

JOB PERFORMANCE OF OLDER WORKERS

Among factors important in measuring a worker's success on the job are his attendance, his ability to meet production standards, his flexibility in learning new operations and adjusting to changing job conditions, and his cost to the employer in terms of job accidents, insurance and pensions. In all these fields, older workers compare favorably with the general working population in spite of some prejudices to the contrary.

Attendance

The older worker is more likely to be on the job than workers in younger age groups. Studies made by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics after World War II covering about 18,000 workers in manufacturing industries showed that the absenteeism rate was lower among workers over age 50. BLS studies in 1955 and 1957 in the footwear, clothing, and furniture industries showed negligible differences in attendance by age groups. 1/

A recent study of attendance in a group of 88 women production workers aged from 18 to 64 was made in the general packaging department of a large manufacturing plant. 2/ About 60 percent of the women were under 45 years of age and 40 percent were 45 years of age or older, with a range of age distribution from age 18 to age 64. The absence record of each worker for a one-year period was reviewed. Those under 45 years of age had an average absence of 10.2 days for the year vs. 7.9 days for the older group.

Among the older group, 32 percent lost no days during the year while only 22 percent of the younger had equally good attendance. The older group was absent less frequently for "personal" reasons than the younger group, although the difference was slight. Also, the younger group visited the plant hospital for first aid twice as often as the older group, although the larger number of machine operators in the younger group probably affected this result. Comparing the machine operators in both groups, however, the older ones visited the plant hospital on the average of 1.6 times each during the year, while the younger ones visited 2.6 times.

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- 1/ a. U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.
Comparative Job Performance by Age. Study of Workers in Men's Footwear and Household Furniture Industries. Bulletin 1223. Washington, U. S. Govt. Print. Off., 1957. 60 p.
- b. U. S. Department of Labor, Job Performance and Age--A Study in Management. Bulletin 1203. Washington, U. S. Govt. Print. Off., 1956. 72 p.
- 2/ Sellett, Lucien R., "Age and Absenteeism," Personnel Journal, June, 1964, Pages 309-313.