

## ***Las Vegas Review-Journal***

### **Senior Transitions: For Many It's Back to Work!**

**By Carl Braun**

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The memories of your retirement party are sweet. Decades of friends gathered around for one night to celebrate your lifelong accomplishments. As planned, you traded your calculator for a fishing pole, your time card for a golf club. You smile, then frown as you lean back in your recliner and ponder your next move: going back to work.

Like millions of retired Americans, you now find yourself a victim of the recession. It's not fair. You worked hard for fifty plus years, saving your pennies and turning them into dollars. Now, in a flash it's gone, thanks to unscrupulous money managers and people who trade things like derivatives that didn't exist when you set up your retirement plan.

According to the job board RetirementJobs.com—the leading career website for people over 50, more and more of you find yourselves working full-time when you thought you'd be volunteering at the local hospital.

“Driven by the dramatic declines in the value of their retirement savings and overall net worth (caused by real estate and stock market meltdowns) we've seen the number of job seekers visiting our website triple,” said Tim Driver, CEO of [RetirementJobs.com](http://RetirementJobs.com). Twelve percent of the nation's 301.6 million people are age 65 and older. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics—in March 2009: some 6.2 per cent of Americans over the age of fifty-five (1.78 million people) were currently unemployed. A Report from Nielsen Online states that the 65+ age group was the fastest-growing age category of online career sites, increasing forty-one percent from 2.5 million unique visitors in January 2008 to 3.6 million in January 2009. Mr. Driver concurs: “People who are retired and had no expectation of working again are returning to the workforce or beginning their personal job search in incredibly large numbers.”

One woman has seen this sort of thing happen before. At fifty-seven she was counting on her retirement from the bank she worked at in New Jersey. Then rumors surfaced that the 150-year old institution with fifty branches, had made some bad loans. In a couple of weeks, the First National Bank of Toms River was on the rocks and so was her pension. It was 1991 and in that year alone there were one hundred twenty-seven bank failures in the US. (The turmoil the financial industry is experiencing today is not a new phenomenon). It took years of battling with the trustees to yield a \$247 dollar per month benefit. Far short of the amount promised. She went back to work. Now, her savings are wiped out by another group of financial bandits and at seventy-seven, she's waiting on tables at a local bar and restaurant.

It is not just the retirees who have been affected though. Many more millions had planned to retire and now have to put off that dream until they can get their financial houses in order. Still others found that retirement was not all that it was cracked up to be and are voluntarily re-entering the workforce.

According to RetirementJobs.com, seventeen percent of job seekers visiting its website are over the age of sixty-six. Sixty percent of retirees now returning to work are looking for full-time work (with forty-three percent seeking part-time employment). Early in 2008, only twenty-five percent of retirees were looking for full-time jobs. Then you have some who play the pension game and many are quite good at it. They put in just enough time

for a decent pension where they are at and retire to start a new career somewhere else and new pension eligibility as well. Most often the first career is military or government service and for millions of people, the second career is also a government related job. Some hit age sixty-five with three or more pensions. Virtual employment has hit the computer savvy retiree market and many are taking those years of experience and selling their knowledge as consultants working from home in their pajamas and bunny slippers.

In 2002, the average age of a retiree was projected to be sixty-two, as opposed to one hundred years ago where age seventy-four was the norm. Of course back then, the average life expectancy for a male was fifty, so if you reached seventy-four, you were indeed very old. Today's seventy is the new fifty or so they say. An average white male in the United States is expected to live to almost eighty years old. People are retiring younger and living longer. At least they were until recently. A March 2008 survey, again by RetirementJobs.com, showed a dramatic spike since 2002—with the expected retirement age jumping to 68.5 yrs old and a full twenty-four percent of survey respondents saying they plan never to retire!

It's not all doom and gloom—Ironically people over fifty are unemployed at a lower rate than those under fifty years of age. Managing life, health, wealth and work in your sixties and seventies can be a challenge but some employers are becoming increasingly “age-friendly”, retaining and hiring workers over fifty because of the unique experience and qualities they bring to the workplace. Still others are experiencing quite the opposite. Age discrimination complaints were up thirty percent in the 2008 fiscal year compared to 2007 according to statistics compiled by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The vast majority of age discrimination complaints involved layoffs. Evaluating just how pervasive age discrimination is in the current job market is difficult, although older workers obviously believe it is rampant. Sixty percent of workers forty-five to seventy-five said they had seen or experienced age bias according to a 2007 AARP survey. In a recent article published in The New York Times, our current economic crisis is playing an important role in the employment of older workers. More are trying to either stay in the workforce or return to it, but with great difficulty. Older workers must battle stereotypes about their energy and adaptability, as well as the reality that their healthcare costs are greater. Interviews conducted with older, out-of-work executives reveal heart-breaking stories regarding their efforts to secure new employment after being laid off. Many have considered taking positions that are far below their experience level in order to remain in the workforce.

Like anything else, competition for an ever-shortening number of jobs in the marketplace puts seniors at a disadvantage yet there are things that one can do to improve their odds. A little bit of preparation and foresight will make your job, of finding a job, that much easier.

