for handling job interviews if you're over 50:

● "Be proactive. Stay one step ahead of your interviewer," Ms. Cummings said. Bring up subjects that make it clear you would be a great hire. For instance, tell anecdotes about the innovative things you've done in other jobs.

● Emphasize that you work well with people of all ages — even a younger boss.

● "Talk as if you're going to work a long time," Mr. Bayer ad-

vised. "Say, 'I see myself working another 20 years.'"

● Get your youthfulness across. One over-50 told Mr. Bayer he took his gym bag to a job interview, and mentioned he'd be going to the gym later.

● Watch your body language. Many older people don't look the interviewer in the eye if the person's obviously younger — which is low self-esteem behavior, analysts say.

● Tidy up. A good haircut and an outfit from a "timeless shop" like Ann Taylor will work wonders, Ms. Cummings said.

● Make your resume work for you: Tailor it to only include details that are relevant to the job you're seeking, Mr. Bayer said.

On your chronological listing of past jobs, just go back 10 to 15 years. List your college degrees, but don't list dates.

● When you're looking for job leads, pull out all the stops — just like younger people do: Network with other job-seekers and hit up everyone you know for tips about who's hiring and join groups that will help you. Also, use the array of Web sites with job listings, or links to companies that want to hire older people — from www.AARP.org to www.Seniors4Hire.org.

● Search for openings at small companies: They tend to be receptive to older job applicants "who can hit the ground running," Mr. Bayer said.