

REASONS WHY OLDER EMPLOYEE IS VALUABLE

There are many studies available that refute some of the misconceptions held by employers relative to the hiring of older workers. I would now like to look at some of the reasons why the older worker can be valuable to business and industry:

1. PRODUCTIVITY -- a study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics concluded that productivity of older blue-collar factory hands is generally as good as or better than that of younger workers, except in jobs requiring considerable strength or high-speed work on an assembly line. Another study examined the relationship between age and work performance for about 2,200 workers in eight footwear and men's clothing manufacturing establishments. The data showed that output per man-hour remained fairly stable through age 54 and declined slightly for the 55 to 64 age group. However, many individual workers in the older age group (55 to 64) had a higher output than younger persons doing comparable work. These data emphasize the point that an employer should evaluate the potentialities of each individual applicant rather than draw conclusions from his chronological age.
2. EXPERIENCE -- middle-aged and elderly workers generally have sufficient experience to preclude the necessity for lengthy training sessions. From my own employment office experience with Aerojet during its rapid build-up of personnel from 1956 to 1963, I know that the emphasis in hiring was on experience -- we were a new industry and there was no time for extensive training -- we needed people who already possessed developed skills. Another example -- in the field of selling, a number of studies have shown that older, experienced salesmen make more impressive records, than the seemingly capable but inexperienced younger salesmen.
3. ABSENTEEISM -- older workers are actually absent less because they don't take off for social and personal reasons like the under-50 age group. When they are out for illness, however, they may require a somewhat longer recovery period than the younger group. Most studies indicate that there is no significant relationship between attendance rates and age.
4. TURNOVER RATE -- in a study of turnover rate among its female employees, a life insurance company found that of the women hired between the ages of 30 and 40 in the previous ten years, only one in three was still on the job. In the 40-50 age bracket, half had stayed. Of those hired in the 50 to 65 bracket, not one had left.
5. LOYALTY -- in general, older employees exhibit a higher degree of loyalty to the company than the younger age group.
6. GUIDANCE -- older workers can provide considerable guidance for the younger employees.