

Experience Pays

Smart workplace strategies:

An employer's guide for managing an ageing workforce

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Queensland
Government

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Introduction



Cracker Print and Paper sales reps Audrey Hollingworth and Jim Barron.

Did you know?

- By 2012 more than one in six workers will be 55 years or older.*
- One in four older workers expect to defer their retirement until after their 70s.#
- There is a widening gap between what employees value and what their employers think they value.#
- Workers aged 55 years and over are most dissatisfied with benefits offered by employers.#

* (from *Workplace 2012: beyond the Global Financial Crisis* – Mercer 2008)

(from *Benefits Outside the Square* – Mercer 2008)

Introduction

By 2012 the number of workers aged 55 years and over will have increased by over 15 per cent, while workers aged between 25 – 54 years will only have increased by around six per cent. Older workers will be growing labour supply at more than twice the rate of younger workers.

Recent studies have shown that while older workers are choosing to work beyond normal retirement age, they are also the group of employees most dissatisfied at work. Employers will be more likely to retain their older workers once the economy recovers by recognising their needs such as:

- availability of flexible work/retirement options
- health and wellbeing considerations
- cultural recognition in the workplace of the experience and knowledge older workers bring.

This guide will assist you to develop strategies and crucial changes in your workplace to ensure you retain valuable experience, knowledge and skills that many older workers hold. It will also introduce you to employers already successfully putting these strategies into place.

Use the following checklist to help become better prepared for managing an ageing workforce and keep your older workers longer.

Is your workplace ready for an ageing workforce?

Checklist

The ageing workforce calls for new approaches to managing businesses.

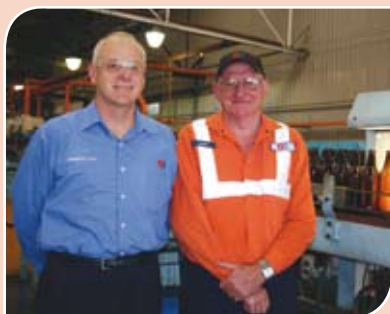
If you answer “No” to any of these questions or “Unsure”, you may need to take further action.

Strategy/Tactic	Yes	No	Unsure
Do you put work and life balance on the agenda? - Stimulate discussions at regular staff meetings about strategies that can be adopted.			
Do you provide access to information and services? - Assist staff to become aware of all their entitlements and eligibility, such as parental and special leave, leave without pay, variable working hours.			
Do you take a fresh look at work arrangements? - Schedule work meetings at times which accommodate those staff working flexibly.			
Do you think about other ways the work can be done? - Consider whether positions are full-time, or whether the work can be done on a part-time basis, job share, part-year to accommodate peaks and troughs; job redesign.			
Do you take family responsibilities into account in workplace change?			
Do you monitor the workplace for changes in trends – absenteeism; turnover; workers compensation?			
Do you provide learning and development opportunities to staff? Which may include: - coaching and mentoring other staff - work shadowing opportunities - relieving opportunities, including job rotation, higher duties and special projects - variety of job assignments including action learning projects - encourage mature-age workers to role model their learning and development experiences and knowledge to other staff.			

Strategy/Tactic	Yes	No	Unsure
<p>Do you provide flexible work or phased retirement options? A range of flexible retirement options may be possible including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - part-time work - job-sharing - working from home (telecommuting) - part-year employment - voluntarily working at a lower level - flexible use of long service leave e.g. to create a four-day week 			
<p>Do you develop ways to ensure transfer of valuable knowledge and skills of older workers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop specific systems and processes for capturing knowledge and passing corporate knowledge and skills knowledge from experienced workers to other employees. - Use job redesign to create roles that value and reward formalised knowledge and skills transfer. - Encourage job sharing between employees who may be staying and those who are intending to leave the business. - Actively encourage coaching, work shadowing and mentoring. 			
Do you continually assess the knowledge and experience of your staff to better understand your workforce and plan for the future?			
Do you redesign jobs to reflect the diversity of skills and capabilities within the organisation?			
Do you introduce 'employment plans' which include flexible work options and transition-to-retirement plans?			
Do you have a bank of retired staff willing and available to work in emergency/peak work periods?			
Do you make your workplace attractive to mature-age workers by building a culture which values life experience?			
Do you have a work-life balance policy for your staff?			
Do you do exit interviews to understand why people leave?			
Have you asked staff "what is good about working here?" to inform your future strategies?			

