



COMPENDIUM OF STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES



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Table of Contents

- Introduction** 2
 - Aging Workers and the Multigenerational Workforce..... 3
 - Older Workers in New York City..... 4
 - Perspectives of Older New Yorkers and Employers in New York City 6
 - Implications for Public Policy..... 6
 - The Opportunity7

- Age Smart Strategies and Practices: A Review of the Evidence** 8
 - Methodology..... 9
 - Age Smart Employer Strategies10
 - Effectively Recruit Older Workers..... 10
 - Optimize the Performance and Productivity of Older Workers 13
 - Reduce Unwanted Turnover by Boosting Engagement of Older Workers25
 - Retain Older Workers While Controlling Health Costs33
 - Promote Meaningful and Streamlined Transitions from Work to Retirement37

- Conclusion** 40

- Appendices** 38
 - Appendix A-Age Smart Employer Research Advisory Panel 38
 - Appendix B-Interviews and Consultations..... 38

- References**..... 42

Introduction

In 2012, The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) was awarded a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to develop and launch a new awards program for New York City employers who promote policies and practices that benefit multigenerational workforces and enhance business success. This awards program is an extension of *Age-friendly NYC*, a public-private partnership to make New York City a better place to grow old. New York City's position as a global leader in commerce, media, and in the Age-friendly Cities movement heightens the visibility of the award and magnifies the attention to the issue of the aging workforce. The Age Smart Employer Award is the first awards program to recognize the importance of generational diversity in the NYC workforce and in particular, to highlight the positive significance of older workers. The awards program will celebrate "age-smart" New York City employers, both for-profit and non-profit, who value and optimize the contributions of older adults. "Age-smart workplaces" are defined herein as "workplaces with practices that optimize the talents of older workers and create environments that capitalize on age-diverse workforces in order to grow and thrive."

The *Age-friendly NYC* initiative is a public-private partnership between NYAM, the Office of the Mayor, and the New York City Council dedicated to making New York City a better place to grow old by promoting active engagement in all aspects of city life. In 2007-2008, *Age-friendly NYC* conducted extensive consultations with older New Yorkers and convened roundtable panels of experts representing key domains of city life (including education, business, real estate, transportation, social services, and civic engagement), and reported the findings in 2009.¹ A high-level, multi-sectoral Commission for an Age-friendly New York City, seated in 2010 and staffed by NYAM, has engaged businesses, colleges and universities, neighborhoods, cultural institutions, government agencies, and various professions with initiatives to use an "age-in-everything lens." *Age-friendly NYC's* contributions to older New Yorkers have attracted widespread attention locally, nationally, and internationally and the program has become a model for similar efforts in other cities. Through *Age-friendly NYC*, New York City was the first city to be recognized by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network of Age Friendly Cities, a network of more than 100 cities around the world.

Because of the importance of older adults as consumers and workers, and the centrality of the business community driving policy, business has been a major focus of the initiative. The Age-friendly Commission formed a business work group and has developed relationships with leaders from the NYC business community. Current projects of the *Age-friendly NYC Local Business Initiative* include an outreach and educational campaign that help more than a thousand businesses to better attract and serve older customers. In 2011, *Age-friendly NYC* co-sponsored a successful symposium that focused on challenges and solutions for preparing for an aging workforce. These and other efforts reflect the recognition on the part of NYAM that successful aging requires effective strategies that enhance the economic well-being of older adults and facilitate their contribution to a healthy economy.

Aging Workers and the Multigenerational Workforce

Population aging is a global phenomenon fueled by increased longevity and declining birth rates. For the first time in history, the proportion of older adults in developed countries is growing faster than the proportion of young people. In the United States, life expectancy has increased by nearly 30 years in the last century and people who reach the age of 65 are likely to live approximately 20 more years. The “longevity bonus,” largely a result of advances in public health, education, and medicine, is expected to increase in years to come; indeed, many of today’s toddlers will live to see the next century. Today’s older adults are significantly healthier, better educated, and living longer than previous older cohorts. Most expect and/or need to continue working well past traditional retirement ages, either as full-time or part-time employees, or hope to ‘phase’ into retirement through gradual reductions in workload or hours.

Although workforces have historically been multigenerational, the proportion and number of workers 55 and older have been relatively small in the past. But with the aging of the “baby boomers” (approximately 79 million people ages 48-66 as of 2012) and the common intent to remain working past retirement age, adults 55 and older will become the fastest growing segment of the workforce. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) projects that adults 55 and older in the workforce will grow from 19% to approximately 25% of the total labor force between 2010 and 2020.² The population of adults 65 years and older in the workforce will grow by 75% over the next decade, whereas workers in the 25-54 age range will grow only by 2%.³ The desire on the part of many older workers to stay in the workforce, combined with the growth in knowledge-based jobs associated with minimal physical demands and the increasing reliance on part-time or contract positions attractive to many older adults, suggests that older workers may prove increasingly valuable to employers, assuming that their skills sets match demand. Moreover, the generational cohort immediately following the boomers (known as GenX) is only 60% as large (48 million versus 79 million), which suggests that employers are likely to need extended work lives from middle-aged and older employees, particularly in certain sectors.

Older workers offer experience and expertise. As a group, they are viewed by managers and HR professionals as highly motivated and responsible, and generally more reliable, loyal, and superior in interpersonal and communication skills than younger workers.⁴ Additionally, older workers mirror the aging population and can relate well to today’s growing “silver” customer base.⁵ But they also present challenges. Older adults generally incur higher health costs (though they also tend to have fewer dependents, which may mitigate the cost of their health care) and salaries may be higher if a premium is paid for length of service. As a group, they are technologically less savvy than younger generations, and many learn at a slower pace or with different methods than younger colleagues. Anecdotal reports of older workers who have “retired while still working” or are resistant to change may not reflect the norm (in fact, the research suggests otherwise) but may represent a minority segment of the older worker population.

Adapting to an aging workforce (and society) is made more challenging by the reality that negative attitudes towards aging are pervasive and public role models for productive aging are scarce (despite the fact that many older adults are innovators). Today's workplace is driven by globalization, virtually instant communications, and increasingly high-pressured competitiveness, demanding rapid response and adaptability to change. Employers are concerned about ability of older workers to adapt.

In sum, employers are faced with integrating an increasingly large demographic with strengths and limitations into a diverse workforce during a challenging economic period. Cognizant of these challenges, the Age Smart Employer Awards rewards innovation by recognizing that development and adoption of new practices and policies requires vision and investment.

This report provides New York City employers (both for-profits and nonprofits) with a resource to create age-friendly workplaces and forms the basis for the Age Smart Employer award criteria. It includes a review of relevant literature and gathered expert opinion on practices and policies that contribute to an age-friendly workplace, and also evaluates and reports on the strength of evidence and the effects of the practice on employers and employees.

Older Workers in New York City

New York City's economy is anchored by the financial, insurance, education, health care, and real estate industries and the sub-industries that support them. As of 2011, the city's labor force is 4 million and there are roughly 3.7 million jobs.⁶ Sectors (as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) that hold the greatest share of these jobs include education and health services (21%); professional and business services (16%); trade, transportation, and utilities (15%); and government (15%).⁷ Reflecting the larger national trends, older adults play an increasing and significant role in New York City's workforce. According to an analysis of 2011 data by the Fiscal Policy Institute, New York City's workforce includes almost 700,000 adults ages 55 and older, comprising 18.3% of the total workforce.⁸ Workers 45-54 comprise an additional 20% of the city's workforce, so the number and proportion of the total workforce comprised of older workers can be expected to increase. The majority of older workers in the city (60.2%) are employed in the top industries in the city, including medical, professional services, entertainment, retail sales, finance, and education.⁹ However, older adults hold a disproportionate percentage of jobs (greater than 20%) in the following industries: manufacturing, transportation, education, medical, social services, and public administration. In those industries with high proportions of older workers projected to grow (medical and social services), the concentration of older workers suggests the need to extend the careers of older workers or risk impending skills shortages.

Older workers in New York City hold approximately 25% of all jobs in occupations including health ser-

vices, cleaning services, and production workers (i.e., food processing; textile, apparel, and furnishings; jewelers and precious stone workers).¹⁰ These occupations disproportionately fulfilled by older workers are vital to New York City's economy. For example, production workers include the food production workers that support the growing food manufacturing sector; health services include home health aides, which is the fastest growing occupation and is critical to the health care sector; and cleaning services include maids, housekeepers, janitors, and building maintenance, which support a variety of economic drivers including the city's thriving tourism sector. Further, occupations in education and social services anchor the city's thriving nonprofit sector, which is the largest sector of employment outside of government and comprises world-renowned cultural institutions, colleges, and universities, as well as human services agencies.¹¹

The snapshot of older workers mirrors the overall bifurcation of the NYC workforce: older workers hold significant employment share in both the well-remunerated knowledge-based industries and in service industries that require low skills and pay low wages. A 2012 report from the CUNY Jobs Task Force¹² examining job growth potential among various industries suggests that anticipated job growth areas will continue to amplify the bifurcated workforce with distinctly different wage levels and educational needs:

- Knowledge-based industries are generating jobs with good wage profiles at faster than average rates, fueled by increasing reliance on new technologies, regulation-sensitive industries (which increases the need for auditing, compliance, and administrative skills), population aging, and health care reform (which drives job growth in the ambulatory care settings).
- Service jobs, which typically pay low wages and require relatively low skills, are also growing rapidly: home health aides and personal aides are the fastest growing job categories in NYC, fueled by population aging.

