

DEVIANT THINKING PODCAST

Episode 14 - How To Battle Age Discrimination & Win



Transcript

See show notes at: www.deviantthinking.com/podcast/014

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Welcome to the Deviant Thinking Podcast. I'm your host, Jennifer Thompson. And today, and as always, we will explore career advice that breaks the rules. So today's podcast is about age, and how to battle age discrimination. And when so many of my clients out there worry about their age and what it means to getting a job. So as always, we're going to dig deep into topics that might even be a little bit taboo to talk about age and his age discrimination real how does it affect individuals and how do we battle it to show up and give our best because I promise you at age 55, or even 65, you can still change the world you still can contributed for in that matter, age 85 now some amazing folks lately who are doing incredible things, and I promise, age hasn't stopped them.

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But before I dig in, I want to kind of throw out a disclaimer here. This show is not going to be about legal advice. If you really have an age discrimination battle that you are going through, you really do need to hire a lawyer. This show is more about the attitudes that you need to take to stay young at heart. And what are some of those real practical suggestions of how to appear young and vibrant and important to the industry that she's still working and really have impact?

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So this show is for any of us who want to be sure we are still relevant in the workplace. Well, where I want to start with us today is all about age isn't an attitude. It really genuinely is. It's not a number. I recently had the opportunity to be at Premier Vision, a fashion show, well fashion trade show in Paris. I was there last week. And I had the opportunity to kind of see the show with new eyes. I knew this podcast was on my list of upcoming podcasts. And I was very curious in the fashion industry of all industries, where we believe vanity and use really brain what does it actually look like? Who was actually there at the show participating? And I have to say I was actually shocked by what I noticed when I opened my eyes. Now, this is an unofficial title and this is my personal opinion as I looked around. But I would say over 75% of the participants, I would guess we're over 55 years old. I'd actually guessed a full 25 to 30% of the participants were probably in their late 50s to early 70s. And these folks were young and vibrant and excited, and learning about new technologies that would change the fashion industry, and having impact.

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And it really gave me hope for all of my clients when I saw this, because I realized that age is not a number. It is an attitude. And I've seen that over the years and I bet you can think about it in your own life. I can remember moving into my new home when I was a child at about three years old and I moved in next to my Aunt Mary and I love My Aunt Mary, she was a fabulous woman. And she was about 50 years old when I moved in. But I remember thinking she was ancient. And why did I think she was ancient? Well, because she told me she was. When I looked at her on a daily basis, she chose to be an old woman. And while I loved cuddling on her lap as a three year old, she allowed herself to be old. She wore house coats, literally that's what she called them around the house, button up house coats. She wore the knee high stockings and the thigh high stockings, she chose not to learn to drive a car. She felt like that was a man's world. She kept her hair cut short and gray and in little curlers that she curled every week. And today this cracks me up because I'm almost 50 and I promise you I do not behave any thing like this. I can remember her asking my mom to get on a chair to hang curtains.

05:07

Well at almost 50 I'll tell you. I'm not that way at all. This summer I had a fabulous opportunity to hang out with my kids who are 18 and 20 and 35. And we went to the National Whitewater Center. I went whitewater rafting with them, we went mountain biking. And my favorite thing is we did many of the ropes courses. And I'll tell you I was really pissed because I couldn't go on one of the ropes courses. And the only reason I couldn't go on it was I couldn't do a pull up. To be fair, I don't think when I was 10, I was able to do a pull up but I still wanted to be able to do it. I didn't want to feel like my age would stop me from doing something. And I think that attitude spills over into my

business and the dealings that I have. When people work with me, they don't feel like they're working with someone who is old and out of it, I work really hard to make sure that I still appear useful. I say often that I am 21 with 28 years of experience, and I really do believe that I am young at heart, and I'm excited to be relevant in my field.

