

INVESTING IN THE EXPERIENCE OF MATURE-AGE WORKERS



Australia is experiencing an ageing of its population caused by a low birth rate and people living longer. This has implications for the workforce with less young people starting work and more mature-aged people remaining in work.

Mature-age workers may be defined as between 45 and 64 years old, but changes to the formal retirement age and people living longer, healthier lives will result in many people working beyond this age range.

This shift in the workforce age profile requires businesses to adopt strategies to attract and retain mature-age workers.

Benefits to business

The experience of mature-age workers can provide significant benefits to business including retention of corporate and industry knowledge. These workers may:

- identify ways to improve work and business processes;
- fill skill and knowledge gaps in the workplace;
- accept responsibility and work independently; and
- provide mentoring and training to younger and less experienced employees.

Mature-age workers bring other attributes to the workplace that underline their value to business. For example, older workers generally have low levels of absenteeism and high levels of punctuality, apply high levels of attention to detail to their work, approach work in an organised way and are good communicators.

Mature-age workers can also be adept at learning and applying new skills and adjusting to the introduction of new technologies in the workplace.

Attracting mature-age workers

Finding people with the right skills, knowledge and attributes can be time consuming and costly for a business. In many cases, hiring a mature-age worker can be a great investment for your business, bringing many years of experience and knowledge.

When considering attracting skilled mature-age workers, it is important that a business targets the broadest potential worker base. Recruitment strategies for an age-inclusive workforce can include the following:

- job advertisements that encourage people of all ages to apply;
- focus on the knowledge, skills and attributes required for the job;
- do not make assumptions about capability, capacity, fitness or health based on age;
- avoid bias, prejudice and stereotypes based on age; and
- measure applicants against selection criteria that are focused only on the requirements of the job and the needs of the business.

Mature-age workers welcome interesting and challenging work and are typically comfortable working in roles with limited or indirect supervision. The recruitment of mature-age workers provides an opportunity for businesses to review and redefine jobs to make the best use of the experience and attributes of older employees.

Support and flexibility

Mature-age workers require the same occupational health and safety, personal wellbeing and employee support as other workers, but may also require some additional flexibility in their working arrangements. This can be accommodated by offering part time and casual work, job sharing, flexible working hours and on-demand work to cover peak periods.

Many mature-age workers want to remain in the workforce but may not want a full time role and being flexible with work hours can be especially appealing to future employees.

The use of flexible employment models allows businesses to retain access to a pool of experienced and skilled workers.

Workers nearing retirement age may be interested in reducing their hours, a move to a lower intensity job or a switch from full time work to contract or consultancy work.

Training and lifelong learning

Mature-age workers typically have the same interest in learning and development as any other worker. A focus on lifelong learning brings direct benefits to a business because older workers who learn new skills tend to stay in their jobs and be more willing to mentor other workers.

Training can help to enhance the overall skill set of a business when it is:

- tailored to suit the specific job or work role;
- linked to broader mentoring and coaching requirements;
- delivered using flexible and adaptable methods; and
- structured to recognise the worker's prior learning.

Support for employers

Businesses that offer employment to people aged 50 years or older may be eligible for financial assistance from the Commonwealth Government.

Go to the following website for details
www.employment.gov.au/Restart



For more information, resources and practical tools to help you plan, attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce, visit:
www.workplace-essentials.dtwd.wa.gov.au



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