The projected growth in both knowledge-based and low-skilled jobs suggests that there will be employment opportunities for many older New Yorkers, including skilled and knowledge-based workers as well as relatively unskilled workers with low wage job histories. We recognize, however, that some of the more physically demanding, low-skilled jobs (e.g., home health aides) may prove unsuitable for many older workers. The least prepared older adults seeking employment are those among the long-term unemployed. Although employers may play some role in subsidizing targeted training programs for this segment, public workforce development programs and/or public-private training programs are likely to be necessary to increase the employability of this population.

Perspectives of Older New Yorkers and Employers in New York City

When NYAM staff conducted community consultations with more than 2,000 older adults in 2007, many New Yorkers of “retirement age” found the prospect of full retirement neither financially viable nor personally desirable. Financial needs were the driving motivation for many, and reflected the erosion of assured retirement income and benefits (e.g., defined benefit plans or retiree health benefits), limited savings, and/or investment losses. Those who valued work for non-financial reasons derived a sense of identity and purpose through work and appreciated the way in which work kept them socially connected to a larger world. We also found important variations in the kinds of challenges that older New Yorkers faced. For many, the lack of adequate computer skills and/or access to training is a major barrier to remaining competitive on the job or obtaining new jobs. Older adults identified several challenges to employment (continued or new), including the perceived reluctance to hire older workers, the need for skills upgrading, the pressures of balancing work-life issues (e.g., caregiving responsibilities), functional limitations (related to aging or chronic disease), and the desire for “bridge” jobs that supported a gradual transition to eventual retirement.

The view from business experts was also mixed. In the consultations held in 2007 and 2008 prior to the recession, some experts expressed concern about the potential exit of older adults from the workplace and worried about how to replace specific knowledge or skill sets, experience, institutional memory, and excellent work ethic. Others acknowledged struggling with various issues including the recruitment and training needs of older workers, accommodating the changing needs of older employees, restructuring benefits to support more flexibility, facilitating better relationships between multiple generations within the workforce, and creating mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between generations of workers.

However, conversations conducted with employers in 2011-2012 indicate that since the recession, their concern about retaining or hiring older workers has noticeably diminished. This is supported by reports since 2009 indicating that employers are less likely to hire older workers than younger workers, and that displaced older workers remain unemployed for far longer periods than younger workers.^{13, 14}

Implications for Public Policy

Although the Age Smart Employer awards program focuses on the practices of New York City employers, we recognize that innovations in federal public policy are also needed. Society has much to gain from the continued contributions of older workers. Delayed retirement can reduce the strain on Social Security and other social insurance systems; in turn, longer work lives will generate increased consumer spending, which drives economic growth and new job creation. However, many social and economic policies are built around the concept of an abrupt retirement from full-time work status at a particular age, with relatively few incentives to support transitional and extended work periods.

Specific retirement age in the U.S. has increased slightly, ranging from 62 for partial Social Security benefits to 67 for full benefits; however, the rise in retirement age does not adequately correspond to the increase in longevity. Current laws regulating Social Security, for example, penalize early retirement by deferring partial benefits for those earning above a set limit. Innovative policies might explore initiatives to support phased retirement and “bridge” jobs.

Similarly, according to some economists, Medicare as a secondary payer legislation (which mandates that employer-sponsored health insurance at organizations with at least twenty employees must be the primary payer) creates an implicit tax on work for older employees. More importantly, since older workers have higher health costs, this policy creates a disincentive for employers to hire or retain older workers. Employees (as well as employers) might be better served by allowing Medicare to serve as the primary payer; increased income tax receipts are likely to offset some portion of additional Medicare costs.¹⁵ In addition, having more older workers will add healthy beneficiaries to the Medicare risk pool, further spreading the costs of less healthy beneficiaries.

The Opportunity

The issue of aging workers and a multigenerational workforce is a change factor that many organizations in New York City have been slow to acknowledge. Older workers, who already comprise a significant part of the workforce, will rapidly grow in numbers over the next two decades. There are advantages to employers in retaining and hiring older workers: most offer a strong work ethic, skills, and experience; they can meet the immediate labor demands of employers; and they can help industries identify opportunities to capitalize on the emerging “*silver economy*”¹⁶ (a term that refers to economic growth related to population aging). In some industries, retaining older workers will be a necessary strategy to prevent labor shortages and loss of skilled workers.

To effectively accommodate an aging workforce, employers can implement a range of strategies to recruit older workers, optimize the performance and productivity of older workers, reduce unwanted turnover by boosting the engagement of older workers, retain older workers and control health costs, and promote meaningful and streamlined transitions from work to retirement. As a city that sets trends, New York has the opportunity to be the vanguard in developing and demonstrating innovative approaches to optimize the new multigenerational workplace as part of a 21st century business strategy.

AGE SMART STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES:
A REVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

Age Smart Strategies and Practices: A Review of the Evidence

This report provides a review of practices considered to be age-smart in several key workplace domains; all practices considered are currently in use by major employers. The practice areas reviewed in this report include recruitment, training and professional development, management training and tools, knowledge transfer and mentoring, work processes and ergonomics, flexibility, caregiving benefits, wellness programs, and financial and retirement planning. We note that the relevance of these areas is by no means exclusive to older workers. In fact, in many cases, the same practices that are “age-smart” for older workers are also “age-smart” for workers of all ages.

We recognize that for companies to justify investments in attention, time, and/or money toward the implementation of age-smart practices, such practices must support larger organizational goals and priorities. We have therefore grouped these practices according to their capacity to achieve specific workforce goals (e.g., reduce unwanted turnover, improve performance, promote engagement, reduce health care costs, etc.). We have examined outcomes in terms of the reported impact on, respectively, employers, older workers, and society at large, and evaluated the strength of evidence supporting these claims. In many cases what works for one group also serves the interest of all; flex options, for example, are viewed as beneficial to workers of all ages, employers, and society at large. In other areas, more data is needed to understand the value of specific practices to different stakeholders; the significance of knowledge transfer, for example, has been demonstrated within specific organizations but not necessarily studied in terms of broader social and economic implications. Evidence supporting the effectiveness of these practices may come from quasi- or naturally occurring experiments, quantitative and qualitative research, expert opinion, and anecdotal reports. The strength of evidence is assessed and rated as follows:

- **Strong:** Companies and/or outside experts have assessed and documented changes attributed to specific practices, companies self-report positive response to practices based on employee surveys or management-level feedback, *and* the practice is supported by expert opinion
- **Promising:** Limited examples of positive impact based on company self-report, *and* the practice is supported by expert opinion
- **Anecdotal:** Limited examples of positive impact based on company self-report

Methodology

Information for this report was derived from a review of recent academic and professional literature from relevant fields (aging, business, organizational theory, psychology, occupational health, and health economics) as well as business and public reports regarding aging, employment, and employer strategies to prepare for an aging workforce. Group consultations were held with thought leaders in various fields including economics, business, aging and workforce development (Appendix A). Further, consultations were conducted with older adults (employed and unemployed); employers; key informants regarding diversity, organizational management, and employee benefits; and business experts in New York City (Appendix B).

Age Smart Employer Strategies

EFFECTIVELY RECRUIT OLDER WORKERS



Some companies, such as Fidelity and CVS, have prioritized hiring older adults to better reflect and serve their growing older consumer base. Others, such as Marriott, made a strategic decision to recruit older workers based on positive experience with older workers and their growing recognition of the trend towards extended work lives. However, one obstacle to effective recruitment has been the fact that older adults are more likely to have limited Internet access or computer skills, and are therefore less likely to search or apply for new job opportunities via the Internet. Age-smart employers have developed several practices to recruit older workers more effectively, which include partnering with community-based educational and non-profit organizations, using staffing services that attract older workers, advertising at “senior job fairs,” and including explicit age-friendly language in job advertising (i.e., “mature workers welcome” or “excellent opportunity for retirees”). Note that although the Age Discrimination Employment Act generally affirms age-neutrality in areas of employment, the statute permits discrimination in favor of older employees. Simply put, an employer can target job ads to retirees without violating ADEA.¹⁷

