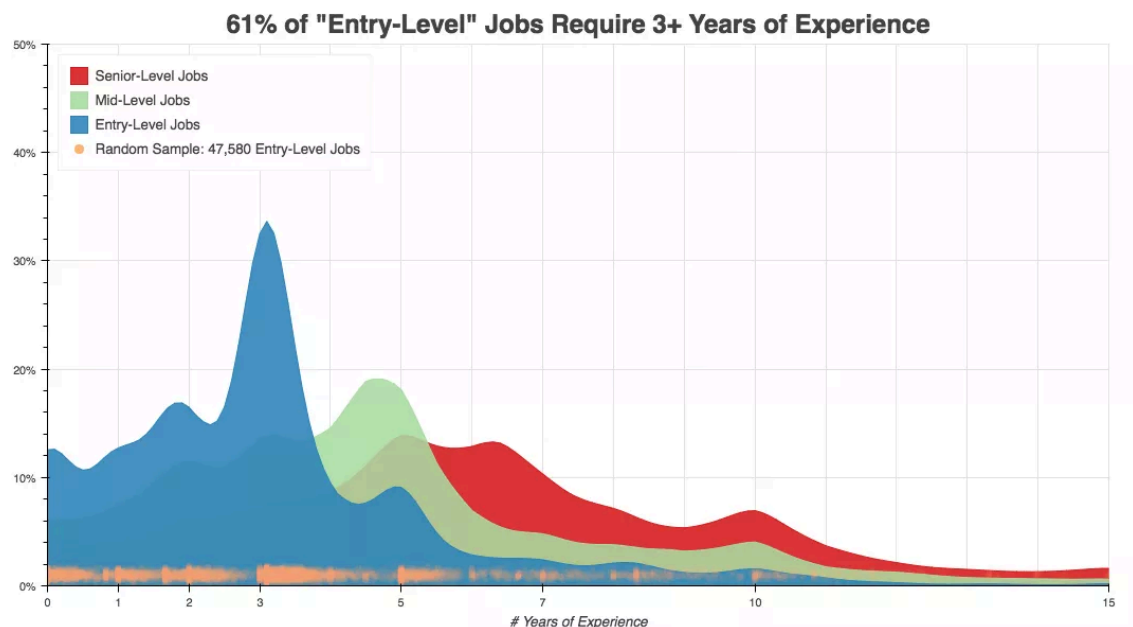




The Science of The Job Search, Part III: 61% of “Entry-Level” Jobs Require 3+ Years of Experience

“**Jr. Marketing Assistant.** Perfect for new grads! *Requirements:* 3 years of digital marketing experience. *Compensation:* \$12/hour.

The job search can feel like one big Catch-22: “How the hell am I supposed to get experience if I can’t get a job *to get experience?*” In fact, after analyzing a random sample of 95,363 jobs, we discovered that **61% of all full-time “entry-level” jobs require 3+ years of experience.**



61% of all supposedly “entry-level” jobs require 3+ years of experience. It’s not just you.

What gives? Before we get into that, here are 3 other interesting things we found:

- **Employers are driving “experience inflation”;** as a result, the amount of experience required to get a job is increasing by 2.8% every year. That means your younger sister (or brother) will **need ~4 years of work experience just to get their first job.**
- That’s bullshit, right? You don’t have to play by their rules. Based on our analysis, **you can successfully apply to jobs if you’ve got ± 2 years of the required experience.**
- 3, 5 and 8 are your magic numbers. **After 5+ years of experience, you (officially) qualify for most mid-level jobs.** After 8+ years, you qualify for senior ones. And 3+ for entry-level, obvs.

Let’s dig in, shall we?

How Much Experience Do You Need?

Employers are a superstitious bunch. How many jobs have you seen asking for 13 years of work experience? They'll ask for 7, 10 and 15 years (but rarely 11-14). You can see job postings clump up by employers' "lucky numbers" in the graph above.

