

This is a list of the comments received to date: 4/7/07

Accountants are their own worst enemies in the way we compete and undercut each other. We lack the self respect that the medical and legal professions have and do not hold ourselves in sufficiently high regard as professionals. Moreover we lack a real business sense and do not understand what creates value. How many sets of accounts does David Beckham produce? When we came to consider a merger of the various bodies we put our own mistaken prestige above commercial acumen. Otherwise the ICAEW members would relish swallowing up the ACCA and thereby strengthen their position in the market, like any other business in the financial markets removing a competitor. I recall the Accountancy issue announcing Mr Izza' installation at the ICAEW and noted that nearly every person shown in the issue had their arms tightly folded! Change is going to be difficult!

Excellent news-having just attended an ICAEW lecture on Ethics I was sickened by the smug tone of the whole exercise-but for the wine and canapés I should have stayed at my desk and created added value.

I have contacted CIMA so that you can get in touch with them as well and they advise in the first instance to use the following address:-

cima.contact@cimaglobal.com

To clarify the relevant individuals:-

Charles Tilley FCA - Chief Executive
Robert Jelley - Director of Education.

Thanks for all your efforts on behalf of those us who feel we might yet have something to contribute! I had been thinking of canceling ICAEW membership as the letters seem to count for little when one becomes d'un certain age.

On the subject of the salary survey well done for what you have done. I am amazed at the claim that the average pay is £80k, I have applied for a large number of jobs in the last few years and my gut reaction is that the pay is a lot less. There is also a large age bias as you suggest, it is not that older accountants are paid less, we can't get the jobs when they are advertised with comments like dynamic environment, lively culture and the rest all with a subliminal message if you've over thirty don't bother.

Thanks very much for sending the results of the survey which to an extent are self selected but nevertheless make fascinating reading.

This is precisely the sort of data that the institutes should be interested in but I suspect never makes it across institute desks.

Two things stood out for me:

Firstly the extent of dissatisfaction with the institutes....not just as result of the age issue but stemming from experience over a working lifetime.

Secondly...just how heavily the odds are stacked against mature accountants obtaining permanent employment of a similar nature to that held before the fall from the ladder.

Very depressing but it provides some comfort to realise that the difficulties faced in finding employment are not purely personal.

In my case it also reinforces the view that the only realistic chances I have of employment are as an interim where strangely experience still seems to be relevant.

Thanks for all your efforts!

Obviously your survey cannot be seen to be representative, given the sample size, but it is very interesting nonetheless.

For my own benefit I have looked at your data in a slightly different way, and wonder whether you would draw any conclusions from my findings.

My first observation is that the average salary of ACAs would on the face of it be higher than the average salary of those holding other qualifications. However your calculation of this average includes the unemployed. For my own interest I stripped the unemployed from the equation (I know that an unemployed person is a real number as I have been there) and I found that the average salary for accountants in employment was more than a third higher for qualifications other than ACA. I confess that this surprised me.

The median salary is also more than one third greater if you hold a qualification other than ACA.

Do you think that this is a message worth delivering to your Institute? Being a Scottish CA I have always realised the superiority of my qualification, but I really do believe that the ICAEW need to bring themselves up to date and provide a better service to their members.

Perhaps during the next deluge you might like to start a survey asking people what benefits they perceive that they get from membership of their Institute and whether the subscription represents value for money. My instinct tells me that there would be a considerable variance between institutes and that within each Institute there would be a much more significant variance between those employed in industry as opposed to the profession.

I have enjoyed the last few days' correspondence.

Well done Martin for stirring the pot – whilst I was interviewed for the post that Mr Izza now holds it will not stop me from "having a go" also

Well done Martin and thanks for your efforts on behalf of us older members!

Interesting that most of the respondents were male!

If it takes a survey to shake the ICAEW, then they are further from reality than they thought.

Nice letter, that ought to wake them up, talk about a biased sample!!

