

employees does not indicate the ages of persons working "on the line". Second, as with physical strength, there is some evidence that experience enhances and extends the ability to maintain work pace. Older employees who know their jobs are satisfactory while inexperienced older persons cannot keep up. Many employers have found that such persons cannot accustom themselves to a fast work pace. Also, their manual dexterity appears either inferior to that of the inexperienced younger person or is more difficult to harness. Perhaps more important, their mental flexibility seems far lower than that of the younger person. For example, inexperienced older females seem to have particular difficulty in becoming accustomed to a rapid work pace. Employers believe this problem stems from unfamiliarity with sustained pace, which in turn creates anxiety over lack of skill and possible embarrassment in the presence of younger associates.

3. Mental Flexibility

As indicated in the preceding exhibit, employers value younger employees for their adaptability to working conditions and speed of learning. In contrast, employers tend to question the mental flexibility, speed of learning and general outlook of older applicants. These are basic employment considerations, of course, since any newcomer must become productive in his new environment as rapidly as possible. Older newcomers seem frequently to experience difficulty in making the necessary adjustment, according to employer reports. The difficulty becomes apparent in several different ways.

a. Older Male Applicants Cannot Be Easily Trained

Three of the companies involved in discussing the mental outlook of older persons, noted that older males do not readily assimilate on-the-job training. These companies believe that such problems stem from a general reluctance of older males to assume a trainee status rather than a lack of aptitude. This seems particularly true for men who have occupied supervisory or managerial positions. Respondents did not mention such a pattern among blue-collar workers, and three of the unions noted that a great majority of the members attending periodic skill updating courses were older persons.

b. Older Female Applicants Cannot Be Trained for Intricate Work

Another condition that causes some employers to question the mental flexibility of older workers, females in particular, concerns training. The electronics companies and related unions interviewed both state that older