Age-smart Recruitment Models

CVS CAREMARK CORPORATION, a nationwide retail pharmacy and health care company with more than 200,000 employees, realized they could enhance relations with their growing base of older customers by increasing their pool of older talent. Their “Talent is Ageless” program, launched in 2003, targets mature workers to fill positions in retail stores, distribution centers, customer service call centers, mail order pharmacies, specialty pharmacies, and support centers. CVS Caremark partnered with local and national community-based organizations to reach a wide range of older adults and developed recruitment literature that explicitly welcomed job applicants ages 50-99 and affirmed their commitment to an age-diverse workplace representing adults of all ages. The program offers flexible part-time options, including changing geographic locations to fit the seasonal migrations of some older adults (e.g., “snowbirds”). Recognizing that many potential candidates became discouraged when trying to navigate online screening procedures, CVS Caremark began providing pre-application technology training, which enabled interested candidates to complete the screening process. They also paired new hires with an experienced older worker for the first 4-6 weeks to orient and mentor the new hire. Reported outcomes include increasing the percentage of 50-plus workers to approximately 20% as of March 2012, and enhanced customer satisfaction.¹⁸

FIDELITY (FMR LLC), a worldwide financial services corporation with approximately 40,000 employees, identified an opportunity to enhance customer satisfaction in their retirement products call

centers by hiring older adults. They noticed that their retirement customers seemed comfortable discussing personal and financial matters with their age peers. The company also recognized that part-time workers would be better able to handle the influx of calls to their call-center during peak calling times. In response, they developed a recruitment strategy explicitly seeking mature workers, targeting retirees seeking additional income and flexible work schedules. Reported outcomes included increased job access for older adults and increased customer satisfaction.¹⁹

ADECCO S.A., a global professional staffing and talent development company with approximately 33,000 employees, created the “Renaissance” program to promote the temporary employment of mature workers, including retirees seeking additional income. Adecco also provides training in computer technology and popular office software, career coaching (including resume writing and interviewing skills), comprehensive benefits, and flexible work schedules.²⁰



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations developed by the Sloan Center for Aging and Work and the United States General Accountability Office regarding the development and implementation of age-friendly recruitment practices and policies.^{21,22}

To recruit older workers, organizations can:

- Identify opportunities for older adults to support organizational missions and/or business strategy
- Explicitly state in job notices that mature workers are welcome
- Educate managers and HR leaders to identify and address misconceptions about older workers
- Create non-virtual, alternative pathways for job applicants
- Partner with community-based and/or educational organizations to reach older adults
- Provide technology training as part of the job applicant screening process to ensure access to a wide possible pool of talent
- Use older adults as interns to try out the ‘job fit’

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers and older workers

There is strong evidence^{23, 24, 25} generated from the Sloan Center on Aging and Work and the Metlife Mature Market Institute with David DeLong and Associates that age-smart recruitment strategies can effectively identify and recruit appropriate older candidates and increase job opportunities for older adults. This is based on case studies and expert opinion. However, much of the data relates to part-time opportunities. More research is necessary to identify effective strategies for generating full-time job opportunities.



Value to society

Effective recruitment programs targeting older workers help to generate additional tax revenues and reduce public expenditures associated with unemployment.

OPTIMIZE THE PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY OF OLDER WORKERS



Productivity and performance of older workers can be optimized through the use of several strategies, as detailed below. Training and career development through standard workplace practices are utilized less for older workers according to some reports. This is due in part to perceptions that “old dogs can’t learn new tricks” or that their work horizon is too short to justify additional attention. However, contrary to this conventional thinking, older workers are actually more likely to stay longer with an employer than young adults,²⁶ and therefore investments in training and developing older workers are likely to yield significant returns on investment.

Experts recommend the development and universal application of performance metrics to ensure optimal performance and job fit for employees of all ages. This approach to performance management empowers supervisors to be more proactive in identifying and addressing under-performance as well as recognizing high performance. As noted by Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, Director of the Sloan Center on Aging and Work, “the concern about age discrimination is diminished if high performance standards and the assessment of fit are equitably applied to employees of all ages.”²⁷

Specific strategies to boost the productivity and performance of older workers include the use of training and development, management training, employee resource groups (an organizationally supported group of employees drawn together by characteristics that the group holds in common), knowledge transfer and mentoring, and ergonomic design.

Training and Development

As the Urban Institute (among others) has noted, the emergence of an increasingly knowledge-based and globalized economy means that “to remain productive workers must continuously maintain and update their skills, especially when technology is changing rapidly.”²⁸ Yet studies conducted in the past two decades consistently indicate that many employers neglect opportunities to invest in training for older adults or develop their careers.²⁹ Age-smart strategies to increase access to training and development for older workers may be age-neutral (e.g., opportunities offered to all appropriate employees) or age-sensitive (e.g., initiatives that target middle-aged and older workers). Both strategies have been shown to improve job performance, increase in-house promotions, and improve retention rates among valued older workers. Some research indicates differences in generational learning preferences (i.e., older adults are more likely to prefer in-person or small group trainings to self-administered webinars) and that some learning tasks may take older workers longer compared to younger workers; however, there are wide variations within generational cohorts.³⁰

Age-smart Training and Professional Development Models

CENTRAL BAPTIST HOSPITAL, a major health care and educational institution in Kentucky, prioritized investment in training and development opportunities for middle-aged and older nurses in response to a workforce analysis that revealed that nearly 50% of their workforce was at least 40 years old. In order to increase retention and promote leadership skills to ensure sustainability, they used both age-sensitive and age-neutral career development strategies. A “Senior Nurse Advisory Council” was established to advise and guide the development of age-sensitive training and development tools. Central Baptist Hospital also provides access to basic leadership training to all staff through their “Evolving Leaders” program.³¹ Reported outcomes include high satisfaction based on employee surveys and increased in-house promotions.³²

CVS CAREMARK developed special training and support programs to facilitate the job entry and initial learning phase for newly hired older workers. Seeing a need for an age-sensitive approach, they customized technological systems to make them more user-friendly and provided peer mentors to help new older workers with skills training and acclimation to the organizational culture. Reported outcomes include smoother starts and improved job performance.

DELOITTE’S MASS CAREER CUSTOMIZATION (MCC) requires managers to regularly discuss professional development needs and preferences with all employees. This age-neutral approach eliminates risk of discrimination and ensures opportunities for employees to identify professional aspirations and new opportunities. Reported outcomes include increased employee engagement, more cost-effective recruitment, and less unwanted turnover.³³



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations developed by the Society for Human Resources Management, The Conference Board, career development experts, and experts in older adult learning for organizations interested in implementing age-friendly training and development programs: ^{34, 35, 36, 37}

- Create an age-neutral approach to enable workers of all ages to receive appropriate training and professional development.
- Look for opportunities to develop late-career employees who are likely to continue working beyond traditional retirement age; provide new or upgraded skills and/or lateral career moves.

- Recognize and adapt materials to suit individual and generational preferences in learning styles.
- Provide a range of training options (e.g., webinars, in-person or Skype sessions, online discussion groups) to ensure that all employees, including older workers, will have access to appropriate teaching tools; this not only supports better learning but also communicates a strong message of age-inclusivity to employees.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers and employees



There is promising evidence^{38,39,40} generated by the Society for Human Resource Management and career development experts that providing training and development to workers (including older workers) is linked to increased employee engagement and promotes career growth for all workers based on limited case reports and supported by expert opinion. There is also anecdotal evidence based on limited case reports that investing in middle-aged and older workers reduces unwanted turnover for employers.



Value to society

Training and professional development initiatives may increase the employability and maintain economic earning capacity of older workers, which will promote economic growth, according to economists with the Program on the Global Demography on Aging at Harvard University.⁴¹

Management Training and Tools

Today's workplace is increasingly characterized by the presence of three and four generations of people working side by side coupled with a substantial and growing percentage of older workers, many of whom are now reporting to their juniors. If not effectively addressed, age diversity and generational tensions in the workplace may increase turnover rates, lessen organizational commitment, and decrease employee engagement.^{42,43} Faced with the challenge of creating cohesive, functioning organizational cultures capable of bridging generation gaps, organizations use several strategies including management training, education around age diversity, and promoting age-related employee resource groups. A 2012 study conducted by the Families and Work Institute found that 50% of companies provide age-related training for supervisors.⁴⁴ Luke Visconti, president of DiversityINC, commenting on the growing inclusion of age as a diversity issue, noted that "intergenerational tensions, biases, and communication gaps have similar causes to issues surrounding race, gender, sexual orientation,

and disability” and can be improved using proven diversity management tools.⁴⁵ Age-based employee resource groups can also be effective vehicles for leveraging the value of diversity by providing networking, professional development, and a mirror into the needs of the growing older consumer market.

