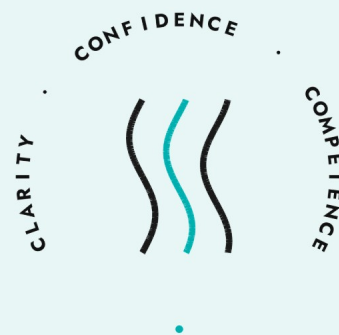


Laid Off After 50?



Where to start when your experience isn't getting you interviews.

You bring decades of skill, judgment, and results. If the interviews still aren't coming, you're not imagining the wall, and you're not alone. We looked through job-search forums, Reddit communities, and AARP resources to see where experienced professionals are finding real traction. We're also saying what a lot of career advice won't: age bias is real, and there are smart, honest ways to get past it.

What the research kept showing

Strong resumes, few callbacks

Qualified people described months of applications with very few interviews to show for it.

The overqualified worry

People feared being seen as too senior or too expensive before anyone heard what they could do.

Advice that asks you to disappear

Frustration with tips that boil down to hiding your age instead of showing your value.

A NOTE BEFORE YOU DIVE IN

This is a research summary, not a list of guarantees. Some of our clients have had success with a few of these resources. Others may not fit your situation. Use them with care, check each one yourself, and keep what works for you. The full note is on page 8.

Inside this guide

2 to 3 Five places to start, and more to explore

4 How to age-proof your resume

5 How to go around the front door

6 Interview scripts and your first week

7 How to check a company before you apply

8 How to use all of this safely

Free help you can use this week

The resources our research kept pointing back to.

1

BEST FIRST STOP

AARP Foundation BACK TO WORK 50+

Free workshops and career coaching built for job seekers over 50, including how to stand out to hiring managers and how to interview well on video. Sessions run online every month, with in-person options in some cities.

Your first step: Call the Work Resources Hotline at **855-850-2525**, or search "BACK TO WORK 50+" at aarpfoundation.org to register for a workshop.

2

FIND EMPLOYERS WHO OPTED IN

AARP Employer Alliance and Job Board

In March 2026, AARP launched the Employer Alliance, building on its former Employer Pledge. Member companies commit to taking action each year to welcome experienced workers. Membership is a good signal, but it is not a promise that every recruiter or hiring manager is free of bias.

Your first step: Go to aarp.org/work, open the AARP Job Board, and look for the option to show listings from age-inclusive employers.

3

FREE, LOCAL, REAL PEOPLE

American Job Centers

Federally funded centers offering free career counseling, practice interviews, training information, hiring events, and help with unemployment benefits. Services vary by location. If you are 55 or older with limited income, ask about the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

Your first step: Find your nearest center at careeronestop.org or call **1-877-US2-JOBS**. Ask specifically about dislocated worker services and training funds for certifications.

4

WHAT FORUM POSTERS KEPT RECOMMENDING

Staffing agencies and contract-to-hire

In laid-off worker threads, people described agencies that placed them in contract roles that turned into full-time offers. Contract work can put your experience in front of a manager before a resume screen decides for them. Results depend on the agency.

Your first step: Ask each agency how they place experienced candidates, and read any contract for restrictions before you sign.

5

WHEN BIAS CROSSES A LINE

The EEOC

The Age Discrimination in Employment Act protects applicants and employees 40 and older at employers with 20 or more workers. Deadlines matter: in many cases you have 180 days to file a charge, or 300 days if your state has its own age-discrimination law and agency.

Your first step: Keep dated notes of age-related comments, emails, and hiring decisions starting today. Learn more at eeoc.gov.

Also worth a look, with care

Workforce50.com

A job board aimed at experienced workers. Use it alongside mainstream boards, not instead of them.

Senior Planet from AARP

Free tech classes. Handy for brushing up on AI tools, video interviews, and LinkedIn.

HiringCafe (hiring.cafe)

A job search engine that pulls listings from company career pages, so you can apply at the source.

RetirementJobs.com

Highlights age-friendly employers, but one review reported thin listings and sign-up walls. Test a search first, and confirm openings on the employer's own site.

Age bias is real. Here's how to get past the first screen.

In AARP research, nearly two in three workers 45 and older said they had seen or experienced age discrimination at work. You can't control a biased screener. You can control what they see first.

Age-proof your resume

Show the last 10 to 15 years

Give full detail only to the stretch that proves you can do this job now.

Remove graduation dates

Your degree counts. The year you earned it does the screener's math for them.

Modernize your contact line

Retire AOL, Hotmail, and Yahoo addresses. Use Gmail or your own domain, and add your LinkedIn URL.

Keep the win, drop the year

Move older highlights into an "Earlier Career" or "Selected Prior Experience" section with no dates.

Cut the tenure language

Swap "30+ years," "seasoned," and "veteran" for results, scope, and the tools you use today.

Lead with what's current

Put today's software, AI tools, and recent certifications near the top so the first scan says "current."

Make everything match

LinkedIn: Use a recent photo, trim dates on early roles to match your resume, and post or comment in your field each week so your profile looks active.

