

**It's absolutely critical to minimize liabilities.**

There are over 25 common liabilities that can cause you to be ruled out—and ways for handling each of them.



## 4 Neutralize your liabilities

Minimize the impact of your negative liabilities.

Every recruiter looks for liabilities. At the same time, the best recruiters know that there is no perfect candidate. But, how you handle liabilities is key. Listed below are the results of a survey of 2,500 professionals who were still in the job market **after 12 months**. This reflects what they felt were their problems.

### Search issues they blamed

- 96%+ Lacked access to right openings
- 91%+ Needed better resume
- 87%+ Lacked industry options
- 77%+ Failed in interviews

### Liability issues they blamed

- 68%+ Unemployment hurt
- 65%+ Age was a problem
- 62%+ Too specialized
- 55%+ Experience in a single industry
- 47%+ Lacked blue chip experience
- 29%+ Changed jobs too often
- 22%+ Titles lacked career progression
- 20%+ Previous firm performed poorly
- 20%+ Reference issues
- 16%+ Left short-term job
- 15%+ Recent jobs were too similar
- 13%+ Had shifted from main field
- 09%+ Was seen as overqualified

Liability issues can haunt you. If you plan how you will neutralize them, you will get much better results. Any good marketer, whether it's IBM or Apple... knows

their products aren't perfect, but they find ways to market them and overcome any shortcomings!

### Let's say you have an "age" liability. Here's the thinking you might go through.

It is always interesting to listen to the opinions of people about age barriers and job hunting. Depending on their age, beliefs, and other factors, you will hear a lot of different opinions.

It is true that in job seeking, "being too old" is often a negative. It is also true, however, that many people stay in dead-end jobs because they believe they are too old to change jobs. It doesn't have to be that way.

At whatever age you begin to feel you have a liability, winning a new job is seldom a simple task. You could have just hit 40 in the advertising business... or lost your executive job at 63.

However, despite any difficulties in adjustment that may be required, a good job change can bring you a totally new feeling about life.

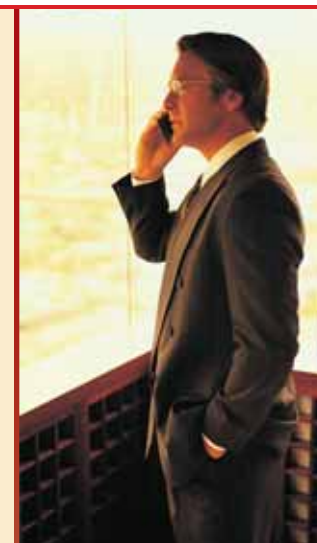
It is always amazing to see what the excitement of new work, a new location, and new associates does for people... in mental stimulation and good feelings. It can make you look and act ten years younger!

**Here's your reality.** Age becomes a major problem only at that point when you mentally accept it as an obstacle. But, there are many things you can do to offset the imagined and real problems associated with age, starting with an examination of your own beliefs and attitudes.

### The most common liabilities

Few professionals devote enough thought to properly handling their liabilities... in their resumes and letters... and in their phone conversations and interviews.

- I'm currently unemployed.
- I've been unemployed for a while.
- My age could be a concern.
- I've changed jobs too often.
- I may be too specialized.
- I may be too generalized.
- I've been too long with one firm.
- I've been too long in one industry.
- I lack a degree.
- My career may have peaked.
- I lack large company experience.
- My firm has done poorly.
- My jobs have all been similar.
- I lack career progression.
- My employment history has gaps.
- I've been passed over.
- My references are doubtful.
- I haven't been a leader.
- I've been an entrepreneur.
- I have a short work history.
- I need to change careers.
- I've just changed positions.
- My achievements are minor.
- My earnings have been low.
- Achievements aren't measurable.
- I have been passed over.
- I need confidentiality.
- No experience in an employer's industry.
- High earnings may disqualify me.
- My job titles aren't impressive.
- I don't have any line experience.
- I need much more income.



*Based on our surveys, over 95% of all professionals and executives start their job search without really figuring out how to handle their liabilities. You don't want to make the same mistake.*

## Having the right mindset

If you are feeling uncomfortable about your work situation, but not doing anything about it, first ask yourself... *are you using age as a convenient excuse?*

Many people who either do not have the confidence... don't know how to search for a job... or aren't willing to go through the work, will use age as an excuse. If this is you, you need to address it honestly, so you can begin to take action.

There are several things you need to write down and remind yourself of daily. Consider the following: At this moment you possess all the skills, know-how and personal strengths that enabled you to make significant contributions to employers over the years. They can still be applied today to help literally tens of thousands of employers.

So the question is not whether you should seek a new job, or seek a job if you are unemployed. It is what you should say and how you should say it, so that you get your *"selling proposition"* across to as many suitable employers as possible. The goal is simple. Have at least one person in one company make the decision to hire you for a position you would enjoy!