My personal findings and situation are much the same, to the extent that I am heavily involved with the two guys I've worked with for years trying to set up a new business. If it does not work it fills me with dread that I will have to start looking in the market again. When will they realise that 50 is just a number and has nothing to do with the enthusiasm and appetite that you bring to a role.

Fantastic job Martin

Tell the ICAEW that I'll be their Technical Advisor for £79k + £29k (I don't mind reading up a bit) and so will the other 999.

Martin, you should also email your data to Richard Donkin at the FT. He writes the Thursday Careers section and is very very interested in the age/ employment theme, which he thinks is very under reported and hidden. He sent me an email of support when I had my letter published. I must say I have been struck over the months about the relatively low salaries of some of the positions advertised by you with many not much better or worse than newly qualified London rates. I have wondered whether some employers have not been taking advantage of qualified older people who are in a weak bargaining position or just offered more mundane reporting type roles where they care less about quality.

PS I did as I was told!!

Martin, you certainly appear to have stirred something up and I wish you well in your endeavours to have us wrinklies recognised!

I'm very pleased that the ICAEW is taking this matter seriously but could you possibly extend the campaign, or at least your mailing list, to include CIMA (my institute), ACCA and while you're at it CIPFA?

Well done Martin, thank you for being an ambassador for all. All the best.

Technical Advisor role

Below the average - not interested!

That is a superb letter - well done for taking the time to draft it - covers all the issues and strikes the right note. I would be interested to receive a copy of your survey (in which I took part) and to be kept informed of the feedback. I'm glad it's not just me that feels the same way about the invasion of 20 something oiks in the financial recruitment market!

One of your mature accountants sent me a copy of your letter. Well done. I do hope that it is not your only BROADSIDE. I wish you great success. I am a 60 year old Chartered Accountant in business for 35 years. I would give up being a Member tomorrow if there was a way without ignominy.

The Institute is completely irrelevant and occupies ridiculous premises.

Well done.

You've hit the nail on the head.

Thanks very much for the update.

Let's hope this is the start of something!

It is however hard to believe that the Institute is unaware of these things and even more worrying if they are genuinely ignorant of the situation.

Well done with the Institute. A dose of reality that so clearly demonstrates their inability to understand the needs of its members can be nothing but good. Sounds as if Michael Izza was genuinely shocked.

Well done!

I hate to admit it, but I am also impressed by MI's swift response. I will be fascinated to see where this all goes.

Well done. I am sure that all of us who have registered with MA feel the same. I suspect that the Institute does not want to know about this "forgotten army".

Well said, Martin,

Some years ago I went to take up a job in Portugal and the director bade me farewell and said "remember, you can't change a culture". So whilst we appreciate the efforts you are making, remember that the whole of the employment world has a culture of youth. If you or I were fifty year old personnel managers, I'm pretty sure we would meet the same brick wall of ageism.

But thanks and tell 'em like it is!

Thanks for keeping me posted of the lightening fast progress and response so far. The wet weekend has proved to be fruitful thus far. Good for you.

Hopefully your planned meeting with ICAEW will be useful and I am sure you wont be fobbed off by 'an official enquiry' which seems to be the most favoured route for anything controversial in government and not-for-profit organisations.

Dear Martin,

Your findings are interesting. There will be a further feature on their benchmarking survey in our next issue, in the ICAEW section. I will discuss how we can cover your own research with Chris Quick (the Ed in chief) when he gets back from holiday in a couple of days. Thanks for sending this to us.

Kind regards
Lesley

Lesley Bolton
Managing editor
Accountancy magazine

Well, on the good side, a swift response. On the other hand a bit worrying that he was not even aware there is a problem! Will be interesting to see how they deal with this.

I myself belong to the ACCA (since 1968) and have just had a totally unhelpful and nonsensical conversation about the "more experienced/older members" who are finding it difficult to find a job. The response of the person I spoke to was there was nothing they can do to help and they cannot promote the benefits of the more experienced members. Thus effectively saying they cannot give any support to the members who are finding it difficult to get a job at the right salary or get a job at all. It was almost like I was the only person to have 'phoned them with this enquiry.

