

**Goals: This session should help the participant:**

- Recognize the valuable contributions of older workers.
- Motivate, train, and retain older employees.
- Avoid discrimination against older workers.

**1. Older Employees Are Valuable Assets**

- Older employees usually have many years of work experience to contribute.
- Most have also had the opportunity to develop important work skills over the years.
- If they have been with your organization for many years, they may also have a lot of valuable knowledge about the organization and its growth and development.
- Older workers often have excellent attendance records, which makes them highly reliable.
- They are also often highly productive and make fewer errors than less-experienced workers.
- Older workers bring different perspectives to the workplace and contribute to diversity.
- Some older employees may be willing to work part-time or on a contingent basis, saving the high costs of benefits and offering you flexibility in scheduling.

2. Don't Buy In to the Myths About Older Workers

- There are many myths about older workers. For example:
 - They stifle creativity in an organization with their old-fashioned ideas.
 - They have a harder time grasping new ideas, concepts, procedures, and techniques.
 - They get sick more often and have higher rates of absenteeism than younger workers.
 - They are less flexible than their younger co-workers and more costly to train.
 - They are less likely to keep abreast of new developments in their field.
 - They're only thinking about retirement and are no longer really interested in the job.
- The fact is that none of these stereotypes is universally true of older workers.
 - As with any other group of employees, some older workers may be better than others.
 - But as a group, older workers tend to be among the most industrious and loyal.
- Treat all workers, regardless of age, as individuals and avoid making assumptions.

3. Take Steps to Motivate and Retain Older Employees

- Demonstrate interest in the performance and achievements of older employees, and give them support and assistance as needed.
 - Because older workers often require less supervision, supervisors may forget that older employees still need to feel that the boss is interested in their work.
- Set realistic performance goals with older workers and then hold them accountable.
 - Make sure they get regular and thorough performance evaluations.
- Give them variety in work assignments whenever possible and try to provide new challenges.
- Everyone, regardless of age, needs positive feedback about their performance.
 - They need to know what they are doing well and what could be improved.



- Everybody also needs recognition for good performance in order to continue to do their best.
- Consider asking older workers to serve as trainers, coaches, and mentors for younger workers.
–This kind of activity can be rewarding and motivating for both older and younger workers.

4. Make Sure Older Workers Get Appropriate Training Opportunities

- Don't stereotype employees based on their age when it comes to determining training needs.
- Don't assume that because of their experience older workers don't need any training.
–They may lack required skills or need refresher training.
- Don't assume that an older worker is less likely to understand new technologies.
–Create the opportunity to build on prior experience and relate the unfamiliar to the familiar.
- Provide equal training opportunities for all employees, commensurate with skills, responsibilities, and career development plans.
- Allow for self-paced learning when possible, since older workers tend to do well with this type of training and can be relied on to meet training deadlines and achieve training goals.
- Be patient and respectful with all employees, regardless of age, during the training process.

5. Be Careful to Avoid Discrimination

- Under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against a person because of age with respect to any term, condition, or privilege of employment.
–This includes discrimination in hiring, firing and layoffs, promotions and job assignments, compensation, benefits, and training.
- The law protects all individuals who are 40 years of age or older, including job applicants.
- Federal law generally also prohibits you from forcing employees to retire because of age.
- In addition to age discrimination, disability discrimination may also be an issue.
–The Americans with Disabilities Act requires reasonable accommodations for otherwise qualified workers with disabilities, including older workers who develop disabilities.
–Be prepared to redesign jobs or make work area adjustments to accommodate older workers.

Applicable Regulations: Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Older Workers Benefit Protection Act (OWBPA)

Training Tips:

- Review your organization's age discrimination and disability discrimination policies.



- Ask participants to discuss some of the contributions made by older workers.
- Lead a discussion about challenges and solutions involved in supervising older workers.

Knowledge Review:

–Distribute copies of the handout and discuss case study. Then have participants complete the Supervising Older Employees Quiz. It provides a useful review of the subject.