Age-smart Management Training & Tools

- Marriott’s Aging Workforce Program includes an “Intergenerational Toolkit for Managers” that includes articles, audio clips of Marriott managers and HR professionals sharing stories and tips, and additional resources. Marriott’s Aging Workforce Project also provides discussion guides to help managers facilitate age-sensitive discussions during staff meetings and other associate gatherings.⁴⁶
- Central Baptist Hospital offers “Multigenerational Training” for employees; these participatory trainings address the differences in generational communication styles and worldviews, and give employees an opportunity to share perceptions around issues of age and generation.⁴⁷
- Sodexo, an international food service corporation with approximately 380,000 employees, formed a cross-generational employee resource group to address age diversity and promote intergenerational understanding in the workplace. “It’s not like Gen-Xers and Gen-Yers need to be like their baby boomer boss,” said Chris Weiser, who leads the group. “It’s not about baby boomers having to learn to text 140 words a minute. It’s about understanding that everyone has some style differences.”⁴⁸
- Wells Fargo, a multinational diversified financial services company with approximately 270,000 employees, formed generational ERGs, including a “Boomers Network” to support professional development, education, and awareness around age-related issues, community service, and to serve as a business resource. The Boomers Network was created when executives realized that “boomer” employees were likely to postpone retirement for financial reasons and wanted to ensure their continued engagement and development. Professional development programs include on- and off-site courses and certificate programs offered in conjunction with a local university. Reported outcomes include positive feedback from older workers and promotions based on the acquisition of new skills.⁴⁹
- One technology company sponsors an ERG for 50-plus employees that allows

members to network and share support around age-related issues, including dealing with younger colleagues. The group also educates managers and executives about age-related work issues (e.g., recruitment, training, and accessibility) as well as opportunities to reach the growing older customer market. In one instance, they were able to alert company designers in the early phase of a new product launch that the new products needed to be more age-friendly, noting “the low contrast and small font size made it difficult for us to use.” Their input motivated the company to reassess their design procedures to engage their accessibility team earlier in the process, in order to maximize market response to new products.⁵⁰



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations derived from research and consultations with experts from AARP, DiversityInc, the Metlife Mature Market Institute, Cisco, and the IBM Center for the Business of Government regarding practices and policies for the effective management of the multigenerational workplace.^{51, 52, 53, 54, 55}

- Identify and communicate the business case for active management of multi-generational workplace issues to both management and staff.
- Provide training and education about ageism and generational differences to help identify concerns, correct misperceptions, and build age-inclusive work relationships.
- Apply proven techniques to address age as a diversity issue, including measurements via engagement surveys, benchmarking, senior management goal setting, structured mentoring effective resource groups, and explicit accountability to top management for closing those gaps.
- Establish an age-friendly culture that recognizes the value of age-diversity, acknowledges age as a multidimensional issue, and promotes inclusivity and mutual respect.
- Develop age-related and cross-generational employee resource groups to empower employees of all ages, promote cross-generational relationships, and establish age diversity as an organizational value.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers

There is strong evidence^{56, 57} that empowering employees through employee resource groups (ERGs) can increase engagement, support career development, and support business growth; this evidence is not specific to older workers (about whom data is more limited). There is promising evidence^{58, 59} regarding the value of ERGs specific to older workers as a means to support business strategy and employee engagement, based on case reports, key informant interviews, and expert opinion. There is promising evidence,^{60, 61} based on limited case reports and expert opinion, regarding the value of including age as a diversity issue in order to support older workers within the workplace.



Value to older employees

There is promising evidence^{62, 63} that age-related ERGs can provide support, enhance networking, and increase employee engagement, based on case reports, key informant interviews, and expert opinion.

There is anecdotal evidence^{64, 65} regarding the value of multigenerational management training and the inclusion of age as a diversity issue as a means to support the well-being of older employees, based on case reports.



Value to society

Research shows that intergroup contact can lead to positive attitudes and can be effective in reducing prejudice.⁶⁶ Multigenerational ERGs facilitate exchanges among workers of all ages, and such interactions could help change ageist attitudes.

Knowledge Transfer and Mentoring

Knowledge transfer practices have been shown to help ensure the sustainability of organizations, shorten the learning curve for newly hired and newly promoted employees, develop new leadership, and retool older workers.⁶⁷ A 2011 survey of HR managers found that although 63% were “very” or “somewhat” concerned about the risk of losing critical knowledge with the anticipated retirement of many older workers, most had not implemented plans to ensure the systematic transfer of knowledge from older workers.⁶⁸ David DeLong, author of *Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce*, suggests that knowledge loss is likely to remain an invisible threat unless organizations undertake a “knowledge audit” to identify and prioritize specific types of knowledge at high risk for loss.⁶⁹

Types of knowledge important to organizational sustainability may include institutional knowledge, relationship knowledge, job knowledge, tacit knowledge, and historical knowledge. Methods of knowledge transfer may include audio/video interviews, storytelling, electronic storage, and debriefings of exiting employees. Although this process is important for organizational sustainability, DeLong notes that many older employees may view knowledge transfer programs as a threat to job security. However, when managed well, employees may welcome the opportunity to leave a legacy of knowledge.

Mentoring, a method of knowledge transfer that leverages relationship building, may develop informally or be structured through formal individual or group mentor programs. Research indicates that both mentors and mentees benefit from the experience, as measured in employee engagement, promotions, and retention.⁷⁰ Reverse mentoring (i.e., pairing younger workers with older workers, usually to teach older workers about new technology tools) effectively transfers knowledge while building intergenerational rapport; it is now considered a “best practice” at major companies including GE, Time Warner, and Dell.⁷¹

Age-smart Knowledge Transfer & Mentoring Models

THE BOSTON SCIENTIFIC CORPORATION, a multinational company employing approximately 24,000 people, develops, manufactures and markets medical devices. Through a “knowledge audit,” the company was able to identify and locate critical skill sets, including some that were held by only a small group of older workers. They prioritized the need to distribute critical skills across an age-diverse workforce, planned systematic transfer practices, and invested significant and ongoing time to achieve identified targets. An important element to ensure effectiveness and employee engagement was communicating to older adults that knowledge transfer did not threaten their jobs, but rather reinforced their value to the company. Within the first year of operations, the project achieved 60% of its goal to capture specific skill sets.⁷²

CENTRAL BAPTIST HOSPITAL developed a structured mentoring program to support the development of less experienced nurses, using retired nurses as “career coaches.” The program was driven by the hospital’s recognition that they needed more nurses capable of assuming more responsibility. The structured program includes an assessment of skills and interests, identification of potential career directions, and development of action plans to achieve goals. Participation in the program is voluntary, informal, and confidential. Reported outcomes include increased percentage of nurses attaining promotions and/or pursuing additional education.⁷³

GENERAL ELECTRIC pioneered reverse mentoring on a company-wide scale in 1999 when Jack Welch ordered 600 executives to partner with younger employees in order to learn how to surf the

Internet. Welch himself participated in the program. Reported outcomes included increased Internet literacy among older executives and increased opportunities for career networking and leadership development for younger employees.⁷⁴

CVS CAREMARK established a community-based mentoring program called the Senior Pharmacists Legacy Mentoring Program, which links trained pharmacists with middle school and high school students. The company's business goal is to interest young people in the pharmacy profession and create a positive relationship with CVS to support their future pipeline for pharmacists. Reported outcomes included an enhanced sense of employee engagement among mentors and increased interest in pharmacy careers among young people.⁷⁵



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations drawn from research generated by knowledge loss experts and The Conference Board regarding developing and implementing knowledge loss practices.^{76,77,78,79}

- Identify and prioritize the types of knowledge and information whose loss would significantly impact the organization as well as the location and depth of different types of knowledge within the workforce.
- Make the business case to top management about the importance of knowledge transfer in order to obtain adequate and sustained resources.
- Develop strategic, specific, and time-sensitive goals for knowledge transfer and implement systems to monitor progress.
- Select and implement a variety of knowledge transfer processes to best meet current and future needs (e.g., database storage for general and future access, structured one-on-one or group knowledge transfer or mentoring sessions, on-line discussion boards, communities of practice).
- Consider different generational preferences in communication and learning styles when developing knowledge transfer and mentor programs.
- Create a culture that, rather than encouraging people to protect their knowledge base to ensure job security, recognizes the value of workers who share knowledge and help to promote the sustainability of the organization.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers

There is strong evidence^{80, 81} developed by experts in knowledge transfer and mentoring that carefully structured knowledge transfer programs can ensure measurable and systematic transfer of valuable knowledge, ensure sustainability, and develop younger employees, based on multiple case reports and expert opinion.



Value to older workers

There is promising evidence^{82, 83} developed by experts in knowledge transfer and mentoring that reverse knowledge transfer can help older adults become more technologically savvy and that mentoring programs can enhance their sense of engagement, based on multiple case reports and expert opinion. Data regarding mentoring programs is not age-specific, but mentors are often senior staff.



Value to society

For specific occupations and industries in the public sector with a high percentage of older workers (e.g., transportation, energy, and health care), the potential loss of knowledge carries significant implications for public health and well-being. For example, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the institutional memory of older engineers and repair staff was reported to be critical in getting New York City subways repaired as soon as possible. Moreover, there are societal benefits when older workers mentor underrepresented populations in professions. Young professionals and the public are well served by this.

