

Qualification is proved through possession of a journeyman rating. Where trade unions are involved, a man cannot become a journeyman until he has completed an apprenticeship. Not one of the trade unions interviewed in this survey will admit a man over 40 into an apprenticeship program and most unions limit such admittance to men under 27 or some lesser age. Thus, a nonjourneyman over 45 can never become a journeyman. These restrictions are eased somewhat where skilled trade work is exercised under the jurisdiction of an industrial union. In such cases, a man can become a journeyman either through completion of an apprenticeship or by possession of ten years' experience in lieu of apprenticeship. Theoretically, therefore, an older person could become a journeyman. In practice, however, few workers over 45 are ever issued journeyman cards by the industrial unions interviewed because the companies concerned hire young persons for beginning work as a result of seniority provisions or promotion-from-within policies. Most employees accumulate the necessary ten years' experience long before they are 45.

The inability of the older applicant to match his experience to the needs of a potential employer is a problem also for older applicants for white-collar positions. Several of these companies, for example, utilize accounting conventions and methods unique to their industries. Unless the background of an accounting applicant includes such specialized experience, it has little value for these companies. If he seeks to gain the necessary experience, an older applicant finds himself competing with younger persons for junior positions. In this competition he is at a decided disadvantage.

b. Overspecialized Experience Narrows the Older Applicant's Opportunities

Sometimes even experienced older skilled tradesmen find themselves at a disadvantage. Such persons are likely to become quite specialized where they have worked for some period in an organized trade. For example, machinists working for a large company may become thoroughly skilled on only one or two types of machine tools. When such specialists seek new jobs with a smaller firm they may find that their experience is of limited value because the smaller organization requires employees who are skilled generalists. This situation is particularly unfortunate since, as previously noted, smaller companies in general offer the older applicant his greatest opportunity for employment.