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So how do we be relevant? How do we look at what is it that keeps us relevant as we age? Well, again, that belief that we're young is a super important part of this. Attitude is everything. I have watched people in corporate situations, who believe they are useful, and you know what everyone else believes they are too. I can think of one of my peers that I worked with and she was amazing. She's probably about five or six years older than me. And it was in the fashion industry, which is quite like I said quite a vain industry. And she was in charge of doing juniors brands, which is quite amazing because to be over 50 and working on product for 13 to 18 year olds, you've got to have a great attitude of being fun and hip. Well, she was amazing because she showed up every day in cool clothes. She had a hip attitude. She worked with the younger team members that she had on her her team. She did things with them. She didn't tell them that she was too old to go out to happy hour with them or too old to go out on an outing with them. She was excited to be out there learning and growing every single day. I will tell you one fabulous thing that she taught me is I can remember I was at the age of I was needing to wear cheaters around the office. And I was complaining about not being able to see. And she pretty much slapped my hand and told me, don't talk about that. That's not an important thing. It makes you sound old. And I was like, Wow, she's right if I'm sitting here complaining about putting glasses on, so I paid attention to her a little bit. I will tell you, this woman had the coolest cheater glasses that you could ever imagine. She made them part of her outfit, which was absolutely great. totally inspired that this was a really great way to show up every day. She didn't deny she was aging. Yeah, she did need cheater glasses, but she didn't have to point it out to everyone else. She pointed out that she was still young and vibrant, and learning and growing and could be relevant. And that's what I really want you to take away from that story is what are the things that you're doing every day that show people your age, whether that's showing them that you're older, or showing them that an 80 year old can be young and vibrant. You get to choose. And I think that's pretty darn exciting. So having that belief that you're young and relevant, is the number one thing. But there's many other things that you can do.

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The second thing that is very important, is to always be learning. Yes, I said it. Education doesn't end when we get out of college at 20, some years old. Education can happen every day. And it doesn't have to happen in a formal way. What are you learning new? What are you doing to keep yourself relevant? What are you excited about that's

happening in your industry? And how can you learn more. By learning that automatically makes you younger. From a perception standpoint, because you're up to speed on the newer things that are happening in your industry. And that is so important. Don't rest on those laurels. Don't assume because you have a Harvard education from 1976 that you're still relevant. What are you doing today to learn? And again, that doesn't mean formal education. There are some awesome opportunities out there to learn. I've recently myself completed an online course on positive psychology with the from the University of Pennsylvania. It was fabulous. I learned so many new things that I've applied within my business. I've taken other online courses, I go to seminars, I go to conferences. I'm always trying to be out there learning what's happening new in my industry. And I don't expect that to change today, or when I'm 70 because I know I have tons left to give the world.

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On that note, I just want to back up and and kind of give you a revelation I had when I turned 46, I lost my grandmother. And that was a pretty lucky thing. Most people don't make it to the point that they're 46 and still have their grandmother. And I realized when I lost her that my grandmother was 50 years older than I was. And I don't know why I never noticed this age gap. But when when I realized that it was a pretty amazing revelation, because I realized that I hadn't even lived half of my life if I was going to make it 50 more years, I still have that time frame there. And then I started to think about the time that I had lived so far. Buy the time I hit 46, I've done some pretty awesome things in my life, and I've had some good opportunities. But in the reality of it, your first 20 years are kind of wasted, you know, not that they're wasted, but you're a kid, you're growing up, you really don't have impact. So when I looked at it, and I said, I've really only had 20, some years to have great impact, and I've done some amazing things. And then there was a really great revelation of Holy shit. I've got 50 more years to contribute to this world and do cool stuff. Wow. And I get to do it with all of the knowledge that I have. And I get to keep learning. I will tell you, it fuels me every day that thought of like, holy cow, I can really make impact today and I can bring the knowledge that I have from my past. And I can keep adding to it. And I can't wait to see what the next 50 years brings. Because I promise you, I'm going to keep this attitude of use and learning and I'm going to have impact and that's what I want for you.

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Another important part about attitude and age is really being future focused. And I just told you about how I stay future focused. I'm always looking at what is it I'm going to contribute next. But what's important about seeing future focus? Is that forward looking at versus pining for the past. I will tell you, I know clients going to struggle when they come in and they start to complain that these kids today they are changing everything. I just don't know that I fit in anymore. Why can't it be simpler? You know, why did why did

this Do people not want Talk, why do they want to text? When I hear that I can almost guarantee that client is going to struggle finding a role.

