



## Boomerslang: The Subtle Clues in Your Resume That Can Out You as an Older Job Applicant

By Daniel Baitch, Ph.D.

**If you're a boomer baby, clues in your resume could trigger companies to screen you out of the applicant pool. Here's what they are and how to eliminate them.**

It's a painful reality -- many employers have negative preconceptions about older employees: over-qualified, too expensive, technologically lacking, set in their ways, less motivated, less likely to stay. Regardless of how inaccurate these assumptions may be, if you are a baby boomer, you may be sending your resume to recruiters who disregard it, and to applicant tracking systems that contain algorithms that screen it out. And it's not just job and graduation dates that out you as a boomer. Other subtle clues can appear in your resume or cover letter.

These clues could be specific words, formatting patterns, and even typing habits that are common for boomers to use. Let's call it "boomerslang"\*. In fact, there is an example of boomerslang that appears several times in this paragraph. Can you identify it? Read on.

To illustrate what boomerslang looks like, here are parts of a sample boomer resume, with some hidden formatting marks shown.

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**ASTRI ZARCUZZA**  
3409 Marcoski Parkway  
San Flandita, CA 12345  
Home: 1-987-654-3210 Cell: 1-789-456-0123  
Email: szarkuza@aol.com  
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### OBJECTIVE

A seasoned financial professional with extensive experience in the retail apparel industry. Seeking a challenging position in a progressive retail organization that will allow me to further develop my accounting, budgeting, and people management skills.

#### **EXPERIENCE**

**Office Administrator**, Flizner and Pavis, Hoswith, NB<tab><tab><tab>1983-92

#### **EDUCATION**

**B.S., Business Administration**, Bethlehem College, PA<tab><tab><tab>1981

References available upon request.

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How many “older applicant” clues do you see? An experienced recruiter might pick up as many as 16. Again, they’re very subtle. Here’s what they are:

1. **Objective statement:** If your resume includes a statement about how the job can benefit you, you might want to replace it with a short 2-3 line summary or profile statement that states your qualifications, what you excel at, what you’re interested in, and how you can help the company grow revenue, reduce costs or mitigate risk. For example:

#### **PROFILE**

A financial professional with diverse expertise in the retail apparel industry. Has a track record of implementing cost-effective solutions that have substantially reduced inventory costs, billing expenses and processing time.

2. **Job dates:** The purpose of your resume is to get you in the door, not to document your entire life on Earth. Many career coaches will advise not listing jobs that are more than 15 years in the past. You only need to convince hiring managers that you have the required skills, knowledge, and credentials. Sometimes less is more.
3. **20<sup>th</sup> century graduation dates:** This is the most obvious example of boomerslang. It’s not a requirement to include graduation dates in your resume, and more enlightened companies aren’t requiring them in on-line applications any more. In fact, their ignorance of graduation dates helps employers protect themselves from accusations of age discrimination.
4. **Street address:** Snail mail simply isn’t used in the recruiting process any more, and no prospective employer will be showing up in your driveway. Especially in a world where identity theft is a concern, your town and state are sufficient.
5. **Email domain:** Pop culture is consistent on this one: If your email domain is either AOL or an ISP, you’re assumed to be older. AOL users are often seen as technology nesters who avoid change and have an “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” mentality. You might want to use another domain, such as Gmail, for your job search.

6. **The term “Email:” before the email address:** Not needed. If you can’t recognize an email address without the hint, you grew up before the wheel was invented.
7. **The term “LinkedIn:” before the LinkedIn URL:** Again, not needed, since LinkedIn URLs includes the term “LinkedIn”.
8. **A default LinkedIn URL:** People who are less sophisticated around social media are likely to use their default LinkedIn address, which usually includes a long alphanumeric code at the end. Customizing it from just takes a few seconds.

By the way, while having no LinkedIn presence isn’t a showstopper, it can give the impression that you are not well connected or not familiar with social media. Setting up a LinkedIn page is fairly painless. It should include an abbreviated version of your resume; again, less is more.

9. **Home phone number:** Millennials are cell phone users. Boomers use home phones. Some with tangled cords. And dial wheels. And telephone poles.
10. **A “1” before an area code:** Most cell phone carriers don’t require a 1 for domestic calls any more. And others who are using land lines...they probably know when to add 1 to a long distance call.
11. **Inclusion of “https://www.” in any URL:** When we lived in caves, we had to type these prefixes into every URL. Current browsers add these codes automatically. Not needed.
12. **Formatting of job/graduation dates:** Millennials grew up using MSWord. They generally know how to set a tab to the right side of a page, so that one press of the tab key plants dates cleanly against the right margin. Boomers tend to hit the Tab button repeatedly to set the date near the right margin; then they use the space bar to nudge it into place. Doing that is like admitting that you learned to drive in a 1972 AMC Matador.
13. **Courier font:** Some boomers still type their resume in Courier, which is a fixed pitch, monotype font (as opposed to proportional), a vestige of printing press days when each letter took up the same space. Use of Courier is a dead giveaway that you learned to type on a dusty old manual Underwood by candlelight. Also, there seems to be a general movement toward simpler “sans serif” fonts like Ariel, Calibri and Helvetica, which are easier to read on line.
14. **Two spaces after periods:** Most boomers learned to type two spaces after periods. After proportional fonts were added to word processors, this need disappeared. The Chicago Manual of Style, the US Government Printing Office Style Manual, and the AP Stylebook now recommend one space after a period. If you still use two spaces after periods, you can easily replace ‘period space space’ with ‘period space’.
15. **Terminology:** Certain terms, particularly *extensive experience* and *seasoned*, frequently appear in boomers’ resume summaries. These terms suggest that you’re either a log, a brisket, or that you grew up in the Sputnik era. Terms like *expertise* are less boomerslangal (boo-mur-slang-ji-kul).

16. **“References available on request”**. This went out around, what, Apollo 12?

Think of boomerslang as a boomerang. Putting it out there is risky; it could come back and whack you. But if you have any boomerslang in your resume, the good news is that removing it is very easy.

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**Daniel Baitch, Ph.D.** ([LinkedIn.com/in/danielbaitch](https://www.linkedin.com/in/danielbaitch)), a card-carrying boomer, is an industrial-organizational psychologist and career transition coach who occasionally refers to himself in the third person. He has given up on trying to stop typing two spaces after each period.

\*The term *boomerslang* was coined by Nancy Zola ([Linkedin.com/in/nancyzola](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nancyzola)) after reviewing a first draft of this article.