Workplace Processes and Ergonomics

Design changes in environment, equipment, and/or job processes can help to prevent injuries and reduce the risk of disability among all workers, and especially middle-aged and older workers who are at higher risk for injuries and disabilities. Age-smart design encompasses a broad range of practices, including redesigning jobs (e.g., reducing physical demands through redesign or change of equipment); using ergonomic design to reduce the risk of common musculoskeletal problems; repositioning or altering equipment to accommodate functional limitation; and incorporating inclusive design principles to ensure access and functionality for all employees. Such initiatives have been shown to enable workers to remain in the workforce, avoid turnover costs, reduce injury- and disability-related costs, and increase productivity.⁸⁴

Research available through the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health details how

ergonomically designed office furniture, computer workstations, and tools can reduce the risk of injury. Prevention through design can also reduce the risk of falls and accidents.⁸⁵ According to employers surveyed by the Job Accommodation Network (2007), job accommodations also yield indirect benefits (i.e., not specific to individual cases) including increased overall organizational productivity, improved organizational morale, improved interactions with co-workers and customers, and improved workplace safety. Most accommodations are low or no cost.⁸⁶

Age-smart Workplace Design Models

BMW, the global automotive company based in Germany with approximately 100,000 employees, recognized that their aging manufacturing workforce signaled a threat to productivity and workforce readiness. They developed a proactive program to create a safer and healthier work environment with the goal of increasing productivity, improving performance, and controlling the rate of injuries and absenteeism. At the pilot site (a plant where the mean age of workers was 47), BMW engaged with plant workers to identify functional limitations and generate ideas to reduce job-related strains. Active employee participation was critical to idea generation and implementation. Solutions ranged from environmental redesign (e.g., covering cement floors with wooden platforms to reduce the impact on joints); equipment changes (adjustable worktables, angled monitors, and improved lighting), ergonomic job adjustments (letting workers sit for some tasks); and strength and stretching exercise classes. The reported outcomes were a seven percent increase in productivity within one year, which equaled the productivity of lines staffed by younger workers; improved performance; and reduced absenteeism. BMW achieved their quality target goal of 10 defects per million three months following full implementation. BMW has since incorporated lessons learned from the pilot into the design of a new plant that opened in 2011 and was described as setting “new standards in ageing-appropriate workplaces.”^{87, 88}

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL is a global lodging and hospitality company with approximately 120,000 employees. An internal review of workforce demographics revealed that 43% of their workforce were 45 years or older and 18% were 55 years or older; also, the majority of their workforce were hourly workers in physically demanding jobs. Surveys of older employees led Marriott to realize that they were highly motivated and eager to learn new skills. To support the health and sustainability of their workforce, Marriott reconfigured jobs to include a smaller percentage of physically demanding tasks within a single shift. Marriott also instituted a program to cross-train workers to do multiple jobs of varying physical requirements. This training provides increased flexibility for both employer and employees to fulfill needed jobs. Reported outcomes included reduced absenteeism, increased workforce readiness, and enhanced employee value.^{89, 90}

An employee resource group for older workers at a major technology company found that many members were experiencing age-related vision changes. The company identified several solutions, all of which were adopted and implemented by the company, including high-contrast signage, angled monitors to help reduce glare, brighter lighting in selected areas, and insurance coverage for prescription computer glasses. Reported outcomes included improved productivity, less eye strain, and improved employee well-being.⁹¹



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations from the NTAR (National Technical Assistance and Research) Center and the Job Accommodation Network (both services of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor) and Dr. Michael Silverstein, an expert in workplace disability and aging issues, regarding the development and implementation of age-friendly design practices:^{92,93,94}

- Survey employees to assess unmet needs that could be addressed through design.
- Educate managers on how age-related changes can often be ameliorated through design.
- Encourage managers and staff to identify opportunities to improve productivity through design changes.
- Identify and implement environmental and ergonomic changes to promote optimal functioning: examples include appropriate lighting, reduced ambient noise, high contrast signage, and universal design to provide optimal accessibility and usability.
- Analyze jobs to identify functions that increase risk for injury and make accommodations to the work process and/or equipment in order to reduce risk.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers

There is strong evidence^{95,96,97} from the Job Accommodation Network and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) that design changes can prevent workplace injuries, improve workforce morale and safety, and enable workers with disabilities to work productively, based on surveys, case reports, and expert opinion. The data is not specific to older workers.



Value to employees

There is promising evidence^{98, 99} from the Job Accommodation Network and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) that age-friendly design and adaptations in equipment, environment, and job process can reduce the risk of workplace injuries and accidents for all employees and enable people with disabilities to function productively, based on studies, case reports, and expert opinion. Most of the data is not specific to older employees.



Value to society

Designing jobs, equipment, and environments to reduce the risk of disability and injury is an effective way to embed a public health agenda into workplace practices and “bend the curve” on spending for disability and health care costs, according to the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.¹⁰⁰

REDUCE UNWANTED TURNOVER BY BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT OF OLDER WORKERS



Although numerous factors affect retention rates and employee engagement level, research indicates that flexibility and the related issue of caregiving support are especially pertinent for middle-aged and older workers.¹⁰¹ A study of older nurses with elder care responsibility identified flexibility, caregiving support programs, and increased understanding from supervisors as the three most important changes that would enable them to continue to work effectively.¹⁰² Apart from caregiving, many older adults value flexible work schedules for many other reasons. Two strategies are discussed below.

Flexibility

Flexible work models, as noted in a recent study from Bain and Company,¹⁰³ are important strategies to increase retention and engagement and among a wide range of employees, not just older employees, so investments in flexibility can yield benefits across all age groups. However, research conducted by the Sloan Center on Aging and Work identified several issues driving the business case for flex options specific to older workers, including the ability to recruit, retain, and engage older workers; retain experienced staff and circumvent massive retirements; help older workers continue to be effective on the job; engage retirees; and tap into their knowledge and skills.¹⁰⁴ Flexibility encompasses a wide range of flex options, which may include job sharing (two or more employees sharing one full-time job); shift-swapping (e.g., the ability of shift workers to exchange shifts with peers); full- or part-time telecommuting; time off (paid or unpaid); paid time banks, which can be used for various personal needs; options to reduce or increase intensity of workload based on consultations with supervisors; part-time options, with or without benefits; flexible time schedules; and compressed work weeks.

Two flex options are specific to older employees: phased retirement and post-retirement work. Phased retirement options allow older workers to transition into retirement by scaling down their workload and working fewer hours. In some cases, pension rules have been revised to allow these employees to work less without reducing their pension amount (which is often based on most recent income levels). A major medical center modified its defined benefit plan so that benefits were calculated on the basis of salary levels of the five highest earning years as opposed to the last five years of work.¹⁰⁵ Post-retirement options allow retirees to work on a part-time or intermittent basis without sacrificing pension benefits.

Age-smart Flexibility Models

THE MITRE CORPORATION, a not-for-profit technology research company with multiple locations in the United States that employs approximately 7600 employees, developed a variety of flex options specifically designed to meet the needs of older workers and ensure their continuing relationship with Mitre. “Flex Options for Mature Workers” generated substantial interest and requests for access by employees of all ages, which led Mitre to expand eligibility and rebrand the program for all employees. (This exemplifies a common finding of this report, i.e., that most “age-friendly” practices are simply “employee friendly.”) Options include flex time (tailoring start/stop times), compressed workweeks, telecommuting, part-time options, job sharing, and phased retirement. Mitre provides training and transparent guidelines to managers and employees about flex options, and uses frequent messaging to reinforce a culture of flexibility. Reported outcomes from employee surveys link the availability of flex options to an increased pool of applicants, and increased job satisfaction and commitment to Mitre.¹⁰⁶ Mitre’s phased retirement option allows employees 59 ½ years old to work a regular part-time schedule (20-plus hours) and draw benefits from a portion of the Retirement Program. Mitre also established a part-time, on-call program that utilizes former full-time employees (including non-retirees) for short-term projects up to 1,000 hours per year, and allows them to receive retirement benefits while employed. (Managers reported that the part-time-on-call program supports their ability to achieve workload targets.¹⁰⁷

OCHSNER HEALTH SYSTEMS, a not-for-profit academic and health care delivery system based in Louisiana with approximately 11,000 employees, faced very high turnover rates following Hurricane Katrina. The management was particularly eager to prevent the loss of experienced, middle-aged nurses (mid-forties) who carried tremendous institutional knowledge and job skills. In order to improve retention, they initiated a variety of flex options including options for part-time work with benefits, transfer opportunities, and compressed workweeks. Reported outcomes included significant reductions in turnover rate (with annual rates dropping from 35% to 18%) and increased retention of highly experienced workers.¹⁰⁸

KRAFT FOODS GROUP, a North American food and beverage manufacturer with approximately 25,000 employees, initiated a flexible work program for hourly workers in response to employee surveys that indicated high levels of dissatisfaction about work-life balance. Based on consultations with hourly workers, production supervisors, plant managers, human resource managers, and union representatives, Kraft developed “Fast Adapts,” a variety of flex options that enables shift-swapping, single-day vacations, and job sharing. Kraft also began employing retirees to cover worker absences, which reduced the burden on regular workers to compensate for absent co-workers. Plant managers are empowered to design programs that best fit the needs of individual plants. The program was pi-

lotted and evaluated in selected plants, and has since been implemented in approximately eighty U.S. manufacturing plants. Information about flex options are regularly provided to employees through newsletter, website messaging, and plant meetings. Reported outcomes based on employee surveys indicate improved employee satisfaction with work-life integration.