Do you know whether any other ACCA members responded to your survey and/or whether any of these have approached the "Association" and if so what sort of response did they get?

I think the ACCA needs a "kick in the pants"

Wow Martin – next step the White House?

While you are discussing matters, please, please, please would you kindly mention the difficulty of accessing part-time and flexible hours appointments?

Many, many thanks, very good luck & kind regards.

This morning I read your very well written letter to Michael Izza. Thank you for letting us know about the response. You are doing very good job and I wish you all the success.

Regards.
Jamal
Islamabad

I have watched and am impressed with how you have developed this. There really is an ageism wrapped within this topic, and it is something that the ICAEW should be championing. Maybe you should ask ICAEW for information on the age profile of their membership to reference some of this research?

I'm a CIMA finalist aged 40 who fell off the corporate ladder and find agencies show me superficial interest. I have been unemployed for 4 months, financially supported by job seekers allowance and my future is like the current weather, bleak.

I bet your findings from your survey will extend to CIMA students, past finalists and members over the age of 40+.

I wonder if you would consider forwarding your ACA report to Robert Jelly CEO at CIMA.

Your letter to Michael Izza was spot on - particularly about 'spin' and Robert Half. The very best to you in developing a rapport and hopefully action with and from the Institute.

I think many of us do not expect to fall off the ladder, so we do not know what to do when it happens. I had no Plan B, but only realised how complacent and unwitting I had been when it was all too late. I had worked hard on pension issues, which was fortunate as I have not paid any more in for five years, but thought those who had developed private work on the side foolish; though it turned out I was the mug.

We are recovering slowly but would like to find a more instant cure.

Thanks again. Maybe the issue should be raised with the other professional bodies too.

I was too slow to contribute to your survey but endorse all that you are trying to achieve. I can agree wholeheartedly with your comments and would add that in the interim / contract market rates can be good but the irregularity and insecurity around such work means that it still remains unrewarding unless one is extremely fortunate. I believe the profession could also do more to help by recognising the value of real commercial experience in their non-audit functions. How many of us could contribute fully to these activities will never be known as we can never pass the gatekeepers, often HR departments solely concerned with ticking boxes they have themselves drawn up that confine their searches to the under 35's.

Keep up the good work!

Let's hope somebody in the ivory towers is prepared to challenge the likes of Robert Half. My experience with their Birmingham office can only be described as "dire". I do hope that the Institute can be brave enough to disassociate themselves from the likes of these spin doctors who are doing our profession no favours whatsoever.

Something you may want to take up with the ICAEW, as I have done with the ACCA, is the constructive use of this "resting" time for us mature accountants.

In the era of CPD as a means of keeping up-to-date, and supposedly marketable, I decided to use this "resting" time constructively to complete my annual CPD hours. I planned my CPD requirements along the lines of where I wanted my career to go and then looked for the appropriate seminars. Now, I realise these are provided by independent training organisations who need to make money but the cost for many of those that would fit my CPD requirements were £375-495. I enquired of the ACCA whether there were reduced rates for unemployed members. This wasn't a question they could answer immediately but when they did, I was stunned.

The ACCA's solution is to **proportionately reduce** the number of hours of CPD required thereby putting unemployed members at an even bigger disadvantage. You will see the slopy-shoulder response on the emails attached. Whilst I recognise there is a means of maintaining CPD relatively cheaply, the more useful training resources are off-limits.

Perhaps I have identified a training opportunity.

[As for the "concealed ageism" of the agencies - well, not always so concealed](#)

Excellent Martin - you can use my name whenever you need to.

I am trying to start a Special Interest Group for Non-executive directors - and also have the interim management group.... Can you think of another grouping that we ought to consider?

