

Finding Employment When You're Female, Fabulous, and Fifty-plus

Abstract

The economy improved, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates, unemployment dropped, and yet women over 50—particularly women of color (African American and Hispanic or Latino)—continue the struggle to find meaningful, substantive, employment. Department of Labor Statistics show that for the first three quarters of 2017 the employment gains of men outpaced those of women.

What does this trend suggest? Have a multitude of "isms" come together to create a perfect storm of older female jobseekers who now find themselves on a cycle of continuing long-term unemployment?

Navigating digital/online applications and other job search technology can be intimidating. Social media, social networking, and software familiarity all represent a new learning curve for the 50+ female. Job postings can be rife with thinly-disguised discriminatory language. These are among many issues to be addressed so that digital intimidation doesn't contribute to ongoing employment inequity.

Data

- "Unemployment rates by age, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity" 10/06/17, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: bit.ly/2rkxdJa
- King County Labor Market Information, Employment Security Department Washington State: esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/king
- "The Unique Disadvantage Older Women Face in the Workforce," PBS Newshour March 2016: to.pbs.org/2zUWAWv

City Role

The City of Seattle provides support to the Seattle Jobs Initiative, which creates opportunities for people to support themselves and their families through living-wage careers. The Seattle Information Technology department coordinates a Digital Equity Initiative that has reduced disparities in Internet access and digital literacy skills for residents with lower education, low incomes, older adults, individuals with disabilities, minorities, and immigrants. The Seattle Human Services Department/Aging and Disability Services provides job readiness training.

Recommended Pre-reading

- "Older Women are Being Forced out of the Workforce," The Harvard Business Review, Feb. 2016: bit.ly/1QGldrH

- “Challenges for Older Employees,” Women for Hire: bit.ly/2yQ4WkF
- “The Stubborn Problem of Ageism in Hiring,” Government Executive, February, 2017: bit.ly/2iFcLTC
- “50 and Unemployed,” Fifty is the New Fifty blog: bit.ly/2yRYild

Presenter



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