But, here's the rub— this isn't just a cute gimmick. It lets us **pinpoint how much experience you'll (officially) need** to qualify for different levels of jobs:

Level	# Years of Experience	% Jobs Qualified
Entry-Level	~3 years	75%
Mid-Level	~5 years	77%
Senior-Level	~8 years	72%

Put another way, **if you've got 3+ years of experience, you'll qualify for 75% of entry-level jobs.** 3 is the magic number here: below 3 years of experience, you don't (officially) qualify for most entry-level jobs; above 3 years of experience, you do.

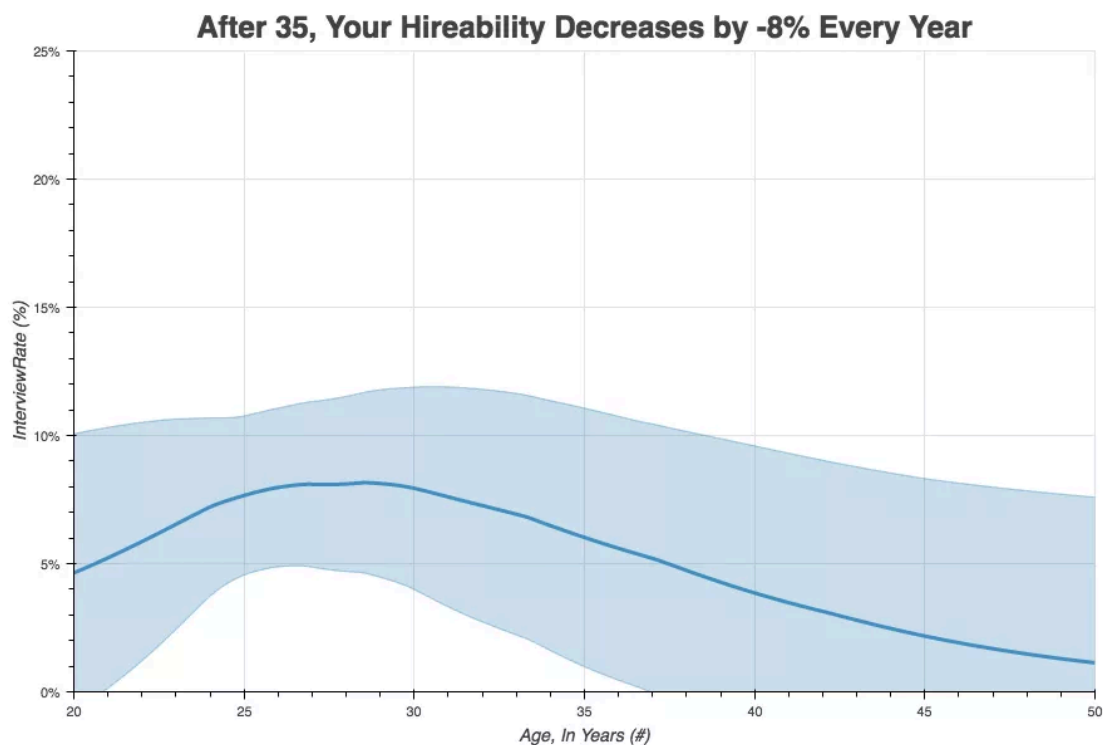
("Officially" is the operative word here. Keep reading.)

Companies Gone Bad

Can You Be Overqualified?

After 8 years of experience, you qualify for most senior-level jobs out there. But even for senior roles, employers rarely ask for more than 10 years experience. (You can see this in the graph above.)

And from our first post in this **The Science of The Job Search** series: **your hireability starts dropping by ~8% every year after age 35.** Assuming today's experienced folks graduated college around age ~23, this is almost exactly 10 years of experience. It's no coincidence.



After age 35, your hireability decreases by ~8% every year. Ageism is very real.