Quick - attach your letter to a press release and send it to Accountancy Age together with the positive response from Michael Izza. It:

- Is newsworthy
 - Commits the ICAEW to action publicly
 - Could be a rallying point for mature accountants
 - Will get you business
-

Thank you for all you have done to bring this to the attention of the Institute. Unfortunately I was not around over the weekend, so I could not respond to your survey. However, I think that my experience is much the same as your "average" candidate. I have been independent for over 15 years, and I think I have been lucky in that I have achieved a decent daily rate over that time (about £400 per day in recent years). However, I have not been able to work either a five day week or a 48 week year! I am now only working about 2 days per week, and I am finding great difficulty in filling the other days. I have been "interviewed" by so many clueless 25 year olds that my blood boils fairly constantly!

Well done, and keep up the good work!

Thank you for your email - I am passing it on to Caroline Florence in the ICAEW main press office as she has been the main contact for this research/survey with Robert Half

As merely the 'conduit' for information, I can only rely on the facts as they are presented to me - but I understand that around 200 members working in business/industry in the Yorkshire area responded to the survey resulting in an "average" salary of £73K in this region.

I have registered with SEVERAL agencies and, like others in my position, find that their attitude to many years of broad experience is a standard letter which simply shows that they have not really read, considered or understood what I have to offer - followed by interminable silence.

I have heard more from you in the short time I have been registered with you than many months with most of the rest of the market place put together.

Your attitude, and the energy you put into your company, is a source of optimism for me and I am sure for many others like me.

Thank you for keeping everyone informed and thank you for taking up 'our' situation with the Institute.

I have often wondered whether it is worth paying the subscription to use the letters FCA after my name and to receive 'junk' mail in return!

I am copying this to the only relevant e-mail address I could find for it to be passed onto Michael Izza so that he is aware that as one who did NOT fill in your questionnaire, I feel the same as most of your respondents.

Thanks for the copy of your letter to Michael Izza.

1. My 30 year old daughter - earns GBP 80K in London and still moving upwards.
2. I am 59 & have totally given up applying for permanent positions but was quite successful on the interim market. However even that is now tailing off.
3. I fit the job descriptions perfectly:-

ACMA - fluent German - UK/US GAAP - lots of manufacturing experience as FC/FD/MD - SAP consultant - however as soon as I mention my age the gushing 25 year old interviewer becomes very polite and I send in my CV and that's the last I hear from the agency.

Very well put and a more realistic representation of the real world rather than some agency survey.

Well done

Being a cynic of 60+ years I won't hold my breath. However it's certainly worth trying, best of luck, maybe they may think of us "oldies" although I am not sure what they can do, apart from publicity.

Well done and thanks for keeping us informed.

Perhaps Gillian Ball FCCA, President of ACCA may wish to add her views??????????????

P.S. Martin says - I have left her a message but she hasn't got back to me!

Well done - at long last someone has their attention - lets hope is not just the usual wind & puff!!!

Terrific. Feel free to tell him that there's a company called FD Solutions providing £80,000 jobs (i.e. at his published salary level) to guys who might otherwise sit on the scrapheap and/or struggle to earn the £43,000 figure from the MA survey. So we're kind of bridging the gap between his findings and yours. If his two colleagues want a second person to talk to, feel free to give my name & number.

Simon Walters
Managing Director

FDSolutions

Thankyou for this - very interesting.

I must say that even with my very limited knowledge on the subject, I thought the figure quoted to be inflated.

(Any fool can look at jobs advertised and see that salaries are mostly around £35 -£45k)

Well said. The ICAEW IS OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY.

I understand that you have forwarded this to Michael Izza at the ICAEW, and he will therefore be responding to you and addressing your comments/concerns in due course.

With thanks

Nicolette Snowden

Nicolette Snowden
PR Manager - UK & Ireland
Robert Half International

Thanks very much for your email. I've forwarded it to the research team who undertook the survey for their comments. It would be more appropriate for them to respond on the specific points that you have raised.

Good response. Interesting to see what reply you get. Interesting also to ask if you strip out the outliers in the population (partners in top 10, FD's FTSE 250 etc), i suspect the average will be a lot nearer your figure! (Most decent statisticians would do this)

I hope Mr. Izza appreciates your reality check. He must endeavour much more to represent all his members.

