

Sterling Performance

Five Tips for Grey-Haired Job Seekers

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Have you reached that stage in your life when suddenly no one is responding to your job applications? It's a sad fact, but employers tend to overlook applicants who are in the autumn years of their working lives. According to **Grey Hair Management**, a job-seeker coaching specialist just setting up in the UK, for every £10,000 you expect in your next salary, expect to spend one month looking for a job.

Grey Hair Management, already established in the US (where it's spelt Gray Hair Management) offers senior managers a coaching course over a few months to break down some of the misconceptions they may have acquired over their careers about their employability. US Founder Scott **Kane** and UK MD **Paul Kelly** refer to the approach they've taken as tough love.

According to Kelly, who had problems finding a job himself, before he persuaded Kane to expand overseas, traditional services, such as resume coaches do a fine job at fine-tuning your job-seeking efforts, but they fail to reach the heart of the matter for grey-hairs who have unexpectedly found themselves on the job market, which is that they need to market themselves as the solution to somebody's problem, just like any other product.

For those with a long history at work, sending off a detailed CV in response to a job ad isn't going to cut it. You need to market yourself to a targeted employer. You will most likely need

to meet them, so that you can pitch yourself as the only person for the job. Grey Hair Management maintains eight out of ten people it helps to place are already known to the company before they are offered a job there.

Kelly says the courses he offers focus on those job-seeking skills that senior executives may have forgotten by relying too much on the support network commensurate with the lofty positions they previously held. For many it's an unpleasant surprise to have to sell themselves again in the job market.

Speaking with Kane and Kelly, here's some advice they gave me for more mature jobseekers:

- Rework your CV as a pitch for you as a solution to the recipient's specific problems. It's too much to expect them to read through your career accomplishments and make the connection to what they want themselves. Each CV gets seconds in front of a selector's eyes.
- Technology is a part of everyone's working lives. If you feel there's an important area of technology you aren't familiar with, find out about it. It's assumed that applicants are familiar with the common office applications. You won't be trained on them and no one stands for self-confessed technophobes in the workplace any more.
- Treat job seeking as if it is a full-time job. Whatever the vacancy, you have just become a marketing director. The product is yourself. The person who is assessing you for the vacancy wants to know that hiring you won't get them fired. If you can reassure them this isn't going to happen, you are pretty much there.
- Be able to explain what you can do in a succinct manner. Many senior job seekers have a long and varied career history which is difficult to put in a few words. Employers aren't interested, in the first instance, in your life story. They want to know that you are the best person in the world for the job they have on offer. Once they are convinced of that, then they're more interested to know the details of your past.
- Be prepared to go in on a lower wage. A £100,000 per year executive is worth less these days. With competition for job vacancies as fierce as it ever was in the UK, (and about to get even fiercer, with thousands of public sector jobs on the block) employers are looking to drive down salaries. It doesn't matter to them what wage you commanded in your last job – that was then and this is now. The longer you have been out of work, the wider the gap between your last salary and present expectations is likely to be.