Case Study—O-I Brisbane

O-I Brisbane has been making glass bottles for the Queensland beverage market for 90 years and has retained its older workers for equally substantial timeframes.



O-I Brisbane Employee Development Manager Noel Hoelscher and Shift Manager Gary Smyth.

Noel Hoelscher is Employee Development Manager of O-I's South Brisbane based plant and says the plant, which is part of the worldwide O-I glass container manufacturing group, employs 216 people. Almost 40 per cent of employees have worked for the company for more than 20 years.

“Many of our Brisbane team members are older workers,” said Noel.

“More than 25 per cent are aged over 55 years and 13 per cent are over 60 years old.”

The company sees many advantages to holding onto its older workers including retention of knowledge and skills, lower absenteeism and injury rates, flexibility and most importantly, dedication.

“Longer serving older employees often don't see their work as ‘just a job’ and tend to have well developed work ethics and strong loyalty.”

Fifty-seven year-old Gary Smyth is Shift Manager at the plant and recently celebrated 40 years with the company.

“I started as a fitter and turner but I haven't just done one job,” said Gary.

“There's always something to go to and if you have ambition you can go forward but if you don't you're not pushed out either.

“The company has good conditions - the work can be dirty but we are paid well and everyone is approachable, they don't treat you as a number.”

Noel said one of the biggest issues the company faces with an ageing workforce is safety.

“In our environment, a potentially hazardous work area, older workers could be at risk of a lot of chronic injuries but we've turned that around,” said Noel.

“Because of the age of our workforce we had to make modifications in the workplace – the ageing workforce is forcing us to look at that now.

“The older guys have helped us with that and our injury rates are low – we strive for zero ‘lost time’ injuries – the last one was nine months ago.

The company has made changes in the workplace to accommodate the changing physical capabilities of its older workers including installation of folding down steps, improved conveyer systems and reductions in manual lifting through the use of cranes.

“All injuries are investigated and we see what we need to change in our work practices to prevent that from happening again,” said Gary.

“Everybody looks after each other.”

O-I also offers phased retirement options to its older shift workers through a shift rotation program.

“The plant operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and leading up to retirement, people can opt to work afternoon and day shifts for three months then day shifts for the fourth month, rotating on this cycle, but retaining shift penalties,” said Noel.

“This is a big incentive as you can earn different amounts depending on the shifts – it could mean \$2000 to \$3000 per month.”

One of the plant’s mechanical tradespersons, who will soon be turning 70-years-old, has been able to continue working safely by progressively modifying his work practices over recent years.

“We reduced physical demands on him, sharing duties requiring ladder work or lifting heavy motors with other workers,” said Noel.

“It has greatly increased his productive time here.”

The company is serious about developing succession planning strategies to transfer the skills and knowledge of its older workforce.

“In the last five years we have developed a cultural change – people help each other in their work now, sharing skills and taking extra responsibilities,” said Noel.

“We put younger people with more experienced people and have a formalised coaching program along with competency-based training.”

O-I Brisbane, who despite having a dedicated workforce, has previously been burnt from failing to transfer knowledge from a long serving employee. It is now ensuring it is equipped for an ageing workforce through smart workplace strategies like job redesign, phased retirement options and knowledge transfer and retention.

“We have to get that knowledge from our older people before we lose them – otherwise it will just go out the door,” said Gary.

Flexible work options



Queensland Government Senior Program Officer Isaac Mundraby and Principal Program Officer Kathy Simpson.

Flexible work options

While not all older workers require access to flexible work options, it is important employers make the options that are available well known to all staff in case they need them further down the track. Research has shown that the known availability of flexible work options contributes to determining older workers' satisfaction in the workplace.

Some employers may be concerned that by offering flexible work options to staff there is a risk of being obliged to agree to all requests even if flexibility may not be appropriate to some roles. This concern can be overcome by ensuring consistent and fair policies are developed that suit the employees and the organisation. Many organisations already have a Work and Family policy that ensures family-friendly workplace policies.