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Where when I have clients who embrace that newness and embrace what's happening within their industry and are excited by the changes, I promise you, they step up and they get great jobs, and they are not subject to the age discrimination. I'm putting air quotes in as I'm saying that because they really work to make sure again, that that future focuses there that they're seen as being futuristic and relevant within their workplace. As I say all of this I also want you to know I am realistic, it does often take longer for my clients who were over 45 over 55 over 65 to find a role. But often the reason it takes longer is not their relevancy. It kind of has to do more with the pyramid principle. When you're at the lower end of the pyramid, and you are the more commodity worker, there's more of those roles out there. They're easier to get the salaries are lower. So switching jobs is a lot easier at that point of your career. It's just a supply and demand case. It's not a relevancy of the person that's doing the work. But as we start to move up the pyramid, there's less and less jobs available. There's bigger salaries at stake for both you and the employer. And there's more responsibility and more impact that each role has. So companies take their time in filling those roles and making sure they get the right person. It is not unusual. An executive level to take between six months and two years to find a role. And I know that for some of you, that might be disheartening. But I do think it's still exciting because there are roles out there, it just takes the time and you've got to have the right attitude to feel that you can get there and that you're not going to be discouraged. So you are not unusual. If you have been looking for a role for more than six months, and you're at that upper level management to executive level, it's really quite normal. And if you think about it in the opposite sense, if you've been in those roles, and you've had open positions near the top, often it takes a little while to fill them because again, you want to make sure that the persons are right fit. So it's even more important for you to know why You want a new role, what you want to contribute, you know how you want to be and how you fit into the organization, you know, and I highly recommend going back and looking at my podcast about culture and fit. Because when you're at this level, you want to make sure that your culture and fit for you really, really works. I'll link to that episode in the show notes. So be sure to check that out.

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So While, I've talked about the attitude side of being younger, there are some actual real steps that you can take to make yourself appear younger. There are many tells, just like in poker, if you've ever heard that term, right, if someone's got a nervous glitch or some thing, you know, there's tells to be able to tell about people well, there's also tells In the job searching market, and I'm going to tell you about a few of them that can help you

appear younger. Well, the first thing is hiding your LinkedIn profile (picture). Folks without pictures don't get noticed they get I think it's like nine times less views and less interest than folks who have a great photo. If you are over 45, I will even say, take the time you're in the prime of your career and go to a professional stylist and have your photo taken. Get a professional to work with you. is a great investment. They will make you look young, they will make you look attractive. They will they can do miracles with photos to make you look young and exciting. Take the time to do that because not Having a photo, they're eventually going to see you. And they're eventually going to get your age. But don't let it be the first thing that they see. along that same lines,

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I highly recommend getting a stylist and working with them. A lot of the better companies like Nordstrom, offer professional shopping help. I have a professional stylist that I work with she and I go shopping once a quarter, and we buy the clothes that I want for the season. She helps make sure I'm picking young hip in style things. And she'll even come to my closet and help me mix and match clothing so I have fun, relevant options. It is well worth this. I actually have found that I'm spending less money on my clothing budget because I'm buying the right things. And there's stylists out there that don't just do this for women. They do it for men. To, you have to invest in yourself and help yourself stay again young and stylish. It really does make a difference. So that's one of the number one tells is that photo and kind of your style as well, making sure you're staying relevant.

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The second tell is really referencing the past and bragging about things that you did 35 plus years ago, and you want to bring things future forward. If you're telling people about the good old days. They don't care. I hate to tell you that it's not relevant to them. Yeah, it's a great story, but they want to know what you're going to do in the future. And that includes even on your resume. When I work with clients, we work looking about what their forward focuses, what are they going to do next? How do they tell their story. We're also really careful to keep the experience relevant to the type of role that they have. Today, even if you have 40 years experience, you don't need to be listing that experience that isn't relevant today. So if you're going for an executive level role, you should only list your executive level experience. Please don't tell me you were an analyst in 1975. No one cares. hate to say it, no one cares, get it off your resume, don't have that six page resume. We know you have experience, if you were doing things at the higher level, we can make the assumption you were doing it at that lower level as well and that you were functional there. So make sure that you bring it up to about the last 20 years. And I say that, in general, you know, there's always little caveats there on the number of roles that you've had things like that, but you really want to keep it relevant to what is current.