## The importance of new industry options for people with age concerns

Today there are many dozens of either young or vibrant industries. And, in these industries there are thousands of recently formed companies with young management, and their emphasis is definitely on youth.

Despite that, you are likely to find most of them have at least two or three senior professionals who are highly valued.

Don't forget that several studies have shown senior employees to be more reliable. Many are just as quick to pick up new information as other age groups.

Young management teams often realize that they need to be balanced with the wisdom that extra experience brings, and will prefer an older candidate for functions such as legal, finance and administration.

Another daily reminder should be to review your beliefs and attitudes. Here is a well known fact among psychologists who study such things. ***We are limited or not limited*** according to our beliefs about ourselves and what is possible for us, and that generally we are treated by others in accord with our expectations—*about how they will treat us.*

Because we tend to get what we expect, and because people tend to reflect back to us the beliefs and attitudes we are projecting, you need to examine your beliefs about yourself and about what's possible "career wise" at this stage.

***If your beliefs are limiting or negative, start working on them.*** Recognize that all of us filter reality through our attitudes and beliefs, so what we perceive doesn't necessarily reflect reality, but just the way we are seeing it at the moment.

If you have held some limiting beliefs related to age, it's very likely that your "filter" has been distorted toward the negative, and has been reinforced by many of those around you. So, consider writing down your beliefs in this area, not as fact, but as beliefs. ***Start each one with the words, "I believe."***

If any of them are negative or limiting, then write a corresponding positive version. As you may know, any belief can be justified by the facts, depending upon which

facts you focus upon. Use “selective perception” to focus on and write down all the events that support the positive beliefs and ignore any negative ones.

If the daily media are full of only negative news, don't read it... read only positive literature, listen to music that makes you feel good... engage in physical activity that energizes you.

Visualize yourself being warmly greeted by interested prospective employers, and make corresponding verbal affirmations. It's not new to anyone that visualization has proven effective in many fields, including sports and medicine, and there is no reason to doubt that it also works when we have to sell ourselves into a new job.

***These activities will help you see the world in a brighter light!*** You will gradually develop more positive expectations about what's possible for you and how people will react to you.

In recent years you may have been subconsciously projecting to the world that you feel you're too old for any really good job opportunities, so make this the time to start changing that message and bring into focus the good times. Working on building positive beliefs and expectations is one way to do it.

### **What to reveal in your resume... when you have an age concern**

Never mention your age on the resume and don't include every bit of experience you've ever had. Choose to leave out earlier experience altogether, or simply summarize years of earlier experience under the heading, “previous.”

As a general rule, emphasize only the last 10 years and your achievements during that time. Never include the year of graduation from college or when you received an advanced degree. If any of your leisure activities require physical exertion, mention them.

### **When you have an age concern... you'll need to use more letters and emails**

You may wish to use e-mail or letters for your initial contact with employers. They can be more easily structured to selectively cover dates, length of experience and other factors, so that your age is not apparent.

In all correspondence, and in interviews, emphasize those characteristics that represent the best of both youth and experience. It will be to your advantage to highlight your sound business judgment and solid record of achievement, as well as your versatility and adaptability, a high energy level, and proven capacity for delivering results in a fast-paced, demanding environment.

In interviews your maturity will be obvious. Point out that you bring the experience and judgment of a seasoned performer, combined with the enthusiasm and energy level of a person who is excited about his or her job, and who expects to make significant contributions.

It will be to your advantage to direct the interview to a discussion of the functional areas where they need help.

Ask questions that direct the discussion toward the functions and personal strengths that will be most important for the person who wins the job, and when they are identified, relate examples of how you have used those precise abilities and strengths to make significant contributions to your employer.

***The most memorable and credible way to do that is through concise SOAR stories*** that show how you analyzed situations well, took appropriate actions, and achieved measurable



results. The actions in particular should show that you have an energetic, aggressive approach to getting things done, as well as know-how and knowledge in the areas most important for the job.

Remember, project self-confidence, high energy, enthusiasm and positive expectations. If you do, you are likely to be treated and responded to accordingly.

### Actions to take in your search

As you become older, at any age your need to make a good impression becomes even more vital. If you're not in good physical condition, consult with a doctor and start a regular program of exercising.

Or, consult with health and beauty professionals to make sure your appearance is at its best. Avoid dated clothing, and invest in higher quality, tailored clothing appropriate for the level of position and income you are seeking.

When choosing the types of positions and industries you are targeting, give a lot of thought to how closely you can match your strengths and achievements to those that are likely to be required for those positions.

**Ask yourself, "If I were doing the hiring for that position, why would I hire someone with my background?"**

Examine your past contributions closely, and take sufficient time to prepare and rehearse several action-oriented stories that demonstrate your talent for moving rapidly to get results in the types of situations that resemble those likely to be faced by the person who wins the job you are seeking.

**Look for as many specific result indications as possible.** Be prepared to give a wealth of evidence using memorable stories.