You are doing us all a public service.

I agree with much of your assessment, particularly your scathing remarks about recruitment agencies. It seems to me that the Robert Half exercise is designed to give a selective boost to the market rather than reflect the truth: I, too, do not believe the £80k figure, and I know the market as well as any recruiter.

Also note that there was one agency, overseas, who openly stated that the ant-ageist UK law is not followed by them. I know that the UK agencies will try to use subtle methods to get around the new rules.

I read your letter with great interest.

I used to work as an interim accountant but have found that the main agencies such as Robert Half do not value accountants with skills and experience. The number of times I have been interviewed by a 20 something who has clearly not understood what I do or how I do it became all too frequent .In the past I have taken my

CV back from an agent because I did not want them representing me due to the amazing ignorance they showed.

I remember being called in by Hayes about a job which was something I was over qualified for. Towards the end of the interview I finally got from the young lady that the job was paying £18 per hour. I asked her if she realised that I was a qualified accountant. She said she had several ACA's and ACMA's up for the job. I walked out.

Robert Half sent me for an interview to be the interim FC of a company while their new FD was settling in. The company wanted my but when RH made me the offer it was at 60% of what I was charging other clients. When I spoke to the RH Agent she said that was the rate they had for me on their system. I suggested that she change it and she said she could not do that as she didn't have access to make the change. This caused me to waste at least 2 days of my time which was unpaid.

I now look at rate and location before I even think about responding to emails from most agencies. Now I tend to get emails about specialisms in VAT and leasing but usually because they can't find anyone else.

A London Agency wanted me to do a VAT job in Surrey for which they could not find anyone else. They told me the FD was really interested in me as I could clearly do the job but the rate they offered was derisory. The opportunity cost did not make it worth my while.

I am sure you have had many tales of woe like the ones above. The main agencies are still ageist and will continue to be so until they are prosecuted by someone as in the cases of women who are forced out in the city. I don't think this will happen because the persons being discriminated against are mainly white, middle aged men.

Sorry for the rant

Whilst I use agents extensively, I must admit my experience will be similar to yours: they are unhelpful in general, only deal with you when it suits them and invariably take the easy route: i.e. to get this job you need to cut your wage demands.

Well done. I agree wholeheartedly. I presume their survey must have been overweight with accountants in financial services.

I fully agree with your synopsis. I am 55 and have never known it so hard to find "valued work". Having been an FD for 20 years I now find that agencies have no feel or interest in me and similar 50+ FCA's.

One interviewing agency was keener to find out more about my son who has just qualified with a Big4 practice than find me work. Like you said, none of the agencies I have seen have a mature consultant who can appreciate what experience and loyalty can offer.

Please forward any response you get from Michael Izza to your "mature army of members".

Just a brief note to congratulate you on your excellent letter to the Institute. I, like you, have my doubts about the likelihood of any positive response but if you want any support or other input please let me know.

Well done Martin! I have always been staggered at the total lack of genuine support that the Institute gives to its members not in practice. I was heartened a few years ago when the Institute at last set up an Interim Manager group. My hopes were short-lived. The minutes of the first meeting of the new body showed that it appeared to have spent most of the meeting debating whether an Interim needed a Practising Certificate. I considered resigning at the time, amazed that the Institute should be so detached from the real world. I carry on paying my annual fee because perhaps, just perhaps, the title FCA may help when applying for assignments.

Sorry -busy until now so I have only just caught up.

But endorse everything you have said. You have to be self-sufficient once you pass 50 no matter what the law says ageism is rife!

Well Done!

But wouldn't bet on any of this seeing the light of day via the Institute.

Although I did not participate in your survey, I wholeheartedly support the views in your letter which reflect what I have seen and experienced.

I think you are spot on with what you say and have experienced the age discrimination thing myself in the past. It would appear that employers seem to put more faith in an untried newly qualified than they do with someone with 10 years plus experience in the relevant trade.

