



ATAP[^]

Ageism and Hiring

Executive Summary - 2019

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We all have biases. They are innate and come from our backgrounds, environments, and experiences. How does this affect recruiting, engagement, and retention of older workers? *Ageism and Hiring*, ATAP's first Advocacy Whitepaper, was inspired by the personal experience and subsequent LinkedIn article by Jo Weech who openly discussed hiring and interviewing practices that discriminate against older workers. The response to Jo's article and the changing employment environment provided the framework to discuss the challenges older job candidates face when seeking employment and strategies organizations can implement to overcome these challenges. This work was a major collaborative effort completed over a period of 6 months by volunteer teams who conducted research on hiring practices, historic and current employment environments, and laws. All volunteers were Talent Acquisition leaders in their respective industries, and this work would not have been possible without their efforts.

This paper focuses on age discrimination as originally defined in the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, which protects workers and, as we review here, applicants aged 40 years and older. Thus, we define the term *older worker* in this paper as anyone who is 40 years of age and older and is employed or looking for work. Age discrimination is the result of unconscious or conscious biases that may vary from one culture to another. Unconscious biases are deeply ingrained and unintentional, whereas conscious biases are often the result of false assumptions. These biases effect how we perceive the world and how we make decisions. In Talent Acquisition, biases, unconscious or conscious, can affect how we recruit

and who we hire. Therefore, it is important that we have a complete understanding of this issue to ensure fair hiring practices.

Today's employment environment looks much different than it did 60 years ago. Since the late 1960s, legislation has been enacted to protect against unfair employment practices. Of focus here are the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) and Age Discrimination Act of 1975. The ADEA provides protection for individuals over the age of 40 and is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. While the ADEA does apply to practices of hiring, promotions, wages, benefits, job assignments, training, terminations, and layoffs, it is important to note that a level of ambiguity exists with this law. For example, some courts have ruled that the ADEA does not apply to applicants, but current employees only. In partial response to the limitations of the ADEA, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 applies to age discrimination for all, regardless of age. Enforced by the Civil Rights Center, this law only applies to organizations that receive federal funding.

In addition to legal changes are demographic changes that have increased the diversity of the workforce in every way, including employee age. In fact, the current employment environment now includes five generations, each with their own expectations, needs, skills, and knowledge to contribute to their organizations. From the employer perspective, older employees bring a wealth of benefits. Organizations that hire older employees typically experience higher productivity, lower turnover, and stability in the workforce. These

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individuals also bring with them extensive life and work experience and knowledge. The needs of older individuals remaining in the workforce was also explored. For many of these individuals, employment is a means to remain active, maintain purpose in life, or supplement income.

A final component to this Whitepaper is the use of technology when sourcing and hiring to ensure practices are “age blind”. For example, the language used in online job postings can discriminate against older workers. Similarly, niche job boards may cater to younger job seekers, thus miss the older worker population. To combat potential biases, technology exists to ensure bias-free language in recruitment communications. Some companies also practice blind resume reviews in which any identifying information is not visible to the hiring manager reviewing the resume. Other technologies such as video interviewing and artificial intelligence also support the idea of blind recruitment practices.

ATAP contends that eliminating age discrimination is not the sole responsibility of Talent Acquisition professionals, rather everyone involved in hiring processes and decision making can support age diverse employment environments. As such, ATAP concludes this Whitepaper by providing strategies to combat age bias, including assessing current practices, identifying hiring managers’ and recruiters’ personal biases, understanding laws and regulations for hiring older workers, influencing decision makers to practice and promote diversity in the workplace, advocating for older workers, and leveraging technologies to make decisions based on skill and ability.

The complete Ageism and Hiring Whitepaper is available exclusively to ATAP members. If you are not currently an ATAP member, please visit <https://atapglobal.org/join> for more information on how to join and get access to this Whitepaper along with a growing number of resources valuable to Talent Acquisition professionals.

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Founded in 2016, the Association of Talent Acquisition Professionals (ATAP) is the only global, member-driven non-profit representing all of talent acquisition. ATAP established the Professional Code of Recruiting Integrity, builds a common body of knowledge for and advocates on behalf of the profession, and fosters an inclusive community of all professionals who have talent acquisition responsibilities

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