

Meghan M. Biro: [00:00](#) We deal a lot with isms today in the workplace, but we don't tend to focus enough on ageism. Not only that, I think a lot of us don't even know exactly what it is. Here's what it is, a brutal truth, and as Vinay Singh says in his new book, *Your Future in Pieces: The Brutal Truth: How Ageism and Income Equality are Destroying America*. He's not only an expert on ageism, but he's also experienced it firsthand and says, "Today's workers feel the brunt of it younger than ever." Let's get into the realities of ageism and how we can undo this vexing problem, remove the bias, and hopefully protect our employees. The shelf life of a robot is one thing, but the shelf life of a human, an entirely other topic.

Meghan M. Biro: [00:56](#) Welcome to the Work Trends Podcast from Talent Culture. I'm your host, Meghan M. Biro. Every week we interview interesting people who are re-imagining work and join us on Twitter every Wednesday, 1:30 PM Eastern using the hashtag #worktrends. Let's take a peek at the headlines. Good news for employees, but kind of concerning for employers. In the coming months, the Supreme court could make it easier for federal employees to prove that they were discriminated against on the basis of age. I saw some fascinating research in Forbes recently that shows ageism starts as early as the age of 42. Kind of depressing, right? Most of us understand that it's against the law to discriminate against someone based on the number of years they've spent on this planet but as my guest says, "Here's the brutal truth, ageism exists and we're all feeling its impact earlier than ever. Essentially it's one of those isms we just aren't talking about enough." On today's show, we're going to talk about the why and the how of ageism and how to fix it, so let's dig deeper with today's guest.

Meghan M. Biro: [02:06](#) Well, let me just start by saying this, there's always going to be someone who thinks you're older than you are. Most of us don't go around saying, "Oh, I'm so old." Well, give it a few years, right? If you've seen me out there on the Twitter's @MeganMBiro, maybe I've said that once or twice because I just celebrated a birthday but anyways, I digress. In the meantime, you shouldn't get fired for it. Our guest today had that very thing happen to him and his name is Vinay Singh and Vinay is a human capital and workforce development strategist and advocacy professional and we are thrilled to have him here today, so welcome to work trends, Vinay.

Vinay Singh: [02:52](#) Thank you, Meghan.

- Meghan M. Biro: [02:53](#) Where are you today?
- Vinay Singh: [02:55](#) I'm in New Jersey.
- Meghan M. Biro: [02:56](#) New Jersey. Have you always been in New Jersey or just for today?
- Vinay Singh: [03:01](#) I've lived most of my life in New Jersey. I went to school out of state to Ohio, so I've got some Midwest. I was born in the Midwest as well, but I have quite a bit of the most recent 10 to 15 years also in Manhattan.
- Meghan M. Biro: [03:15](#) Very nice. I could feel it. I'm feeling the Manhattan vibe from you. It's all good, so listen, it's illegal to discriminate against people based on their age. If that's the case, why is it happening so much, Vinay? Talk to us about your experience with this.
- Vinay Singh: [03:32](#) Sure. Meghan, America is at a crossroads today. We live in very unique times. Right now, we've got four generations in the workforce and too many employers and executives are buying into false beliefs and biases fueled by age discrimination. They include, but are not limited to, here are some of the top ones. Older people take too much time off. Older people are not tech savvy and older people will quit sooner than younger people, so older workers will quit sooner than younger workers. These are some of the biggest top polling reasons, but I will also say that these false beliefs and biases are being carried over not just year in and year out, but decade in and decade out. In today's world and workforce, these are very, very false biases, beliefs, they're simply not true.
- Meghan M. Biro: [04:35](#) I know you've done quite a bit of research on stats and data around age discrimination, specifically in the workforce. Talk to us about what you're seeing with some of these numbers.
- Vinay Singh: [04:46](#) Yeah, and the statistics are alarming and I get a lot of people, not a lot of people. I get some people that come to me and say, "Well, that's not my experience." People need to realize if they haven't had that experience, they are one 330 millionth of an opinion. 330 million people live in America, but let me give you some statistics. As of the end of 2018 and I look at a lot of Q4, end of year trends, research and reporting, but as of the most recent December of 2018 year end report, nearly two thirds of not coal mining or rust belt, but tech workers age 40 to 45 worry that their age will hurt their career and they fear about losing their career. That number skyrockets to nearly 90% when

an individual hits the age of 50 and these are credible, cited resources from some of the biggest global reporting, Dice, HotJobs, Monster, top magazines, Entrepreneur, et cetera.