Age matters. A lot, sadly. Your chances of getting a job at age 20 aren't great. At 30, they're OK. After 40, they're getting bad again. It's illegal for companies to discriminate based on age, but ageism is very real.

What Gives? “Experience Inflation”

In addition to discriminating against older workers, employers have also been driving “experience inflation,” which is especially dangerous for younger workers. For entry-level jobs, the **amount of work experience required to get a job has been steadily increasing at 2.8% per year.**

Anecdotally, we all know this is true: 30 years ago, our parents could get an amazing job with just a college degree. These days, we don't even know if a college degree is worth it and a college degree on its own doesn't buy you much.

Over the next 5-10 years, recent graduates will start needing ~4 years of work experience just to get their first job. (Yes, I know this doesn't make sense. Hold on.)

We'll get into experience inflation in detail in next week's post, but for now let's focus on what options you have. This is all very depressing—

What Can You Do?

Honestly, the job search is unfair. (That's fundamentally **why we started TalentWorks**, but that's a different story for later.) So what? Folks still need jobs. Hell, maybe you need a job.

What can you do?

#4: Don't List Your Graduation Date If You're 35+

We've already briefly touched on fighting ageism. **Hiring managers (subconsciously) guess your age based on your graduation date**, how much work experience you have, etc. If you don't list your graduation date or only show your most recent 2-3 jobs, they can't tell how old you are.

#3: Use Freelance Jobs To Build Your Experience

One way to get past the job-searching Catch-22 is to play a *different* game. Instead of fighting with everyone else to get that first job, you can instead **build up your work experience (and resume and portfolio) by doing freelance jobs** on the side.

Not only will you get paid, you'll also have far higher chances getting your 2nd job (everyone else's 1st job). In the future, especially when experience inflation means you need 4+ years of experience to get your *first* job, this might be the *only* way to break into your job.

#2: Apply for Jobs Within ±2 Years of Your Experience

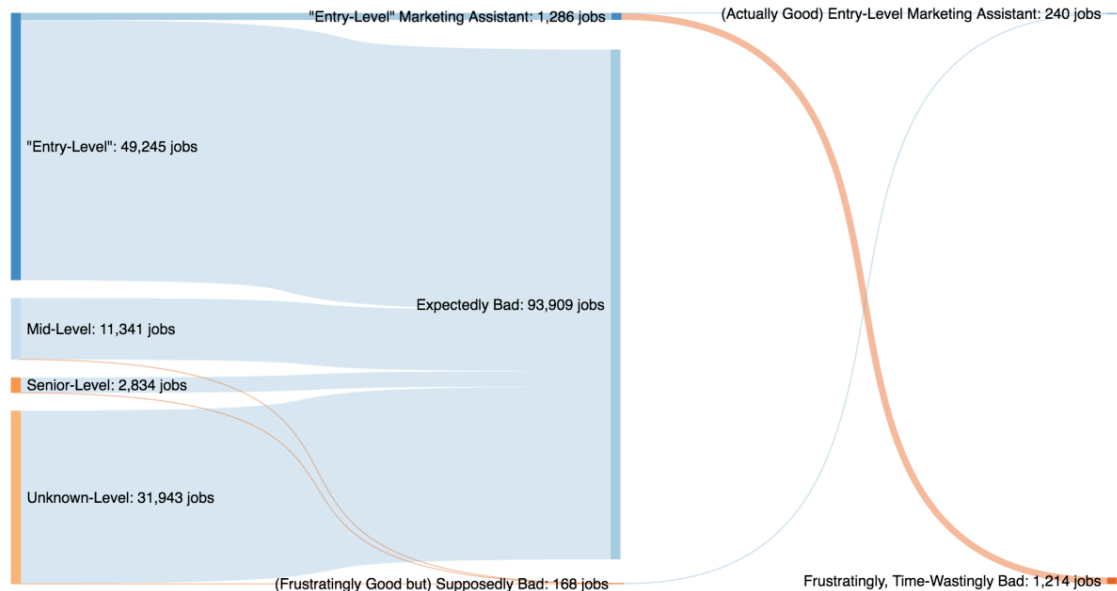
The #1 lesson: you miss 100% of the shots you don't take. From what we see, **if you're within ±2 years of required experience, hiring managers will often consider you “close enough.”**

So, be flexible with what jobs you go after! You never know if something special in your application will catch the hiring manager's eye. What's the harm in applying?