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So I want to talk about another tell that I feel Little bit funny even talking about, because it's kind of humorous. And it's your email address. Yep, your email address. It tells people a lot about you. And it cracks me up when I get someone in and they have an email address that says dadof4-56. Well Guess what? What do I know at that point about them? That they're old! I hate to say it, they are a dad of 4 and they were born in 1956. So I want you to think about your email address. And I know when you signed up for your AOL address, back in 1990, it made sense to put your name or a few characters and the number that was your birth year because you weren't old back then. But today, it is a telltale sign of your age. So get rid of that email address. Get yourself Something a little bit more professional, you know if it has to be your initial and your name, you know, put your middle name in there. If you have a name Jennifer Thompson, do you know how hard it is to find an email address with that, but I have or create your own your own domain so that you can have you know, Jennifer@Jenniferthompson.com. Those things exist out there. They also make you look younger and more relevant. I love to see it when a client comes to me with their own personal website that talks about their career. Again, if they're 60 plus years old, and they've got their own website. I know they are not thinking about themselves as someone who is old. They're thinking about themselves as someone who is still relevant in the workplace. So that is another telltale sign that you might be a little bit older is if you've got that crazy email address and I promise you please get rid of the yahoo.com emails. And the AOL emails, I still have mine, it still collects all my junk mail, but it's not what I'm going to use in a professional setting any longer.

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Then there's some really small tells that are out there too. And one of them that bites me on the butt regularly is double spacing after a period when I'm typing a letter or it's in a resume or anything like that. It's a really silly thing. Many of us were taught to double space, it is so reflective, I can't stop it. I really wish I could. But the youth of today do not do this. So it is something you have to get rid of. Because only people over 40 actually double space. You might not even know that, It took me forever to figure that out. So if you're putting your resume together You're writing a cover letter. So really subtle thing. But the, if somebody's younger, they absolutely notice it. So be sure to clean up your paragraphs and clean up your sentences and quit double spacing. really silly, but yet super, super important.

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And last, but definitely not least, one of the biggest tells I find is putting your relevant skills on your resume or your LinkedIn profile. And what do I mean by that? It's claiming things like knowing how to use Word or Excel. Those are table stakes today, you have to know how to use Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Office, Word, PowerPoint, any of those things email, don't put that on your resume. And be sure you know how to do those things. If you are just genuinely older and you are struggling with any of those things,

check out YouTube, go to youtube.com. and type in whatever skill that you want to learn, be it learning how to do an Excel spreadsheet, or learning how to master Microsoft Office, email, any of those skills you can just type in and I promise you, they'll be an awesome video that shows you how to be better at that skill set. So don't put that on your resume. Know that that's table stakes, know that you need to have that as part of what you're doing. And for God's sakes, don't tell someone that you don't do email. I actually had someone come to me and said, You know, I really hate email. I won't do it. But I really want a new job. And I just thought to myself, how are you going to have a job in today's marketplace? If you're not willing to do email, it is the form of communication. And that was someone who was an engineer and my thought was Goodness, if you can't do email, how can you learn what's going on new and materials and sciences and engineering? You know, you've got to be willing to continue to learn. So get rid of those skill sets that aren't relevant, especially as you hit those higher levels.

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Well, that wraps up today's episode on how to battle age discrimination. And when I hope that you understand from this episode, that attitude is 95% of it. Be youthful, assume you're useful, assume you're still relevant. Get out there, learn, educate yourself and be relevant. That is the best way to fight age discrimination is don't let people believe that you're old. I'm curious about how many of you feel like you are 21 years old, with 28 years of experience because I really know that's truly my attitude. So attitude, number one thing and fighting age discrimination, and then learn those tells. If you can't figure them out on your own. Ask your kids ask someone younger, getting younger mentor to help you be useful. I promise you, they can point out things like the crazy email addresses, like the pictures that don't look useful. Like the double spacing within your documents. They know those things, they do it every day, get them to help you if it's not something that comes natural to you. I have my kids look at my stuff to make sure again, but I'm appearing young and youthful because I want to be relevant. It's not about not claiming the experience that I have. It's about being relevant and that's what I want for you. That's how you beat age discrimination is being relevant.

29:02

Well, that wraps up our episode for today. I hope you feel like you've learned some things and you found some career advice that breaks the rules. Today we definitely dug into a taboo subject, but I think we met it head on with some great options for you. If you enjoyed this podcast, it would mean the world to me if you would head on over to iTunes and give us a review. It really allows other folks like you to know about this podcast, and hopefully they would love the podcast as well. Thank you so much and