Vinay Singh: [05:53](#) Let's just put that into context. We're not talking about older people, we're all living longer and longer, right? If you're fearing for your ... If two out of three people are fearing for their careers at, 40 you should be worried about that if you're 38, 37. Nine out of 10 at the age of 50, 50 is a couple of decades away from retirement and more than that, we're living to our 80s and 90s, so this is quite alarming. I'll give you one final stat, and this should come ... It should alarm any American, one out of five senior citizens will not enjoy their golden years and they have to work till they pass. There is no retirement period. One out of five, that's 20%. Move that five basis points to 25 that's one out of four, so there's some alarming statistics, but they are true.

Meghan M. Biro: [06:42](#) I want to talk a little bit about why this is. I mean, the one thing that strikes me about our conversation right now, it's not the rust belt. This is high tech. This is people movin' and groovin' and shakin', right, of all ages. As you mentioned, we're all living a whole lot longer, especially if you go in for those regular medical checks, right? Do you think ageism is on the rise because there's a divide between those using technology and those who don't or where are we seeing this emerge specifically?

Vinay Singh: [07:13](#) Yeah, so excellent question Meghan, and I'll say it like this. Every company today considers them a technology company. I just heard of a storage company and I don't even remember the name, it was on a commercial while I was driving and they say, "We don't consider ourselves a storage company. We consider ourselves a technology company that's in storage." Every company says, "We're not a car company. We're a technology company that builds cars." Everybody's saying it. It's the thing to say today. There's actually no difference than couple of decades ago.

Vinay Singh: [07:43](#) Everybody's constantly using technology, so to whether you're a programmer or a developer and your title says computer programmer or computer architect or computer administrator is irrelevant. If you're in accounting, using the latest accounting software. If you're in human resources using the latest HRIS or human resource information systems, everybody is a technologist. Again, feeding into the false beliefs that if you are not "a techie", you're not technical. Wrong. We're all technical.

We all know how to use smart phones, grandparents know how to use technology just like young people do. Sure, young people have a lot more time just to play with Instagram and whatever, Pinterest.

Meghan M. Biro: [08:32](#) Hey, wait a minute, Vinay. It's not just young people that are playing with Instagram, right? I was just on my story like 15 minutes ago, but you're right, like we all have it at our fingertips, so it's almost like why are we using this as our excuse, really?

Vinay Singh: [08:47](#) That's exactly what it is, Meghan. It's an excuse to create bias against pools of people and to make a case for hiring the groups of people a particular company wants to. In other words, it's allowing companies to get a pass for discrimination.

Meghan M. Biro: [09:05](#) Talk to us about how this is affecting our wallets, our bottom lines. I mean, what's the impact of age discrimination on the economy?

Vinay Singh: [09:14](#) It's a huge impact. Perfect example, and this should resonate with everybody. If 80% of the population, I shouldn't even say if, it is a fact that 80%, the bottom 80% or the majority, vast majority of Americans have had little to no wage increase. The bottom 40% have actually seen a decrease in wages. I mean, that's shocking. Maybe less now than you did 40 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago, 10 years ago. Hey, if you're making less, you're not pumping money into the economy. You're not buying CDs, you're not buying clothes, you're not buying toys to play with. Hence, the American gross domestic product is shrinking.

Vinay Singh: [09:57](#) If one person is making 70 million and everybody else is making nothing, that person that's making 70 million, they're not buying 70 million in ... They're not buying 1,000 pairs of jeans. They're buying the regular amount. They're just hoarding the money away. American's GDP, national GDP is shrinking. People's ability to buy is shrinking. People are living paycheck to paycheck and just trying to keep their head above water, paying for necessities. People are eating not organic food. They're eating dollar menu. Their health is at risk. It's a lose-lose proposition for the American economy and the American workforce and the American population in general. This is not a benefit.

Meghan M. Biro: [10:42](#) Well, there's something that's very scary going on here, Work Trends audience. If we look at the current trajectory as Vinay is

talking about, the American middle class is struggling and that it hurts, doesn't it? It's just, I wish we weren't here, but I'm glad that you're here today to unfold this with us, Vinay, because it's reality. It's unfolding before our eyes, so speaking of realities, I understand you experienced age discrimination yourself. Talk to us about that story and what that was like for you.

