



Building the Best Organizations in the Insurance Industry

STRATEGIES FOR USING, RECRUITING, RETAINING OLDER WORKERS

By: Beyond.com

More and more employers are finding it cost effective to utilize retirees hired on a part-time or project assignment basis for hard to fill openings. Retirees generally need less training and have a better work ethic and will often take a part-time or temporary assignment for far less than the hourly rate they commanded when they were working full-time. Employers usually do not have to pay benefits for these hires so hiring retirees is a win-win for employer and retiree. This article will provide supporting data for these cost savings as well as recruiting methodologies.

Background

Few employers are preparing for the coming retirement of boomers in great numbers. As these employees retire a great deal of experience and knowledge will be lost. Most employers have not yet instituted programs to retain these boomers and even fewer employers have put programs in place to recruit retired seniors with the needed experience and knowledge to fill coming vacancies.

Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes

The perception that older workers are less productive than younger ones is false. Numerous studies and research have shown that older workers' productivity does not fall but rises because of greater dependability, better judgment and accuracy. Studies have shown older workers actually miss less work than younger workers and can learn new techniques and technologies effectively.

Advantages of Hiring Older Workers

Most older workers have a better work ethic, are more dependable, tend to be more loyal and are more appreciative of having a job and care about doing a "good" job.

A study conducted by AARP identifies older workers' assets (compared to younger) as having and being:

- Lower absenteeism - Punctual
- Less likelihood to change jobs - Commitment to quality
- Superior customer service skills - Better people skills
- More eager to learn new skills – Positive attitude
- Experienced

How Some Employers Effectively Engage and Keep Mature Workers

The cost of retaining older workers is often substantially less than replacing them when all costs of hiring and training are included.

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Employers have used the following to both keep current seniors interested in continuing to work as well as interest retirees in working for them.

1. Allow seniors to work more flexible hours.
2. Allow seniors to work part-time jobs or temporary assignments. Managers and executives can work project assignments.
3. Allow seniors to work from home or remotely (telecommuting) part or all of the time.
4. Create job sharing programs for seniors.
5. Outsource the task of hiring and employing seniors and retirees you wish to return to work or continuing working if this is a difficult program to initiate internally.
6. Money is not necessarily the most important factor for seniors. Seniors need recognition and support. If a senior employee is doing a good job make sure to say so. Reinforce their efforts by telling senior workers you care about them. Ask for their input and use it. Their experience can be of great value. Give them support if they make an error.
7. Set goals, communicate them effectively and give accolades when these goals are met.
8. Set up training programs to assist and coach hiring managers to initiate talks with retirement eligible employees without subjecting the company to problems of age discrimination.
9. Have younger or new employees involved in shadowing programs to learn from firsthand experience the skills and see how retiring employees perform their duties and handle their job functions.

Resources

- YourEncore.com provides assistance primarily in the areas of researchers & chemists.
- Temp firms that have divisions that specialize in staffing utilizing seniors.
- Green Thumb a leading non-profit provider of training and placement services for mature and disadvantaged workers partners.
- National Council on Aging, or NCOA, has a full department dedicated to Workforce-Development. Branded under the name, MaturityWorks, this department works to increase awareness of the viability of older employees and provides direction to companies on how to maximize their value.
- Work with local chapters of AARP.

Reaching Older Workers

Many older workers will not apply for positions that may be appropriate for them as they often feel they will be discriminated against because of their age. That is a good reason to go to media that targets seniors. It is also a reason to craft a message tailored to a senior audience.



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- Try internet sites like: RetiredBrains.com, seniors4hire.org, retirementjobs.com, retireecareers.com, seniorjobbank.org, seniorhelpwanted.com, ncoa.org
- Direct mail lists that are targeted to a senior audience
- Senior publications
- Alumni magazines
- Radio programming for the senior audience
- Special issues or sections of newspapers that target seniors
- Employee referral programs targeting seniors with the skills and experienced needed

To assist you, chose appropriate media and craft a message to best reach older workers. Consider working with a recruitment communications firm that has expertise in this area. Check out the firm you are currently working with to see if they offer this expertise. Some of the background material for this article was researched by the Mature Market Group of JWT Specialized Communications which specializes in the senior market.

One of the biggest problems facing many employers is that each has areas where they are most anxious to keep seniors from retiring while at the same time there are other areas where retirement is cost effective and early retirement programs are encouraged. This is a slippery slope that can cause employers huge litigation, problems not only with government agencies, but with their workforce. It can also generate bad publicity that can cause millions of dollars in lost revenue. Caution is advised. Work with professionals who have experience in this area!