About the author:

Carl Braun is a partner in the Executive Search firm, The Inclusiv\* Group, and he is the President and CEO of Cross-Post LLC, a company that links newspaper employment advertisers with specialty niche employment sites. He is the author of six books including ***Success Is Your Birthright Too!*** He also offers free employment advice several times weekly at <http://www.TXTalkradio.com/careers> He can be reached at [cfbraun@inclusiv.net](mailto:cfbraun@inclusiv.net)

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## **Tips for Seniors Seeking Work**

From RetirementJobs.com (Waltham, MA)

[www.retirementjobs.com](http://www.retirementjobs.com)

*Today's job market bears little resemblance to those found 40, 30, 20 and even 10 years ago. Mailed, hardcopy resumes and walk-in applications have given way to internet-based job posting boards and interactive, online applications. Yesterday's job searching techniques and skills are not effective today and new skills are required, particularly for senior job seekers.*

### **1) Learn computer skills**

Basic computer capabilities are expected of today's job seeker, even for jobs not requiring the regular use of them. Every job seeker should be capable of several core abilities including:

(1) Word Processing – the ability to create a text document. This is the modern equivalent of using a pencil and paper; (2) Email – the ability to send, receive and attach documents. This is the modern equivalent of mailing a letter; (3) Internet Searching – the ability to obtain information and perform information from the Internet using search engines such as Google; and (4) Computer hardware and media – the main computer box (central processing unit), monitors, printers, hard drives, CDs, flash drives and memory cards.

Not only are these important competencies, but an older job seeker will appear “tech savvy”. Electronic job posting boards are the want ads of yester-year. If you can't read them, you will miss countless job opportunities.

### **2) Get Connected**

What Online Social Networks Aren't: a) Just for Kids and Grandkids, and b) Just for fun  
Free online social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn are efficient ways for you to reach out, connect with, and benefit from your friends, family, acquaintances and colleagues. You can use LinkedIn.com to research and approach other people in your intended field of work about opportunities, even just ask them for advice or informational interviews. LinkedIn.com let's you create a detailed online summary of who you are, what you've done, and what you can do. Through your LinkedIn Profile you can ask people to put up recommendations of you for all to see. It's the equivalent of your own personal website—without having to know how to build one.

### **3) Get Wired**

Even if you have access to a computer at a local library or a friend's house, you should consider spending \$350 to \$500 for a computer, monitor and printer. Take a class on computer use or have a friend or family member help you learn the basics. Regular computer use is really the only effective way to develop needed the skills.

### **4) Go Mobile**

A *cellular phone* is no longer optional for job seekers. You want to be available to receive any call from a prospective employer. Even if only a prepaid phone with limited minutes, a cellular phone marks you as “tech savvy” and easily reached – a common expectation of employers and recruiters.

The next necessity is an *e-mail address*. This will require you obtain an Internet Service Provider (think of it as your connection to the internet) such as AOL or EarthLink or through your cable or phone service provider.

Select an e-mail address that appears mature and professional – would you hire an individual with the e-mail address of “thrillseekerjane62”?

### **5) Keep Healthy**

Employers are justifiably concerned about the health and fitness of employees. Do your best to maintain an exercise routine and care for any ongoing health conditions.

Common sense suggests that appearing fit and healthy can only be a positive for a job seeker. Are you discouraged, even depressed about finding the right job? Talk to your doctor – your feelings could be related to your health and even the sheer stress of your job search.

### **6) Keep it Neat**

Like it or not, personal appearance can help or hurt a job seeker. Appropriate, stylish clothing, hair care and a neat, professional appearance is always appropriate.

### **7) Keep a Positive and Proud Outlook**

Is age bias an obstacle to your job search? This is an endless debate that leads nowhere. Instead, accept the reality that many employers will prefer to hire younger candidates. Be proud of your age, maturity, judgment, skills and accomplishments. Don't react badly to even inappropriate questions. Do you believe it is illegal to ask your age on an application or during an interview? It's not! It is only illegal to base an employment decision on age--but who's splitting hairs. Answer the questions unless they are personally insulting or intrusive.

### **8) Broaden your horizons**

Going back to doing the same work you did in your earlier career is just one option you should explore. Consider turning an avocation into an income stream or going back to school to brush up on a particular skill or get a certification that could let you switch to a new field or launch a business.

### **9) Seek out Uncle Sam**

In the recession, while private employers may have cut back on hiring—the U.S. Government continues to hire for a variety of its departments and agencies. In 2008, The Partnership for Public Service launched *FedExperience*, an initiative to enhance government's recruitment of experienced workers and enlist potential partners to fuel interest in federal service. <http://www.ourpublicservice.org> . Also, don't overlook state and municipal government jobs.

### **10) Seek out Age Friendly Employers**

Be aware that many major national and regional employers are deliberately looking for older candidates. Refer to lists of age friendly employers at *RetirementJobs.com* who evaluate and certify employers as *Age Friendly*, or *AARP's National Employer Team* companies and their *Best 50 Employers for Workers Age 50+*. These employers are looking for age 50+ workers in a wide variety of industries and occupations.

<http://www.retirementjobs.com>

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