Vinay Singh: [11:11](#) Yeah. Yeah, so it's interesting. It started for me around 43, 43-ish when ... Actually started before. I was in, there's two kinds of talent acquisition, recruiting, staffing, whatever you want to call it. There's the agency where companies, all the big companies and all the small, all companies, period, they hire agency recruiters to help staff their companies. There's that group and almost all companies 20 years ago needed that kind of support because they didn't have talent acquisition onsite, in-house the way they do today. Fast forward to me wanting to go corporate and leave the agency world because agency is very commission-based.

Meghan M. Biro: [11:51](#) It sure is.

Vinay Singh: [11:52](#) Yeah, exactly. You get paid when you make your placements with those companies. Corporate, you have a salary and you have a career ladder with one company. After X amount of years, I wanted to go corporate and I got a lot of bias by people basically saying corporate people saying, "You don't have any 'corporate experience,'" which I found to be a bias.

Vinay Singh: [12:11](#) I've managed, at that point maybe 100 corporate clients, how do I not have corporate experience? I worked at a corporation, how do I not have corporate experience? It never made sense to me. It still doesn't. I'm not going to subscribe to it and I know it's a bias. Interestingly enough, when I finally did get into corporate, I was a rock star, like I was on the agency side. Why? Because I knew how to do all the right things for partnering and working with executive personnel decision-makers, but I had to take out the first five to 10 years of my resume, which had a whole bunch of good leadership and accomplishments because my colleagues that said, "Hey, listen, I want to get you into my company, but you got to shave off the first 10 years of your resume and take off your MBA because you're getting hired for this position."

Vinay Singh: [12:57](#) They don't want you to be overqualified. You're going to keep getting overqualified like you have been, so just take it off your resume. I didn't appreciate hearing that. I kind of fought it a

little bit until I realized my friends were like, "Look, if you don't do it, I'm not submitting your resume." I thought that this would be something that would be highlighted and show that I'm an overachiever. I'm going to be great in your company. Apparently no, I took that stuff. All my management, all my first five to 10 years off and my MBA and my graduate certificates, and that's how I got into the corporate roles that I had. Fast forward to the last position, my company had an M&A in 2017. I sent about 500 resumes out at the age of 45, and after 14 months of getting a lot of overqualified or no call backs, I always was in school and I got into Columbia into their Master's of Human Resource Management.

Vinay Singh: [13:46](#) I called my friends and I said, "Hey, good news. This is what's happening," and everybody was very excited except my 11th friend, I'll never forget had said, "I'm so sorry for you," and I was thrown back, Meghan. I'm like, "You better explain yourself, man. What does that mean?" I didn't say it that nice.

Meghan M. Biro: [14:01](#) Right, I was just about to go there with you.

Vinay Singh: [14:04](#) Yeah, and he basically said, "You've always spent all your time and your own money going to school, getting Master's degrees, graduate certificates, weekends, nights, and becoming more and more of an asset to your companies. You've got all these experience and all these accomplishments and you can't even get a job to that would keep you under employed. You are the ultimate epitome of irony. One of the top schools in the world have accepted you and you can't even get a basic job that's lower level than what you should be getting. You're the ultimate epitome of irony." When he said that, I realized if this is happening to me, I can't imagine how many people this has happened to all over the country. I'm going to take myself off the market, force myself to be a writer and author, and I'm going to make this book a tell-all because this kind of a book doesn't exist, and that's what I wrote. Future in Pieces: The Brutal Truth: How Ageism and Income Inequality are Destroying America.

Meghan M. Biro: [14:56](#) Good for you. We're so excited you're here and I mean, the first step is just talking about it because I think this is one of those ugly scenarios of the elephant in the room and here we have it, we're talking. For those out there who are in the same shoes as you or others who are experiencing this right now, what would you say on how we can retool and then reinvent ourselves after experiencing something like this? Because I know that the

audience would love to hear, they're definitely going to be inspired by your story, number one, right? You're brave. You're a brave guy for coming in and talking to me about this. What can we do next?

Vinay Singh: [15:33](#)

Well, that's a very important question, Meghan, because nothing's ... It's not like discrimination is going to stop overnight, so we've got a long way to go. A lot of that has to do with those solutions I put in my book but I'm not, we don't have that kind of time. From what an individual can do, number one, is focus on your LinkedIn profile. That's the business social media. That's where employers are going to first and foremost to hire you. Maybe HR looks at the other things, the other social medias later on, but they are looking at your LinkedIn profile. Is it up-to-date? Are you using the correct buzzwords? Do you have a professional photo and if you don't, you should. Not having a photo at all is a red flag as well. Do you have a banner or is it that plain blue with little dots LinkedIn? That shows you didn't even bother putting up your banner.

