



Los Angeles Times

Geezer at 40? Yes, if You're Job-Hunting

By ARLENE SCHINDLER

Most of my friends are currently unemployed. They used to work at dot-coms or sit-coms.

It's bad enough to be unemployed, but your chances of getting hired come to a screeching halt when you reach your 40s.

Becoming invisible after 40 is not just a quandary for movie stars; it impacts many people who are looking for work in Los Angeles.

Like it or not, especially with the recent economic downturn, most large companies generally hire younger, less costly workers. Numerous unemployed are forced to reinvent themselves, look for new careers, new skills, at what's supposed to be the greatest income-producing time in their lives. Forty to 55 used to be considered the prime earning years. Now many experience the panic and anxiety of outplacement and the need to "recareer."

I graduated college in the 1970s. But I don't dare put that year on my resume. It might frighten a prospective employer who was being toilet trained during that same era.

Yes, we live in a world of "equal opportunity employers." But many recruitment ads utilize the euphemisms of discrimination. For example, many a job description asks for a college degree and three to five years' experience. This is doublespeak for saying, "We want someone 30-ish or younger."

I know this to be true because I actually interviewed for one of these spots. When I showed up at the company, everyone there was 30-ish. I was the only one without a toe ring.

People suggest looking for a job on the Internet. There are thousands of jobs there, right? But there are hundreds of thousands of people applying for those spots. Any employer who has posted a position on the Internet will tell you of being inundated with responses. Most don't even acknowl-

In a work force ruled by the young, no toe ring, no hope.

edge your application; they can't with such volume.

Others explore taking temporary jobs while looking for full-time work. Many temp agencies are swamped with hundreds of prospective candidates—all highly qualified—to handle a few dozen positions.

Many displaced workers need to recareer. This involves taking training programs to learn new skills.

Some large corporations are promoting campaigns that say, "We hire 55 and older." That's great. Maybe tax incentives can be offered for those firms that do hire people 40 and older. Extending unemployment benefits would also help.

On behalf of the unemployed, I hope our elected officials will pay attention to the job struggle many of us are undergoing and will respond to our emergency needs. Otherwise, they may soon join us.

Arlene Schindler lives in Los Angeles.