They will reassure the prospective employer that, from your perspective, age is not a factor, and you are more than ready to dig into challenging problems and opportunities.

Develop and coach enthusiastic references from selected individuals you can trust inside your employer organization, if possible.

Also make use of references from outside, e.g., customers, suppliers, sales reps, consultants, etc., who will be happy to attest to your high energy level, action orientation, ambition, and ability to deliver results in a demanding, fast-paced environment.

Review your resume with these references, and make sure they keep a copy available to scan when and if they are called. **Make it easy for them to send people a link to your personal marketing website (see chapter 6).**

### The scope of your search when you have an age concern

There is no question that in many organizations you will encounter a bias that takes away what might have been opportunities for you. To compensate for the realities of the marketplace, run a broader and more aggressive search... and allow for higher rates of rejection that are part of the reality you face.

The channels available to you for running your search won't be as broad as others. For example, don't spend much effort on recruiters, because your response will be too low for the time and expense you put into contacting them.



The same will be true when you answer published openings in newspapers, magazines or online. The one exception is if you are highly specialized. Occasionally, companies will put out searches for specialists without a concern about age.

Marketing yourself to targeted employers is a channel on which you will need to focus. Again, you will need to double or even triple the numbers of someone without an age concern... but you will find your way to people who simply want results.

### Recapping truth, fiction and the age barrier

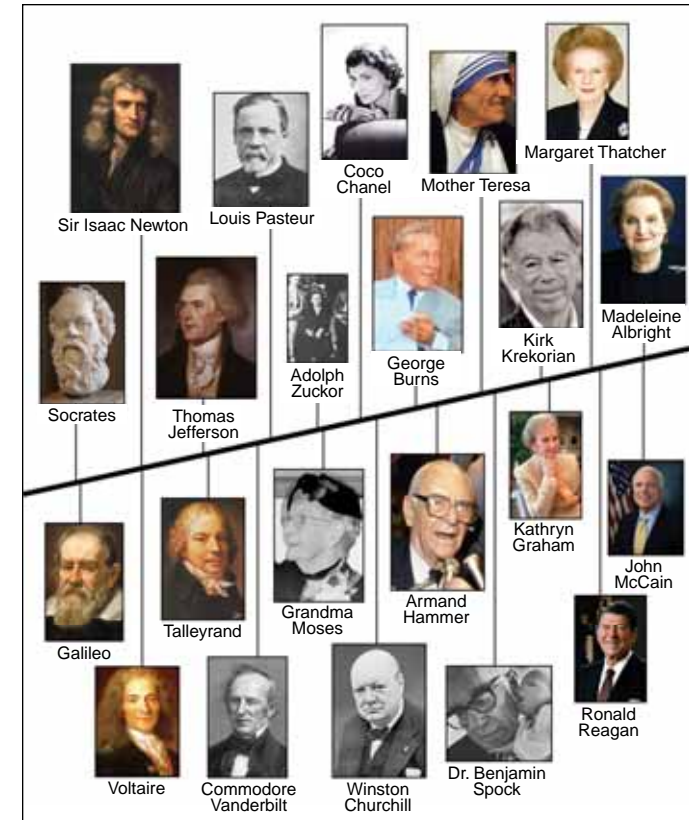
As firms have been re-engineered, many people in their 50s and early 60s have had their jobs eliminated. A look at *PepsiCo, Inc.* gives a good example of the trend. Data on the firm indicates 36 officers had a median age of 47.

When we encounter situations where age is a problem, we compensate by developing a more aggressive action plan. The reality is that today, more employers than ever prefer young professionals... often because it costs less.

At the same time there is another simple reality. Many people in their late 50s are connecting with fast-growing companies in new industries, where experience is in demand.

Last year, we also successfully helped clients in their 60s and early 70s. Success depended on each person's background, but the starting point for you as an individual is to avoid putting limits on your thinking.


**Just for the record, a common thread bound the following people. Each made their major accomplishments after they became "senior citizens." So, don't put any limits on your own thinking.**



*"Age is a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."*  
—Satchel Paige

# Why not minimize any negative information? Failure to neutralize your liabilities is never a winning strategy!

*“It is extraordinary how extraordinary the ordinary person is.” —George Will*



**#4 RECAP**  
 Neutralize any liabilities you may possess

Everyone who recruits is on the lookout for liabilities, reasons to rule you out. You can be very talented, but if you can't neutralize any perceptions about your liabilities, you will be at risk.

There are over 25 common liabilities, and solutions exist for handling each one. Remember, it takes only one to knock you out of the picture.

### Quick action steps for handling liabilities

On our Job Market Access Center we provide solutions for all liabilities. But you can use this book's list and master the ARTS process. For any liability that might prompt someone to raise a concern, decide how you'd "redirect" discussion to the positive qualities being sought. Develop SOAR stories for each answer. And, make sure your resume doesn't make your liabilities apparent.