A formalised approach to determine the viability of a request for a flexible work option may be beneficial, such as standardised procedures to:

- assess a flexible work option request
- implement the agreed change
- periodically measure the effectiveness of the change.

A good starting point for employers is to:

- look at the key operational requirements of the business and what flexible work practices might suit work requirements, and
- ask employees which family-friendly work practices would assist them to balance their work, life and family responsibilities.

A needs analysis can be undertaken by identifying the organisation's key operating requirements such as client contact hours, equipment operating needs, minimum staffing requirements, inefficiencies, workflow and workload peaks and troughs, and determining which family-friendly work practices would suit these operational needs.

The needs of employees can be ascertained through:

- asking employees individually (will work best in a small workplace)
- open discussion with employees in staff meetings
- asking employees through general employee surveys or through their managers and supervisors or
- a formal work and family survey.

Flexible/phased retirement

Flexible or phased retirement is any arrangement that enables employees to reduce their work hours and/or job responsibilities for the purpose of gradually easing into full retirement at a sometimes much later date. It could involve:

- part-time work
- part-year work
- working in a role with a reduced level of responsibility
- working in a job-share arrangement
- taking an extended leave of absence in preparation towards retirement
- aggregating and averaging ordinary hours of work
- re-employment after a period of retirement as a consultant, contractor, temporary or casual worker.

While it may sometimes be difficult from a short-term operational point of view to offer employees flexible retirement options or an opportunity to re-enter the workforce, these types of options can provide employers with unique opportunities to attract and retain experienced and valued employees. Supervisors should be appropriately trained to ensure they do not inhibit employees from accessing flexible/phased retirement options.

Benefits for employers include:

- the extended retention of skilled, experienced employees who can contribute to the effectiveness of the organisation
- better management of potential skill shortages
- ability to transfer knowledge from the experienced worker
- improved capacity to transfer critical corporate knowledge and skills
- improved continuity with customers and stakeholders as employees more gradually phase in and out of critical roles

- improved employee morale and commitment
- reduced absenteeism and lateness
- potential for improved occupational health and safety
- enhanced corporate image.

Potential benefits of flexible retirement for employees include:

- the maintenance of self-esteem and confidence
- continued access to satisfying paid work while moving into retirement
- retaining a sense of identity, belonging, contribution and connection to community where work is a central life interest
- the ability to offer an employer sought after or difficult to replace skills
- improved work/life balance
- the ability to maintain an income and health benefits.

Financial implications of phased retirement options

Employees are advised to seek financial advice before entering into phased retirement arrangements and consider the effect on their accrual of paid leave entitlements.

Superannuation

In superannuation terms phased retirement is often referred to as 'transition to retirement'. Mature-age employees considering a 'transition to retirement' arrangement should contact their superannuation provider to discuss the effect any pre-retirement working arrangement may have on their superannuation, and what options they have in accessing their superannuation to supplement their income.

“It’s not just a matter of keeping them on, it’s a matter of keeping them on and giving them a worthwhile role with clear objectives, that contribute to the business. These people have generally been in the business, all their life was focused on the performance of the business. To suggest to sort of park them off to the side - I don’t think is going to attract them to stay.”

– Jack White Senior Manager (Product Support), Boeing.

Flexible options at work:

Part-time work

Part-time work involves less than the full-time weekly hours of duty of an employee as prescribed by the applicable award or industrial agreement. It may take a number of forms. For example, employees may work:

- part of a day, say from 10.00am to 3.00pm or
- part of a week, say from Tuesday to Thursday or
- two days one week and three days the next week or
- one week on and one week off, and so on.

Some part-time work arrangements provide for an employee to work a set number of hours each week, but it is left up to the employee to arrange a schedule to suit.

The particular arrangements are normally to be recorded in an agreement between the employer and employee that sets out:

- the part-time employee’s specified hours
- the duration of the agreement
- any other specific matters such as return to full-time work arrangements.

If the employee wishes to increase or decrease their working hours at a future time, the employer and employee may agree that the employee may do so as soon as practicable, depending on prevailing work, organisation factors and operational requirements.