DELOITTE TOUCHE TOHMATSU LIMITED, a global audit, risk management, and financial services organization with nearly 200,000 employees, pioneered Mass Career Customization (MCC), which adapts mass customization consumer practices to the workplace. Mass customization systems enable consumers to customize their orders (as in people customizing their coffee orders at national chains of coffee shops). Deloitte provides thousands of employees with options to customize their career trajectory to better meet the changing needs, preferences, and life circumstances of employees throughout the course of their careers. Managers incorporate MCC principles into their discussions with employees and jointly discuss the desirability and feasibility of exercising options to “dial up” or “dial down” workload intensity, take on new responsibilities (without necessarily being promoted), or restructure place and time schedules based on a holistic assessment of the talents, career goals, and life priorities of employees. The model rejects the conventional corporate ladder model in favor of a corporate lattice model that supports multiple pathways, varied periods of intensity, and many definitions of success. The MCC model offers employees the opportunity to discuss potential options; makes trade-offs more explicit; provides greater transparency; and communicates to all employees that flexibility is truly an organizational value. The program was piloted and evaluated for several years prior to its adoption as a signature, corporate-wide policy. Reported outcomes include improved retention rates, increased employee satisfaction,¹⁰⁹ and reduction expenditures for talent acquisition (attributed to a substantial increase in employee referral). Cathy Benko, Vice-President and Chief Talent Officer for Deloitte, argues that the policy also creates an additional “option value,” i.e., even though most employees have not chosen to alter their jobs, simply knowing the option exists increases employee comfort and satisfaction.¹¹⁰

VITA NEEDLE,¹¹¹ a specialty production company with 35 employees, employs mostly senior citizens in part-time positions. Flexible part-time scheduling (as well as age-smart training programs) enables the company to attract and retain older workers. One 93-year-old woman joined Vita Needle at age 84 and an 86-year-old man recently celebrated his 17th year at the company.



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations for organizations wishing to implement flexible work options, based on research available from the Metlife Mature Market Institute and David Delong and Associates, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Sloan Center for Aging and Work regarding the development and implementation of workplace flexibility practices and policies.^{112, 113, 114}

- Assess employee satisfaction with work-life balance and identify unmet needs
- Offer a variety of flex options
- Make options universally available to all who meet specific criteria and define expectations clearly
- Provide guidance to managers to enable them to manage virtual offices and flexible schedules
- Establish a culture of flexibility, in which managers routinely educate workforce about flex options and ensure that utilization of flex options is not perceived as damaging to job security or career prospects
- Pilot and evaluate new initiatives against clearly defined goals and expectations
- Monitor utilization and results in terms of productivity, employee engagement, and absenteeism, and continually revise programs to support overall organizational goals

Strength of Evidence



Value to older workers

There is strong evidence^{115, 116, 117} generated by the Sloan Center on Aging and Work and the Families and Work Institute that flex options improve employee engagement, quality of life, and successful job performance. This is based on multiple surveys of employees and HR managers, case studies, and expert opinion. The evidence, derived from studies of workers of all ages, includes data specific to older workers that is consistent with overall findings. Although reports on outcomes associated with flex options are largely positive, some research suggests that telecommuting may negatively affect some workers by increasing hours of overtime and eroding normal work boundaries;¹¹⁸ this data is not specific to older workers.



Value to employers

There is strong evidence^{119, 120, 121, 122} that flex options lead to improved productivity and employee engagement. This is based on multiple case reports and supported by expert opinion. Some case reports primarily concerned middle-aged and older workers whereas others were age-inclusive. Anecdotal evidence, based on limited case reports¹²³ concerning general workforce policies, suggest that flex options may help to control the cost of doing business through the use of unpaid leave or voluntary reduced hours during slow periods, and through increased utilization of part-time, temporary, or contract workers available on an as-needed basis rather than carrying more expensive full-time staff. Flex options are viewed by most executives and HR professionals as an important inducement to attract younger employees and retain older employees.¹²⁴ Utilizing retirees as part-time and/or contract workers capitalizes on their experience and organizational familiarity and fits in well with a “just in time” workforce model increased use of virtual office and telecommuting can reduce the organizational footprint, resulting in reduced overhead, lower energy costs, and increased employee engagement.¹²⁵



Value to society

Flexible scheduling and telecommuting enables caregivers to remain employed and still fulfill their care giving responsibilities. Flexible scheduling also enables people to better maintain work-life balance, which promotes better mental and physical health, according to the Families and Work Institute; this data is not specific to older adults.¹²⁶

Caregiving Benefits

Within the workforce, employees in the age range of 45-64 years are most likely to be family caregivers. In 2009, more than 20% of that segment identified themselves as caregivers.¹²⁷ That percentage is expected to rise in the future as population aging creates more responsibilities for adult children, partners, relatives, and friends. As noted earlier, flexible scheduling is a critical need for employers who are also caregivers. Caregiving benefits also enable working caregivers to better manage the dual demands of work and care giving, while yielding benefits to employers including improved retention and engagement as well as reduced absenteeism.

According to the National Alliance for Caregivers (2012), most employers do not capture data on caregiver program utilization, but estimate very low program utilization. This may reflect fear of stigma, lack of effective program promotion, and/or program weaknesses, which indicates the importance of needs assessments, executive-level endorsement and promotion, and program evaluations.

Age-smart Caregiving Benefit Models

CBS CORPORATION, a national media company based in New York City, offers a comprehensive elder care program including subsidized emergency elder care (up to fifteen days per year), information and assistance with Medicare and insurance claims, and options for long-term care insurance to employees, dependents, and parents, as well as two weeks paid time off for a critically ill dependent. The company conducts an annual employee survey that includes questions about current or anticipated caregiving responsibilities. Although the program has not been formally evaluated, the company credits the program with reduced absenteeism and reduced employee stress.¹²⁸

FANNIE MAE, a public-private mortgage finance company with approximately 6,000 employees, launched their elder care services in 1999 with Eldercare, a geriatric care management vendor that provides in-person or remote consultations with geriatric care managers. Services are available for any care situation facing the employee including care for in-laws and grandparents. Consultations may include conference calls with siblings and joint consultations with spouses. Other program components, added as the program expanded to meet new needs, include information, resource, and referral services and supportive/crisis counseling. Reported outcomes: Between 5% and 6% of the workforce use some element of the program annually; survey results indicate high satisfaction; 25% of those surveyed said that the absence of the services might have forced them to leave their jobs. Fannie Mae reports organization-wide benefits including increased retention and productivity, improved morale of workers, and a decrease in caregiving-related anxiety and absenteeism.¹²⁹

JOHNSON & JOHNSON, a worldwide healthcare organization with approximately 118,000 employees, has been providing elder care services since 2000, including geriatric care management services (e.g., assessments, assistance in coordinating services, on-site facility reviews, and assistance with paperwork and family issues); respite care; referrals to community resources; and educational information via intranet resources and podcasts, webinars, and workshops. The services, provided by an outside company, are provided free of charge in order to maximize participation. Utilization is approximately 1%, but users rate the program highly; the company is seeking ways to drive higher utilization. Reported outcomes include positive employee feedback based on employee surveys, improved retention and increased loyalty, increased employee engagement, and reduced stress (although it is not clear how outcomes were measured).¹³⁰

KIMBERLY CLARK, a worldwide consumer products company with approximately 57,000 employees, funds an employee resource group, Family Caregiver Network, whose mission is to provide information and support to employees with caregiving responsibilities and educate managers about the issues. The group created a “starter kit” for new caregivers and offers workshops and seminars on varied topics (including elder law, financial elder scams, and Share the Care trainings). Workshops are video-

taped and available to all employees. Kimberly Clark does not have a formal elder care benefit program but augments services of the Family Caregiver Network with paid sick leave, emergency leave, and (in some locations) flex time options.¹³¹



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations from the National Alliance for Caregivers, Respect a Caregivers' Time, and the AARP Public Policy Institute regarding the development and implementation of age-friendly health and wellness program:^{132, 133}

- Conduct needs assessment among employees concerning current and anticipated care giving need.
- Monitor program utilization and measure employee satisfaction (this may need to be done via a third party in order to assure employee confidentiality).
- Ensure that caregiver support programs and flex options are available and viewed as valid options within the organization.
- Provide an array of options to suit multiple care giving needs: recommended program components include elder care resources and referral services, support for dependent care, respite reimbursements, geriatric case management, online resources and end-of-life support
- Sponsor employee caregiver networks and/ or support groups.
- Complement caregiver benefits with flexible work time options and paid leave.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers

There is promising evidence^{134, 135, 136} from the National Alliance for Caregivers, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, and the AARP Public Policy Institute that elder care programs improve employee engagement, health and wellness, productivity, and reduce absenteeism, based on case reports and expert opinion.



Value to employees

There is promising evidence^{137, 138, 139} (from the same sources as those cited above) that elder care programs can improve employee health and well-being and increase employee engagement, based on case reports and expert opinion. Although the data is not specific to older workers, middle-aged and older workers are more likely to be adult caregivers so it is reasonable to assume that they derive substantial benefit from such programs.



