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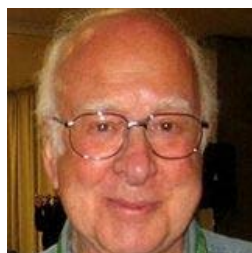
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From the Department of Dead Wood

Who Would Hire Higgs?

By Beryl Lief Benderly
December 09, 2013

If [Peter Higgs](#) were a young physicist looking for a faculty job today, would anyone give his CV a second glance? The octogenarian Nobel laureate, world renowned for proposing the existence of the particle known as the [Higgs boson](#), thinks not, [The Guardian](#) reports.

Low productivity, Higgs believes, would sink his chances for an academic post in today's job market. In the 49 years since he wrote the [papers](#) laying out what physicists now call the Higgs model, he has "published fewer than 10 papers," [The Guardian](#) notes.

Fortunately for his career, at the time Higgs did his groundbreaking work he had a faculty post at the University of Edinburgh, where he is now a professor emeritus. His scanty publication record made him "an embarrassment to the department when they did research assessment exercises," he says, as quoted in [The Guardian](#). Only a 1980 nomination for the Nobel Prize kept him from being let go, he told the paper.

Given today's severe pressure for productivity, and universities' propensity to judge scientists' value by the length of their publication list, Higgs said to [The Guardian](#), he finds it "difficult to imagine how I would ever have enough peace and quiet in the present sort of climate to do what I did in 1964." (Related: "[Give Science Some Slack](#).")

Beryl Lief Benderly writes from Washington, D.C.

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