#1: Identify (Actual) Entry-Level Jobs Near You

Let's be honest: looking for jobs is a *!@\$* pain in the ass. Of the 95,363 jobs we analyzed, 52% (49,245) were supposedly entry-level (based on what the employer said). Of those, my hypothetical job-searcher — a Marketing Assistant in LA, say — was only interested in 3% (1,286). Of those 1,286 supposedly entry-level Marketing Assistant and other jobs, I found 240 for **actual** entry-level Marketing Assistants.

In real life, folks need to apply to 150-250 jobs to get a job, so needing to review 1,286 job postings is actually pretty representative. (Afterwards, you'd still have to apply to the final 240 jobs, of course...)



Identifying 240 (actually good) entry-level Marketing Assistant jobs **meant wasting 94% of my time**. I reviewed 1,286 supposedly-good jobs and had to discard 94% as crap. OTOH, I found 168 great jobs out of 95,067 supposed baddies. Doing this was a *!@\$* pain in the ass.

It's painful work, but someone's gotta do it. If you've got the patience and the time (and stubbornness), rock on! If you don't, you can **pay us \$10 to do it (and other stuff) for you**.

Summary

Getting a job has *always* been hard, but it's getting (quantifiably) harder. These days, you **need to have ~3 years of experience (officially) to get the average entry-level job**. It's a full-on Catch-22: "No, you can't have a job." "Why?" "Because you don't have a job." "..."

With the right insights and tools, you can break the Catch-22 and get the job you deserve. To recap:

1. **Identify (actual) entry-level jobs near you.** With a bit of patience (and a lot of stubbornness), you can identify the ~5% of jobs that actually match your needs.
2. **Apply for jobs within ±2 years of your experience.** If you're within ±2 years of required experience, hiring managers will often consider you "close enough."
3. **Use freelance jobs to build your experience.** Go guerrilla. Not only will you get paid, you'll also have far higher chances getting your second job (everyone else's first job).
4. **Don't list your graduation date if you're 35+.** Ageism is real. If you don't list your graduation date or only show your most recent 2-3 jobs, hiring managers can't tell how old you are.

We’ve already added a filter for (actually) entry-level jobs in ApplicationAssistant. If you’re looking for an entry-level job, **sign up for ApplicationAssistant** and set “Entry Level” during setup. We’ll only look for (actual) entry-level jobs near you!

*(88% of recent graduates looking for entry-level jobs got an interview in 60 days or less using ApplicationAssistant – it’s backed by our **Interview Guarantee**.)*

Methodology

First, we randomly sampled 100,000 jobs from our index of 91 million job postings. We extracted the # of years of experience, job level and employment type for each job using TalentWorks-proprietary parsing algorithms. We then used a blended Gaussian-linear kernel to calculate experience densities. Finally, we used an averaged ensemble of multiple independent RANSAC iterations to robustly calculate inflations against outliers. This was done in python with pandas, sklearn and scipy and plotted with bokeh.

Why Are We Doing This?

With ApplicationAssistant right now, we can boost the average job-seeker’s hireability by 5.8x. But, what makes ApplicationAssistant work has been an internal company secret until now. We’re fundamentally a mission-driven company and we believe we can help **more** people by sharing our learnings. So, that’s exactly what we’re going to do.

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Mission-driven entrepreneur, world traveler (400K+ miles), dad to 100-pound German Shepherd. My #1 mission: To help you get the job you deserve.