All part-time work agreements must comply with the requirements of the relevant award or industrial instrument. Restrictions on the availability of part-time work and the setting of maximum or minimum hours of work for part-time employees are generally no longer a feature of awards and industrial instruments. The pattern of hours and days to be worked, depending on workplace legislation, may be changed by individual agreement between employer and employee.

Part-time work allows flexibility for businesses to better utilise employees and creative opportunities for effectively and efficiently managing productivity. It also offers greater flexibility for employees to balance their work and personal lives.

Part-time as a retirement option

It is likely that an increasing number of older workers will be interested in part-time work as a flexible retirement option. This could involve interested employees moving from say, five days per week to four days per week, or six hours per day instead of seven or eight and gradually reducing their working hours as they progress towards full retirement.

From the employee perspective part-time work can be used to reduce working hours and income gradually so as to avoid a shock from income change and remain connected to the work environment, albeit in a reduced capacity.

For the employer, part-time work provides a cost effective means of retaining and transferring important corporate knowledge and specialist skills.

There are very few jobs that cannot successfully be adapted to a part-time or job share basis. However, the success of part-time work arrangements will depend on the willingness of employers, managers and supervisors to make it work and their understanding of the issues involved.

Part-time work should be designed so that the workload is proportionate with the number of hours worked, offers varied tasks and involves skill development. The basis for an employee initiated reduction from full-time to part-time employment is normally the conversion of the employee's working hours rather than the conversion of a particular job.

Possible part-time strategies:

Change in attitudes	Identify ways and means of dispelling organisational perceptions that employees who choose to work part-time are less dedicated to their work or are not interested in a career or a varied workload.
Lateral thinking	Apply lateral problem solving approaches to workload management and design of part-time work opportunities.
Company policy	Ensure that company policy about part-time work includes information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how to apply and the rights of employees and managers to initiate requests for part-time work• providing feedback on reasons for non-approval and objective justification as to why jobs are not suitable for part-time work arrangements• the rights, responsibilities and processes involved in converting from part-time work to full-time work and vice versa• mechanisms for promoting the integration of part-time staff including access to development and training opportunities, career structures and communication and consultation mechanisms• designing part-time work opportunities that value the worker and avoid creating mundane monotonous part-time jobs• the impact on superannuation• ways of addressing any grievances that may arise.

Case Study— Mt Gravatt Coach and Travel

Mt Gravatt Coach and Travel General Manager Skye Naismith said 95 per cent of its 35 drivers are over 45-years-old and the company is always developing strategies to cater for the changing demographics of its staff.



Mt Gravatt Coach and Travel mature drivers Jon Nantes (left) and Marie Sharp, with fellow drivers Leon Batman, Jim McCleary, Donald Harris, John Harris, Col Levett, Max Simpson, and Percy Forrester.

“Over the past 10 years we have become aware that many of our existing drivers are approaching retirement age and looking at reducing their hours, which would leave significant gaps to fill,” said Skye.

“We have found that older drivers are generally more experienced road users, are patient, flexible, have life skills they can call on in an emergency and provide good customer service, especially when dealing with school children.

“We have a variety of work to offer employees and can adapt to what a person is looking for, be it school runs for two hours in the morning or long distance coach trips – we have structured our business to best cater for flexible employment options including the option to salary sacrifice.”

Mt Gravatt Coach and Travel is always on the look out for staff and have tried some creative recruitment strategies including advertising for drivers on score cards at the local bowls club.

“We try to place an ad where older people might stumble across it,” said Skye.

“Many older people feel uneasy about applying for a job and make a point of telling us that they are old—often over 60—and we assure them they’re ‘spring chickens’ compared to some of our employees!”

The company also provides accredited and on-the-job training which the drivers are completing at work and not in their own valuable time. All drivers have also completed their Certificate II in Transport and Distribution and are now completing their Certificate III.

Skye said the average staff retention rate is seven years, while 59-year-old Marie and 68-year-old Jon have served with the company even longer. “Marie has been with us for 22 years and Jon was our first employee 27 years ago,” said Skye.

