

Top 10 Reasons to Hire Older People

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In a world where traditional retirement makes less and less sense, the need and desire of older people to retain or find meaningful jobs depends in part on overcoming bogus attitudes about older employees. Smart and progressive employers get this. Sure, Google is probably not losing any sleep over failing to train septuagenarians about search-engine algorithms. But being uninterested in crowd-sourcing the best taco stand within four blocks of your smartphone is not a disqualification for being an excellent employee.

[See [10 Workplace Myths Debunked](#).]

Unemployment rates among older workers are lower than that of the general workforce. However, when an older person does lose a job, it has been much harder to find a new one. Older job seekers need to do an honest self-assessment of their skills and upgrade them if needed or set their sights on jobs that better match their current capabilities.

Employers need to make their own adjustments, beginning with tossing preconceptions of older workers out the window. Judge each job applicant as an individual. It's the law, and it's also the right thing to do. In assessing the suitability of older job applicants, here are 10 other things to keep in mind:

- 1. They are not unhappy.** MetLife recently completed its 10th annual survey of employee benefits, based on extensive surveys of hiring managers and employees. It finds that younger employees are really unhappy these days. Older workers, by contrast, tend to be more appreciative of what they've got.
- 2. They are not going to jump ship.** MetLife also found that alarming percentages of younger workers would like to be working somewhere other than their current employer in 2012. Among Gen Y workers (born 1981 to 1994), it was 54 percent, while 37 percent of Gen X workers (born 1965 to 1980) were ready, willing, and able to bail on their employers. The comparable figures were 27 percent for younger boomers (born 1956 to 1964) and 21 percent for older boomers (born 1946 to 1955).
- 3. They are not as needy.** Upwards of two-thirds of Gen Y and Gen X employees want more help from employers in providing benefits that better meet their needs. Among older baby boomers, only 31 percent felt that way.
- 4. They don't want their boss's job.** Older employees have, by and large, recognized where they are in terms of professional advancement. They don't waste a lot of time, either theirs or their employer's, with career concerns.
[See [When Your Boss is Younger than Your Child](#).]
- 5. Their skills shortage may be way overblown.** Don't assume that older employees don't know their stuff. Maybe they are not texting during meetings because they are more polite. Odds are, they may actually know how to spell complete words, too, if that's important to you.
- 6. They know what they want.** Personal quests are great but they shouldn't be done on work time. Older workers tend to leave their angst at the door when they get to work.
- 7. They show up on time every day.** Any older employee with a solid resume has already developed the kind of attendance and reliability records employers want.

8. They have few personal or family distractions. Seniors love their children but are gladly done with afternoon school runs, soccer games, and any number of other parental duties.

9. Benefits are not as crucial. The MetLife research found that much more pressure for better benefits comes from younger workers. In part, that's because they don't believe Social Security and Medicare benefits will be around for their later years. Older workers, by contrast, have much greater confidence in being able to count on those government programs.

[See [Is an Extended Senior Career in Your Future?](#)]

10. Wisdom still counts for something. Even a rock picks up something of value after 40 or 50 years. Imagine what older employees can bring to the job if they are encouraged to share it and even mentor younger colleagues.

One final note: Today's column includes several misguided stereotypes about younger employees. Before taking too much offense, imagine how older folks feel when they are treated the same way.

And by the way, happy birthday to the most influential arbiter of high-tech gadgets: Walt Mossberg of the *Wall Street Journal*. He turns 65 tomorrow.