Vinay Singh: [16:26](#)

Do you have a vanity URL? If people don't know what that is, like when I send my URL out for LinkedIn, it says Vinay people strategist. That's catchy. That tells people what I do, but a lot of people, they still have that long code. I will tell anybody that is listening. If they reach out to me on LinkedIn, I'm happy to send them a checklist for LinkedIn on how modern day do-all's are for, to get their profile up-to-date, so that's number one. You got to be up-to-date. Two, you should have recommendations. If you have certifications and educations besides your current, your major Bachelor's or your Master's, put them in there. You should have your keywords and the things, your top skills and you should invite colleagues to check them off to boost up your top skills to 99. You can get up to 99 recommendations for your top skills, so there are things that make your profile more attractive.

Vinay Singh: [17:20](#)

It is your digital presence besides your resume, right? Your word doc is your resume. Your digital presence is how people look at you. That's also how recruiters are looking for you. Do you have the right keywords because they're putting in their keyword searches. If you're putting in their search strings and you're not matching up, you're not going to be found. Let's talk about something else. When you do go on an interview, it's important to discuss your top three or four achievements that pertain to that company. I come from a time where we had to every prep candidate.



- Meghan M. Biro: [17:50](#) I'm going to include myself in this group with you because I did the same thing when I was an agency recruiter. Everybody got vetted in that way.
- Vinay Singh: [17:58](#) Exactly. Nobody does that these days. Well, I don't say nobody. It's far and few between. The last X amount of interviews that I've gone to, none of the recruiters did that for me. Look, you're seeing less and less and less human communication and we're going to get ready. A lot more of that is going to happen because Jenny AI is going to be the person that is your new recruiter and she's not human. She is not going to be prepping you the way you want. If you do have a question, she may not answer it because I don't care what anybody says. Chatbots, I know the CEOs that are making these chatbots, they don't do a lot of the things that they say they're supposed to do, but that's normal technology.
- Vinay Singh: [18:38](#) I'll give you a perfect example for the audience. When email came out, it was we were going to be a paperless environment. We use more paper than ever before. When Monster and HotJobs and Dice came out, it was the end of the recruiter. There's more recruiters than ever before. Technology prompts is a lot of things. I'm not sure if they actually deliver or takes decades for the delivering to happen. Make sure if you're going to a defense company, what is it that you did? You got to take the time to make sure that your accomplishments line up. It's so important. Make what you do relevant to them, not what you think is important to you, what is important to them. It's not about you, it's about them.
- Vinay Singh: [19:18](#) The last thing I have to say is the reason why I oftentimes was the number one pick for a job was because of my education. I'm a tech recruiter, but how many recruiters have three or four technology certifications? I don't know many. None of my colleagues ever did, but I'm a Cisco [inaudible 00:19:35] engineer Boot Camp-certified, PeopleSoft-certified, AI-certified, digital marketing-certified. Why are you doing digital marketing? Because I'm multi-disciplined. Check. Hire. It's these kinds of things. Stay in school, get a certification. What's cutting edge that you can learn to put you ... To separate you from the rest of the pack? Always be thinking this way because if you're not, your competition is.
- Meghan M. Biro: [19:59](#) Vinay Singh, thank you for being you and stopping by here and how are people going to reach you after this? What's your email?



This transcript was exported on Nov 08, 2019 - view latest version [here](#).

Vinay Singh: [20:08](#) My email is V-I-N-A-Y 12@optonline, so it's Vinay12@optonline.net and they can reach me on LinkedIn.

Meghan M. Biro: [20:19](#) All right, thank you.

Vinay Singh: [20:21](#) Thank you very much, Meghan.

Meghan M. Biro: [20:27](#) Let's keep talking. Join us for our Work Trends Twitter chat. We are going to be on the Twitters with Vinay Singh on Wednesday, November 13th at 1:30 PM Eastern, 10:30 AM Pacific. Join us to talk about age discrimination and its impact on each of us. If you'd like to get our Twitter chat questions in advance, sign up for our newsletter at talentculture.com.

Meghan M. Biro: [20:57](#) Thanks for listening to Work Trends from Talent Culture. Join us every Wednesday at 1:30 PM Eastern for a live Twitter chat with our podcast guest. To learn more about guests featured on today's show, visit the show notes for this episode at talentculture.com and help us spread the word. Subscribe to Work Trends wherever you listen to podcasts, leave us a rating, review in iTunes, share Work Trends with your coworkers, your friends. Look forward to it. See you next time.