

# What employers look for of those re-entering the workforce

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Finding a job in today's economy is difficult in the best of circumstances, but many women are facing an even bigger challenge: returning to the workforce after a long absence. Researchers recently looked at the characteristics on older women's resumes that received the most success in securing job interviews. The top characteristic that resulted in job interviews for middle-aged women seeking an entry level job was vocational or computer training, according to the study in the *Journal of Career Development (JCD)*.

In the article "The Resume Characteristics Determining Job Interviews for Middle-Aged Women Seeking Entry-Level [Employment](#)," researchers looked at the effects of age, job-related experience, vocational training, outside activities, and length of gaps in work history. Researchers sent varying resumes to more than 3500 employers in Boston and St. Petersburg, FL, and studied the responses from employers interested in conducting interviews with their "candidates." Employers represented various fields of industry and the jobs listed were all entry-level positions requiring up to one year of post-high school education and combined work experience.

"Employers focus almost exclusively on educational background in the entry-level jobs studied," wrote Emily Johnson and Joanna Lahey. "The benefits of adding volunteer experiences, hobbies, or involvement in sports may help in some communities more than others, and while they may not hurt the potential for an interview, these activities do not guarantee an interview for an entry-level job position."

Some of the findings go directly against what today's career guides direct job seekers to do, not the authors. The lack of impact of outside activities did not carry the same importance as a lot of today's job manuals profess. Johnson and Lahey hope their findings will impact the advice to middle-age women by career counselors, and encourage them to seek further education or vocational training to stay current with today's sought after skills.

"[Job seekers](#) may be helped in their decision making processes by knowledge of employer demand and specifically by knowledge of the items employers are looking for that could make employees more attractive," wrote the authors.

Johnson and Lahey's results also confirmed a previous study that showed a negative correlation between age and hiring.

**More information:** [jcd.sagepub.com/content/38/4/310.full.pdf+html](http://jcd.sagepub.com/content/38/4/310.full.pdf+html)

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