

possessed by older applicants is generally of little value to the employer and the beginning salary level is likely to be well below the applicant's expectations. Since the older applicant is thus likely to be mismatched to the majority of positions open, an offer by the employer and acceptance by the applicant are both unlikely.

Practices requiring preferential treatment of employees by seniority were encountered in surveyed companies of all sizes and representing various industry classifications. Generally, such practices stemmed from union contract provisions although, as exemplified by one company, such provisions sometimes were simply a codification of a management philosophy which predated any union representation of employees. Strongly applied promotion-from-within policies were found mainly in larger companies or mentioned by unions dealing with larger employers. Only one of the medium-sized companies surveyed adhered closely to promotion from within. This pattern is not surprising since a promote-from-within policy seems particularly suited to the larger organization.

b. Efforts to Maintain a Balance of Ages Work Against the Older Applicant

Many employers are concerned with maintaining a balance of ages within their work forces. This is particularly true for the larger companies included in the survey. Evidently, the most desirable situation is to have a flat distribution of employee age from 25 to 55 with fewer employees at the age extremes. This is exemplified by one company in particular. Employers believe that such distribution provides very desirable flexibility in filling positions and protects a company against a sudden loss of capability through a wave of retirements and against a lack of innovation through absence of youth. Unfortunately, maintenance of such a balanced distribution requires that most new employees be younger persons since all employees automatically age with time and turnover among younger persons is much higher than among older groups.

7. Job Search Techniques

Older persons displayed three major weaknesses in applying for employment, as discussed below.

a. Older Applicants Are Defeatists

The most frequently cited weakness is a defeatist attitude about age. Evidently, concern over their age causes applicants to be either much too assertive or much too