Value to society

Research has consistently shown that caregiving responsibilities increase the risk of unemployment and/or reduced earnings (and reduced savings for retirement) and are a risk factor for poor physical and mental health. A 2011 study by the AARP Public Policy Institute¹⁴⁰ estimated the economic value of voluntary caregiving by relatives and friends as approximately \$450 billion dollars, which includes lost wages and retirement necessitated by caregiving responsibilities; significantly worsened health prognoses for caregivers; lost productivity and increased absenteeism at work; and the cost of care that would have otherwise been shifted to health and long-term social support services. Anecdotal reports suggest that elder care programs not only enable employees to remain employed (and may have a protective effect on their health) but also increase the potential for older people needing care to remain at home rather than be moved to a nursing home (the majority of which is paid for through public funds).

RETAIN OLDER WORKERS WHILE CONTROLLING HEALTH COSTS



The perception that older employees are more costly is usually linked to compensation and health costs. Salaries are often higher for older employees, but the salary differential is linked to experience and expertise, not age. There is no evidence of differential wage levels between newly hired older and younger workers with comparable experience.^{141, 142} (An increasing number of older adults are interested in part-time work if they are receiving benefits and income from other sources).

Health Costs

Federal law allows Medicare to be the primary payer for employers who have fewer than 20 employees and offer health insurance, which makes older workers in the 65 years and older category attractive to small organizations. Larger organizations offering health plans do not have that option, and insurance costs are typically higher for older workers than younger workers. However, business expert Peter Cappelli notes that older workers are likely to have fewer dependents, which may actually make their total health costs less expensive than younger workers with dependents.¹⁴³ Additionally, the health cost differential for older adults is expected to decrease with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA). This law mandates expanded use of community rating, which usually lowers costs by spreading the risk among more people. The new law also limits the cost differential for older adults compared to younger adults: starting January 1, 2014, the law limits the age rating band to a ratio of no more than 3:1.

Even with the trends toward lower costs, health insurance and losses associated with employee ill health remain a significant threat to productivity and profitability. In order to control costs and improve productivity, more employers are utilizing workplace wellness programs to promote health and reduce the risk of illness and injury.

Workplace Wellness Programs

Effective wellness programs targeting the risk factors associated with chronic diseases (which account for 75% or more of health-related costs)¹⁴⁴ have been shown to slow or reduce health care costs, reduce absenteeism and presenteeism, improve health, and improve quality of life. Many programs have also demonstrated a positive return on investment.¹⁴⁵ Baiker, Cutler, and Song analyzed the impact of wellness programs on health care costs and absenteeism (focusing on programs with well-defined criteria and comparative data) and found that “medical costs fall about \$3.27 for every dollar spent on wellness programs, and absentee day costs fall by about \$2.73 for every dollar spent.”¹⁴⁶ The research strongly suggests that even employers who are not responsible for health care costs would benefit

from the utilization of workplace wellness programs. Effective workplace wellness programs should also help to mitigate the increased health costs potentially associated with older workers (which in fact relate more to modifiable risk factors than to chronological age).

Historically, small organizations have been less likely to implement workplace wellness programs, in part due to cost concerns and insufficient information to guide them; however, the Affordable Care Act provides tax incentives to businesses with fewer than 25 employees earning less than \$60,000 (on average) and will also be collecting data in order to develop best practices for small organizations.¹⁴⁷

Research indicates that successful implementation requires high rates of employee participation, usually driven by executive-level leadership, strong messaging, and incentives. Negative incentives (i.e., higher health premiums for people with modifiable risk factors) have been challenged by employees and unions as discriminatory; more acceptable approaches include offering cash incentives or discounted health costs to any and all employees who complete Health Risk Assessments (HRAs). (This approach helped Eastman Chemical attain high participation rates, as noted below.)

Age-smart Wellness Program Models

EASTMAN CHEMICAL, a global specialty chemicals company with approximately 13,500 employees, engages almost all of its employees (including second and third shift workers) in workplace wellness by offering programming around the clock. By providing cash incentives for completing HRAs, employee participation also rose 30% to 88-94% in recent years.¹⁴⁸ The program offers weight management, physical activity programs, on-site fitness facilities, individual and group coaching, health promotion, and incentives to join and maintain participation. Reported outcomes include steady reductions in health risks including high cholesterol, hypertension, and blood glucose levels (measured between 2005 and 2010); a calculated 3:1 return on the direct costs for educational and physical activity programming; and high levels of employee satisfaction.¹⁴⁹

AB VOLVO, a global manufacturer of transportation vehicles with approximately 100,000 employees, launched its Health for Life program in 2004. The program includes nutrition education, personalized biometric and preventive health screenings, on-site health and fitness resources, and health coaching. In order to assess the success of the program and its individual components, Volvo developed and utilizes a comprehensive “best practices” evaluation strategy that tracks participation and utilization trends, engagement, satisfaction, health risk reduction, and financial outcome data. The company also conducted a quasi-experimental analysis of health care costs of participants compared to non-participants in 2003-2006 period, and reported a three percent decrease in participant health care costs vs. five percent increase in nonparticipant health care costs. Other reported outcomes

include positive outcomes in risk reduction, a slowing of the rate of increase in healthcare costs, improved productivity, and reduced absenteeism.¹⁵⁰

OCHSNER HEALTH SYSTEMS is an academic and health care delivery system with multiple locations in Louisiana, employing approximately 11,000 employees. A study examining the clinical value and cost-effectiveness of their workplace-based exercise training and cardiac rehabilitation program found multiple positive impacts on health risk factors as well as a significant return on investment; average medical claims cost declined by almost half (48%) among active participants, which translated into a 6:1 return on investment for program participants. A majority (57%) of the participants initially classified as “high risk” in the intervention group were reclassified as low-risk after the program. Participants received health education, nutritional counseling, smoking cessation counseling, physical activity promotion, physician referral as needed and other health counseling. Researchers suggest that the significant reduction in risk factors among active participants (including weight, body mass index, lipid profiles, blood pressure, depressive symptoms, and quality of life) is likely to yield extended benefits in cost control and improved wellness beyond the one-year period monitored for the study.¹⁵¹



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations generated by health economists and the Partnership for Prevention in conjunction with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce regarding the development and implementation of an age-friendly health and wellness program:^{152, 153, 154, 155}

- Use positive incentives (i.e., substantial cash rebate on health insurance costs) rather than negative incentives.
- Address health at individual and environmental levels: environmental components may include on-site fitness centers and health-conscious food offerings; individualized components often include personalized coaching and targeted education based on HRA data.
- Offer a wide variety of program options.
- Offer tailored risk assessments for individuals and educate workers about privacy protections.
- Utilize multiple methods of messaging to drive employee awareness and utilization.
- Maximize accessibility by having on-site services and low-cost or no-cost programs.

- Create a “culture of health” with highly visible commitment from top leadership to help shift the organizational culture.
- Measure program utilization over time and monitor changes in health risk factor profiles.
- Publicize utilization and results to drive employee awareness and enthusiasm.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers

There is strong evidence^{156, 157, 158, 159} generated by health economists, researchers, and wellness managers that health and wellness programs can reduce absenteeism, improve productivity, and favorably impact health costs, based on controlled studies, case reports, and expert opinion.



Value to employees

There is strong evidence^{160, 161, 162} generated by health economists, researchers, and wellness managers that health and wellness programs can improve workforce health. This is based on studies, case reports, and expert opinion. The data is not specific to older workers.



Value to society

Wellness programs succeed by reducing individual risk factors for disease, promoting healthy behaviors, and encouraging better management of chronic disease, all of which help to promote better public health. Many of the programs have options for spouses, and can help influence health behaviors of entire families. These programs, which can affect health across the lifespan of workers, have long-term implications for reducing demand on government health programs.

PROMOTE MEANINGFUL AND STREAMLINED TRANSITIONS FROM WORK TO RETIREMENT



Pensions, historically structured on the premise of full retirement after specified work tenure, have not generally allowed for the possibility of transitional periods. However, legislators have taken some steps to better align pension policy with longer work lives. The Pension Protection Act of 2006 allows employees to draw benefits even while working once they reach the age of 62. 401(k) plans can make payments to employees once they reach age 59.5, even if they are still employed. And some organizations have revised their pension plans to support phased retirement and retiree work programs. As noted earlier, Mitre's phased retirement options enable employees 59 ½ years old to work part-time while still drawing partial retirement benefits. However, many private pension and Social Security regulations still include disincentives for phased retirement and retiree work options for specific segments of older workers. For example, workers who elect to receive Social Security before reaching full retirement age are limited in the amount of money they can earn before their benefits are reduced; Social Security will defer \$1 of social security for every \$2 additional income above the prescribed limit (\$15,120 as of 2013). Also, some private pension plans calculate retirement benefits based on the income levels for their last years of employment; electing a reduced work schedule prior to retirement reduces full retirement benefit amounts unless plans are revised to support greater flexibility.