Online applications: If a birth date or graduation year field is optional, leave it blank.

Stay truthful. You are choosing what to show first, not inventing anything. Everything on your resume should hold up in an interview and a background check.

Go around the front door

A cold online application puts your resume in front of a filter first. These moves put you in front of a person.

01 Get referred in

Former colleagues, bosses, alumni, past clients, and vendors. A referral puts your name on a person's desk instead of in a pile. Reach out to five people this week.

02 Go straight to the hiring manager

Find the person the role reports to on LinkedIn. Send a short note naming one problem you can help them solve. Apply too, then tell them you did.

03 Ask for 20 minutes, not a job

Informational interviews build relationships before a role opens, so you're already known when it does.

04 Show your value before they ask

Pick a real business problem the company has and outline how you'd solve it in a one-page memo or a short video. Demonstrating your expertise can open doors a resume can't.

05 Be impossible to miss

At job fairs and networking events, a shirt or card with a QR code that links to your LinkedIn or portfolio puts your experience directly in front of decision-makers.

06 Take the side door: contract, fractional, consulting

Short-term and part-time work lets a company see what you do before anyone thinks about age. Contract roles can turn into full-time offers.

What to say when age comes up

Make these your own. Say them out loud until they feel natural.

"You seem overqualified."

"I call it fully ramped. My focus is on stepping into this specific role, taking immediate ownership of the deliverables, and removing the ramp-up time a less experienced candidate would need."

"This pays less than your last role."

"I evaluate roles based on total impact and alignment, not just past titles. The strategic scope and goals of this team align with where I want to focus my expertise."

The tech question they won't ask

Bring it up first: "Lately I've been using [tool] to [result]. I'm the one on a team who learns the new system and shows everyone else."

"How long do you plan to work?"

"As long as I'm adding value here, and I plan for that to be a good long while. What does success look like in this role a year from now?"

Your first steps after a layoff

FIRST PRIORITIES	Review your severance, unemployment eligibility, benefits, and deadlines.
WHEN YOU'RE READY	Explore free career resources, including BACK TO WORK 50+ (page 2).
NEXT	Age-proof your resume and LinkedIn so they match (page 4).
BUILD MOMENTUM	Identify target employers, check each one (page 7), and reconnect with professional contacts.

BEFORE YOU SIGN A SEVERANCE AGREEMENT

If you're 40 or older and the agreement asks you to give up age discrimination claims, federal law (the Older Workers Benefit Protection Act) gives you at least 21 days to review it, or 45 days in a group layoff, plus 7 days to change your mind after signing. Have an employment attorney look at it first.

Check a company before you apply

A pledge or a job post doesn't tell you how a company treats experienced people. These tools help you look closer.

D&B Hoovers

Company size, financial health, leadership, and industry data in one place. Ask your public library or check its online databases: many libraries offer free access with a library card.

LinkedIn "People" tab

Look at the team you'd join. Do you see people with long careers in leadership and individual roles?

A simple Google search

Type the company name plus "age discrimination" or "ageism" and read what comes up.

WARN layoff notices

Your state labor department posts large layoff notices. Did this company just cut its experienced staff?

Glassdoor and Indeed reviews

Search the reviews for "age," "older," and "culture fit" to spot patterns.

EEOC newsroom

Search eeoc.gov for press releases about lawsuits or settlements naming the company.

Age-friendly lists

AARP Employer Alliance members and Certified Age-Friendly Employers (Age Friendly Institute) are good signals, not guarantees.

Where the research pointed

These sectors came up as valuing experience, steadiness, and judgment. Check any specific employer with the tools above.

Healthcare and insurance: patient services, case management, compliance, risk analysis

Government and nonprofits: data collection, logistics, grant administration, community education

Established finance and enterprise: project management, corporate administration, financial consulting

B2B sales and customer experience: account executive, sales consultant, customer success

Use these with care

- ✓ **Confirm every opening at the source.** Check the employer's own careers page before you apply anywhere else.
- ✓ **Don't pay anyone who promises to get you hired.** Legitimate employers and the free programs in this guide don't charge you to apply.
- ✓ **Guard your personal details.** Keep your Social Security number and banking information private until you have a written offer from a company you've verified.
- ✓ **Read the fine print.** Look at the terms before you create an account, share your resume, or sign an agency contract.
- ✓ **Track what responds.** Note where you applied and what came back, so you can drop what isn't working and double down on what is.

A NOTE ON THESE RESOURCES

This guide shares what our research turned up in October 2026, along with resources some Career Cafe clients have found helpful. It is not an endorsement or a guarantee of results. Career Cafe is not affiliated with, sponsored by, or paid by any organization listed. Programs, websites, eligibility rules, and deadlines change, so confirm the details directly with each organization before you rely on them. This guide is general information, not legal or financial advice. For questions about your rights, contact the EEOC or an employment attorney.

Want help turning this into a plan?

No pressure, cameras optional.

**Book a free 20-minute discovery call at
nicoledarby.coach**