After all a youngster is looking to move on and widen their experiences in 4/5 years whereas many mature accountants are looking at a long term commitment. It would appear companies are happy to spend their time constantly retraining new staff than looking for loyalty and commitment from a person who could actually make a real impact on their business as they actually understand it.

I don't look forward to hitting 45 then - I topped £100K in an industry roll last year and am 42!

But seriously, all the ACAs at my grade working with were on packages worth £75-£100 and some were over 45! I dread to think what the CFO was on, but his share award alone would have been worth at least £25K! It wasn't in London either so that argument can't be run!!

I hate to say it, but there are plenty of jobs out there paying that much, even for the over 45s - I'm getting calls on a weekly basis. But like a lot of things nowadays, there are too many people with the qualification chasing too few jobs that really need ACAs. That is why there are an awful lot of highly qualified, highly experienced ACAs doing jobs that really don't justify the qualification! I've also seen an awful lot of people holding the ACA/FCA qualification that I wouldn't trust to do my bookkeeping, let alone anything more demanding!!! I think that's the problem - it's the same as the graduate market nowadays. Supply and demand sets the salary levels!

I was interviewed last week for the post of South West Regional Director of the ICAEW. The salary was £50,000. I asked my interviewer what message this sent about how the Institute values its own qualification, given the results of the Robert Half survey.

Dear Mr Hammond, (Accountancy Age)

Having seen that the 'average' salary for an ACA working in business, according to the Robert Half survey, is £80K, I feel compelled to ask my employer for a substantial pay rise.

Since qualifying in 1972 with first-time passes and a county prize in the old 'Intermediate' exam, I have worked in business for the majority of my career and have always considered myself at least 'average'.

Perhaps my relative under-achievement in the pay stakes is more to do with my age (56) than my ability and experience.

If the ICAEW are going to quote 'headline' salaries from these surveys, they should include a caveat to the effect that they only apply to the under 45s.

Sadly, those of us over 45 have to consider ourselves lucky to have a job at all, whatever the salary!

Martin, I agree with you completely. He lives in a world that I certainly do not.

In London right now I am paying a plumber and his mate in cash £2000 to redo a bathroom, where I am providing all the hardware, for what I think is a one and a half- day job but might stretch to part of a third day. They will provide a modest amount of copper pipe materials. I have argued with my builder that in after tax terms that is more than an interim FD of many years experience gets paid, if they can get the work. I have searched for alternative plumbers but they do not return calls.

In my view the President of the ICA's comments apply to London plumbers, but not most CAs.

Please keep up the fight to blow away the froth and self generated propaganda and do not be afraid to go public. Even the private equity boys have realized that one has to participate and make the case in public. I went public in the FT letter page a few years ago. It probably did me no good personally but I just could not keep my mouth shut!

I echo your reaction. Though I'm ACCA and not party the ICAEW's survey's questionnaire, I find the results remarkable. Of course there are statistics and statistics, but which every way this is sliced 'n' diced it's hard to imagine from my experience of the accountancy job market, how you arrive at a headline grabbing "average" of "nearly" £80k. If you get inundated by a £50k opportunity and the average is £80k, then it reasons that if you advertised a £110k job, it should get the same volume of response? Clearly there are not as many £110k job opportunities as there are £50k ones, so it would be interesting to understand more.

Perhaps you could ask ICAEW the assumptions and basis behind the results. How is the average calculated? Is it base salary or package? Perhaps the individuals motivated to shout from the rooftops and be bothered to reply to a survey will be in the upper salary bracket anyway. Finally, if this is a benchmarking exercise designed to help, it can only be dispiriting for the accountancy professional who finds that with increasing age and experience, his/her worth is inversely proportional to the salary commanded.

I agree completely and I think you should add M Page to R Half. Having registered with both some time ago, NOTHING has happened, chasing does not help they seem to concentrate on the easy market, having put 'young' people in they keep that culture going...

