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Dateline AGL – Eliminating ageism and age discrimination in consulting marketing

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According to the Ontario (Canada) Human Rights Commission, the term "ageism" refers to two concepts: a socially constructed way of thinking about older persons based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young, thereby failing to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons

(<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ageism-and-age-discrimination-fact-sheet>).



Throughout my careers, it has been natural to gravitate toward people with similar life and business experiences. By doing so, it seems easier to build and maintain a relationship because there are underlying assumptions about touch points, language comprehension that includes unspoken words and nuances, values, and level of knowledge, to mention only a few points that encourage empathy between individuals. For many consulting marketers who view their career as a source of income rather than a lifelong purpose, they are startled with a reality that their circle of clients and prospects has contracted or disappeared. It is too late to build a client base of other generations because their skills and expertise have become redundant and not saleable. They themselves have triggered ageism in their careers and contributed to their demise.

I continue to be overly critical of competing for work through the proposal competition method. It is based on the presumption that the best service for the best price comes from inviting 3 or more individuals or enterprises and then selecting one by committee. I have been on both sides of this process and it is heavily flawed mainly because the proponent takes little time to research and understand the services being sought and the capabilities of the parties being invited to submit a proposal. The reasoning is that the parties come with experience, skills and knowledge to fulfill a need by the proponent and the proponent is



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entertained with documents and presentations until one feels better than the others and the price for services is within budget. The real need is not identified often, nor the person or business most capable of solving the problem.

I venture to say that this flawed model is used for the selection of individuals or enterprises for consulting marketing services. One of the differences is that today, proponents go first to websites and social media pages to help prequalify consultants. And we know that information online cannot always be trusted. At this point, the potential for age discrimination may become real because of short profiles and photos of consultants. A Boomer-run organization might gravitate to a team of young-looking entrepreneurs because the notion is that youth and online technology are a match. I have made that mistake. Millennials will spend more time discussing a project and "brands" who may be a fit for their project, and they will scan websites and social media pages. It is unlikely that they will read many articles and other publications by potential candidates to "quote" on assignments. They will certainly view video. Again, by seeing images of candidates, they may dismiss some outright as they appear too old for the assignment and the assumption is that they are not familiar with implementing online technology needed for the assignment. A lot of assumptions here, I know, but they do exist.

It is incumbent upon aging consulting marketers to continue to upgrade technical skills and refresh themselves about modern marketing standards, principles, and ethics. They must be familiar with the generations in play in their markets and how to communicate through visuals and words. You can disguise age, but you cannot hide incompetency. Aging consulting marketers must demonstrate proof of their knowledge, experience, and skill set. This will keep them engaged in the profession. Clients and prospects must consider decades of knowledge and experience that elder professionals hold about what works online and offline. Both online and offline environments for consulting marketing services have merit today, some more, or less than others depending upon an assignment. The rewards of success and failure are etched on the faces of older professional marketers.

There is age discrimination in consulting marketing. And it is a reality that will remain throughout the ages. It does not need to be a determining factor in the success of a business or the career of a professional marketer when the reality is accepted, and action is taken to do something about it. Skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced



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professional consulting marketers no matter what their age will always find happiness in the reason for which they offer marketing services. And for me, my friends, it is to help the world to be a better place through marketing.

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