Phased Retirement & Post-Retirement Options

More predictable retirement transitions and post-retirement work options would be mutually beneficial to employees and employers. Phased retirement options can create a smoother transition from work to retirement for employees since the option enables employees to shift into a reduced work schedule for a specified period of time. Phased retirement also provides employers advance notice and sufficient time to transfer key knowledge from the departing employee to other colleagues, and plan the recruitment and training for their replacement. Post-retirement options enable employers to access the talents, experience, and institutional knowledge of retirees on an as-needed basis and provide additional income options for retirees.

Financial and Retirement Planning

Financial education and retirement planning programs are beneficial to workers of all ages but are especially critical to older workers who need information to make the best decisions regarding whether, how, and when to retire. Research indicates very low levels of financial literacy among older Americans; levels were particularly low among older female workers, a group for whom retirement decisions are critical because they earn less and live longer than men, and need the skills to maximize whatever benefits and investments they possess.¹⁶³ Many older adults also lack information and understanding about

pension benefits, Social Security, and other retirement-related issues. Recent studies have shown that retirement and financial education programs can enable employees to become more knowledgeable and motivated to act on behalf of their financial well-being,^{164,165} reduce employee stress and improve workplace productivity,¹⁶⁶ and increase employee loyalty.¹⁶⁷ These programs, although especially important to older workers, are also in demand from younger workers, including many GenY and GenX employees, who recognize their need for financial literacy.¹⁶⁸

Age-smart Retirement Planning Models

WEYERHAEUSER, a global manufacturer of timber-based products with nearly 13,000 employees, offers a range of financial literacy and life and retirement planning workshops to employees and their spouses. The core workshop is a 2-1/2 day pre-retirement seminar, “Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise,” offered to employees 50 years and older; the workshop is offered during regular business hours, which makes a strong statement about the value the company places on the financial well-being of its employees. Weyerhaeuser also sponsors workshops on a variety of financial topics relevant to workers of all ages, as well as monthly webinars on topics including corporate benefits, wellness, long-term care, and retiree health insurance. Many workshops are taught by fellow employees. Reported outcomes include increased financial literacy among employees, positive feedback, and increased contributions to retirement funds. Some employees also delayed retirement as a result of better financial understanding.¹⁶⁹

NCP, a print, mail, and electronics communications company based in Alabama and Florida, offers free or low-cost financial assistance courses and retirement planning seminars conducted by financial experts. According to Forrest Cook, NCP’s Vice-President for Human Resources, the programs reflect a commitment to employee well-being as well as enlightened self-interest. Cook states, “We all have a community responsibility with the financial literacy of the people. If they are worrying about their finances, they’re not as productive as they should be.”¹⁷⁰



Expert Recommendations

The following is a synthesis of recommendations from Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Metlife, and the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) regarding the development and implementation of financial education and retirement planning benefits.^{171,172,173}

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify current and anticipated needs for financial and retirement planning.

- Provide a range of materials and modalities in order to reach as wide an audience as possible; consider offering in-person workshops, individual counseling, educational materials, and access to online resources.
- Tailor materials to address specific life-stages as well as general financial topics.
- Include explanations of existing benefits.
- Monitor employee response to programs and generate data to help inform program changes.

Strength of Evidence



Value to employers

There is promising evidence^{174, 175, 176} generated by Metlife, the Financial Industry Regulatory Association (FINRA), and corporate managers that well-executed financial education and retirement planning benefits decrease stress, reduce absenteeism, increase productivity, and engender employee loyalty, based on a national study, case reports, and expert opinion.



Value to employees

There is promising evidence^{177, 178} generated by Metlife, FINRA, and corporate managers that workplace-based financial and retirement planning programs enable employees to better manage their finances and plan for retirement based on case reports, an extensive national study, and expert opinion.



Value to society

Post-retirement financial insecurity, an all too common occurrence among retirees, is likely to dramatically increase in the near future, since most “Boomers” have not saved adequately for retirement. Better financial education and planning and post-retirement work options can help to reduce the risk of poverty for older people, which carries enormous potential for social good including the reduced risks of poverty, food insecurity, and ill health among senior citizens, according to Metlife.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, improved financial situations will allow older adults to remain active consumers, which will benefit the economy.

Conclusion

This review of the evidence suggests that many employers have developed effective and (in many cases) cost-efficient strategies to ensure the full participation, productivity, and well-being of older workers. In addition to the range of practices reviewed in this report, the research suggests that age-smart workplaces tend to share three characteristics:

- A candid and data-driven recognition of workplace age-diversity, starting with a review of the age profile of their workforce
- An organizational culture that values age diversity, creates an inclusive environment for workers of all ages, and identifies the business case for optimizing a multigenerational workforce
- Strategic planning that integrates and aligns workforce needs with organizational mission

As the population continues to age and the percentage of older workers increases, employers will develop additional strategies to meet evolving needs. Continued research, monitoring, and sharing of best practices is encouraged and needed. Similarly, leaders who are ahead of the curve need to be recognized by their peers. The Age Smart Employer Awards are the mechanism for such recognition.

Appendices

Appendix A-Age Smart Employer Research Advisory Panel

This report was prepared with the guidance of an esteemed research advisory panel, which convened three times during the winter of 2012-2013. Members of the research advisory panel included:

James Parrott (Chair)

Deputy Director and Chief Economist
Fiscal Policy Institute

Kathleen Christensen

Program Director, Working Longer
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

David DeLong

President & CEO
David DeLong and Associates

Suri Duitch

University Associate Dean for Continuing
Education & Deputy to the Senior University
Dean for Academic Affairs
City University of New York

Lorrie Foster

Vice President of Foundation Relations
The Conference Board

Michael Hodin

Executive Director
Global Coalition on Aging

Richard W. Johnson

Senior Fellow & Director, Program on
Retirement Policy
The Urban Institute

Marcie Pitt-Catsoupes

Director
The Sloan Center on Aging and Work at Boston
College

Edward Rogoff

Chair, Department of Management & Director
of Lawrence N. Field Center for
Entrepreneurship
Baruch College

Michael Smyer

Provost
Bucknell University

Appendix B-Interviews and Consultations

Key informant interviews were conducted with:

- Frances Kunreuther, Director of the Building Movement Project
- Laurel Pickering, President and CEO of the Northeast Business Group on Health
- Luke Visconti, CEO of DiversityInc

- Keith Winik, Wellness Manager, Prudential

Confidential key informant interviews were conducted in the spring and fall of 2012 with employers and employees from technology, law, health care, and media and communications companies with offices in New York City.

Additional insights into the perspectives of older adults, businesses, and employers in New York City were gained through earlier research conducted on behalf of *Age-friendly NYC*, including:

- Community consultations with over 2,000 older adults from 2007-2008
- A business roundtable discussion held at City Hall on January 23, 2008, with attendees including:
 - Speaker Christine Quinn, Speaker of the New York City Council
 - Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Chair of the Committee on Aging
 - Council Member James Vacca, Chair of the Sub Committee on Senior Centers
 - Council Member Gale Brewer, Chair of the Committee on Technology in Government
 - Kathryn Wylde, President & CEO, Partnership for NYC (*Chair of Roundtable*)
 - Jo Ivey Boufford, President of The New York Academy of Medicine
 - Suzanne Towns, Executive Director of Community and Strategic Partnerships for the Department of Small Business Services
 - William Arnone, Human Capital Practice, Ernst & Young LLP
 - Connie Ciliberti, Vice President of Human Resources, Time Warner Cable
 - Ruth Finkelstein, Vice President for Health Policy, The New York Academy of Medicine
 - Janaera Gaston, Director of Programs, New York Business Health Group
 - John Hyland, Central Labor Council
 - Patty Lee, Senior Vice President, Macy's East

- Ray Masucci, President, RPM Warehouse
 - Vikki Pryor, President and CEO, SBLI USA Mutual Life Insurance
 - Carrie Robinson, Harlem Chamber of Commerce/Grandparents Empowerment Movement
 - Humphrey Taylor, Chairman, Harris Interactive
 - Mark Wagar, President, Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield
- A symposium on employment and older workers held in New York City in April, 2011 which included presentations by:
- Michael Hodin, Executive Director, Global Coalition on Aging
 - Deborah Russel, Director of AARP Workforce
 - David Neumark, Senior Fellow, Public Policy Institute of California
 - Hans Johnson, Co-Director of Research and Senior Fellow, Public Policy Institute of California
 - Linda Gibbs, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, City of New York
 - Lois Cooper, Vice President of Employee Relations and Diversity at ADECCO North America
 - Deborah Briceland-Betts, Vice President of the AARP Foundation
 - Scott Miyake Geron, Director of the Institute for Geriatric Social Work, Boston University School of Social Welfare Policy and Research
 - Sunil Gupta, Dean of the Borough of Manhattan Community College
 - Robin Willner, Vice President of Global Community Initiatives at IBM
 - Fay Radding, Senior Gerontologist, MetLife Mature Market Institute
 - Veronica White, Executive Director of the Center for Economic Opportunity, City of New York
 - Anne Weisberg, Talent Director at Deloitte Services LP

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