I agree with you. The situation is exactly as you describe and every member of the Institute is fully aware that it is totally out of touch with its members. Why else are so many students doing ACCA? I would not want to get on my hobbyhorse, but.....!!!!!!

Keep up the good work!

Should you wish to show my e-mail to anybody you have my permission.

I fully understand that recruitment is a competitive business. What worries me is the wastage of talent and experience that might be occurring in the U.K. economy. I was told by a consultant for Nigel Lynn Financial Recruitment in Manchester of an ACA with a degree in German from Manchester University who after working for one of the Big 4 in the U. K. got a job in Germany and worked there for a number of years in Munich. For personal reasons, he has returned to the Manchester area is looking for work in the north west and doing low paid temporary roles in order to" prove" himself to local Employers. Obviously, not all British companies require an ACA with experience of business in Germany but Germany is one of the U.K. leading trading partners. British industry is said to lack foreign language speakers. Having this gentleman in a company might help a British company win business there. Not all the world speaks English and this gentleman with his fluency in German might be just what a company trying to export to Germany requires. His knowledge of German accounting, business contacts and fluency in German, I feel shouldn't be wasted just because he might be over 40 and hasn't done U.K. VAT returns for the last ten years.

Very well said your remarks in reply to the survey. I wrote to you some weeks ago about my experience during 7 months in the U. K. job hunting. I registered my C.V. with Robert Half in Leeds and Manchester and during that time never heard from them although I applied for various jobs on their web site. I also registered my C.V. with Reed Finance in Manchester and Hays Accounting & Finance again with little result except once being asked whether I was interested in a job paying 20,000 a year near Bradford. I also registered my C.V. with other agencies such as Marks Sattin, CMC Consulting and kept an eye on web sites such as Total jobs and obsfinancial.com. I have a 5 page list of U.K. financial agencies which I regularly check. I qualified as an ACMA in 1986.

I believe there is fundamentally something very wrong with the recruitment of accountants in the United Kingdom. I am not a human resources expert but some sort of investigation needs to be undertaken of the role of recruitment agencies and their inability to represent candidates with skills and experience outside of certain perceived requirements. I have 15 years work in Spain, speak Spanish fluently but from my time in the U. K. got the impression that my skills and experience were just not required there. I returned to Spain very depressed from my time job hunting in the country of which I am a citizen.

I was disgusted a few weeks ago to receive an e-mail from the CIMA asking me to vote of which recruitment agency I considered the best, none of them did anything for me. I decided to write to the President of the CIMA telling him of my experience in the U. K. and the very difficult personnel circumstances that I face here with my family in Spain. I have yet to receive a reply from him. Agencies such as Robert Half, Hays and Reed do very little for accountants with years of experience; they are interested in earning their fees by churning young accountants through more junior vacancies.

The more noise that you make on this issue the better. The waste of talent is criminal. The comment about the ICAEW is particularly apt. There is a perception that those over 40 without a job must be the failures. I believe that there is no understanding about the numbers involved (and not just in the field of finance) and the skills capabilities and energy that are going to waste.

Have you thought of pushing the Interim side? Robert Half down in Bristol I believe have over 40 qualified on the interim side, although they do concentrate in trying to get Preferred Supplier Status with bigger employers like MOD, Orange, BAE, or SOX project work with Top 4 firms where they manage to put 4-5 staff in at one time. When a SOX project comes out from the large financial services companies, the call goes out for newly qualified + 3 years to do project work. They earn £400+ a day for a period until the project finishes. American companies like the one I am in, often use outside Accountants rather than internal audit to carry out 2 year SOX reviews. At this daily rate I know of one accountant who only works for 6 months a year on this type of work. SOX is so boring!!

Congratulations on being someone who is prepared to take on the idiots at the "big" recruiting firms.

As you say, £50Kpa for us ageing people would indeed be good money!!

Keep up the good work.

I think Robert Half must have sampled accountants working for FTSE 100 companies and investment banks and somehow overlooked everyone else working for 'average' companies.

And there I was thinking I was the only one that feels exactly as your feedback put so succinctly.

You have your finger bang on the pulse.

Even though I am yet to take full advantage of your business I do think you are providing an invaluable service and now becoming the voice of mature accountants up and down the country.

A good response to the Institute.

I am getting less now in 2007 than I did in 1974 (as adjusted by RPI as a rough guide) despite adding more experience.

Do you think that the Institute should issue a DIRECTIVE to all its members responsible for hiring staff stating that they must comply strictly with the recent Age Non-discrimination legislation? A similar DIRECTIVE should be sent to all Accountancy Employment Agencies - with the exception of yourselves.

I give one example. I was told by a well known and respected Christian Organisation that I could not apply for the job because they expected 15 years service and clearly I could not do that.

In the Accountancy job market the legislation is clearly being ignored except with yourselves.

Thanks for everything you are doing to help us older accountants

Some further info, which I am sure is just "teaching my Grandmother to suck eggs", in that with the more I do Interim work, the harder it is to obtain a permanent role, BUT there again what is PERMANENT

nowadays. I like many have been made redundant, actually twice from my last 2 perm roles!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

To make life even more amusing some FDs will not look at anyone who has undertaken Interim/locum/temp roles and some who want a "stable" work history i.e. 2 or 3 roles, which is a bit difficult in a 40+ year working environment.

I wonder which planet some of these people are on.

Please feel free to pass this onto the ICAEW.

I still feel a book titled "The art of job hunting" in my bones but for the libel laws!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Is there an MP who was responsible for the Age Dis Act we could send this to? Coz it obviously ain't working!

What a harvest you have reaped over a wet weekend. (A result for global warming, oh sorry, it is now called 'climate change' by the spinners).

You certainly have grabbed the attention of the mature market and hopefully the 'ears' are listening.

If I can be of any assistance as your campaign gathers pace I will gladly use my 'free day' a week I currently have available.

Remember there is no offside rule anymore - you have enough momentum for this rule to apply here.

Apologies that I was unable to send in my responses earlier.

Thanks for sending the comments, now I know I am not the only one!!!

You are certainly doing a good job and I agree with your views 100%.

I am based in Northern Ireland and the salaries here are at least 15-20% lower than in the UK, so a £50k salary it self is considered toooo good.

I have just caught up on my mail and read with interest your exchange of correspondence with Michael Izza.

It is with regret, that I have to agree totally and absolutely with your own benchmarking survey and the results of your analysis. I am certain that this does not come as a complete surprise.

Like many other corporate accountants with 20/30 years experience as an FD who has developed into a "mature accountant" the market and the recruitment consultants (excluding you) have definitely become ageist.

Does this really matter?

Yes it does as we have the experience, the experience and the experience to be part of the team that delivers the corporate goals for businesses.

I like many other qualified accountants have enjoyed the financial rewards during our 40's and early 50's. At the end of corporate life I decided to work for a very demanding but reasonably good employer - me. The hours are long, the pay is reasonable but as a consultant or non executive director there is no direct responsibility for my actions. It is not just about salary it's about using your experience.

"Mature Accountants" have successfully brought an excellent concept to the market. Thank you for your vision.

Wondered if an approach to the government minister responsible for the age discrimination act might concentrate the mind of the likes of Robert Half? Who knows - it might lead to the creation of a government Czar for age discrimination!

Keep up the good work and pressure.

You are doing a brilliant job on behalf of the long of tooth

Much appreciate your efforts, life can be difficult for the over 50s who become unemployed.

Attached please find my response to your survey - hope it's not too late.

Since 1991 I have just had contract/temp work

Recent excuses by agencies for not looking on my behalf include:

- Experience not recent.
- References not available due to being unemployed.

Some agencies just ignore your inquiries, when they get your details

Very well written letter. I wish you (and all of us over 50) luck. It does scare me when I think of the future and decrease in earning power. I must say, reading your results last Sunday made me slightly depressed. Let's hope your letter does get some action.