“The sharing of knowledge is fantastic, for example Jon’s knowledge of the area and routes means he is always able to help other drivers out.”

“It would be difficult to replace that amount of knowledge so we offer flexibility to retain him.”

Job-sharing

Job-sharing is a voluntary arrangement where one full-time job is shared between part-time employees. Employers can offer a greater variety of employment options and provide flexibility for employees to choose preferred work patterns through job-sharing.

Job-sharing may also provide employers with opportunities to attract and retain people with scarce skills. A job could be shared on the basis of:

- 2.5 days on and off
- one day on, one day off
- one week on, one week off
- three days one week, two days the next week
- any other suitable combination of days.

Job-sharing may be attractive to employees with family care responsibilities or older workers who wish to phase into their retirement. Job-sharing may also provide the employer with extra coverage during peak periods and continuity of coverage when one share partner is sick or on other leave.

Conditions of employment are the same as for part-time employees with benefits accrued on a pro-rata basis. Likewise, it may be arranged at the initiative of the employer or the employees concerned.

There are three basic forms of job-sharing:

- **Shared responsibility** where two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time job. The two individuals perform the full range of tasks of a single position together with either member able to pick up where the other one left off. This type of arrangement is most suited to ongoing work, rather than project based work. It will, however, require a high level of communication and coordination between the workers involved and need to be implemented carefully so as not to disrupt customers and co-workers. Well matched partners are critical to the success of this type of arrangement.
- **A divided responsibility** arrangement occurs when two people share one full-time position and divide its responsibilities clearly between them. They may also provide back-up for each other as needed. This arrangement works well when the work can be easily divided and may be performed by partners who do not know each other well.
- **The unrelated responsibility model** is where the two job-share partners perform completely different tasks but generally work in the same unit. This arrangement is essentially two part-time jobs. It is most suited to situations where partners do have similar skill levels.

Job-sharing strategies:

Job-share register	Implement a job-share register to assist with managing job-share opportunities for interested employees.
Job-share agreements	Use job-share agreements that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a plan of action for when either partner leaves the job or the organisation, or wishes to take up full-time employment (e.g. procedure for selecting a new partner or offering the remaining partner the whole position etc.)• information about how the workload, responsibilities and accountabilities are shared or otherwise between the partners, and• arrangements for the separate performance appraisal of each of the partners.

Working from home

Working from home or telecommuting involves employees working away from the workplace. The main benefit of a home based work arrangement is the flexible working hours that can help employees who have family or other life commitments to better integrate these with their work commitments. Other benefits include savings in travel costs and commuting times.

Home-based work may be attractive to older workers who are experiencing difficulties starting or finishing work at a particular time because of family care commitments combined with excessive travel times to their place of work. A reduced travel requirement may also assist older workers to better manage the physiological impacts of ageing.

Job characteristics that lend themselves to working from home include:

- a high degree of intellectual work rather than manual work
- work performed on an individual basis, or with clearly defined areas of individual work, such as:
 - project work
 - research and report writing
 - policy analysis
 - case work
- work which has clearly defined objectives and is not subject to sudden changes in priorities
- work where performance can be measured
- work that does not require frequent input from other staff members or centrally provided facilities.

Jobs that involve continual interaction with the public; a high degree of interaction with other workers or that require the use of specialised facilities or equipment are likely to be less suited to working from home arrangements.

Part-year work and special leave without pay

Part-year work

Arrangements, by agreement between employer and employee, where an employee takes a number of weeks leave without pay in addition to their annual recreation leave entitlement are sometimes referred to as part-year work arrangements. Salary is paid for weeks worked, recreation and other leave accrued and the remainder of the year is unpaid. This type of arrangement may be suitable where workloads fluctuate, or employees need to take additional leave during school holiday periods.

Part-year work arrangements can be facilitated by a 48/52 or other purchased leave work agreement, or simply by the employee taking a regular agreed period of special leave without pay.

Special leave without pay

Some employees may be interested in accessing a period of special leave without pay to investigate and trial their involvement in some new activities leading up to their retirement, such as volunteer work, hobbies or extended care of family members while still maintaining their access to their existing job until such time as they are ready to make a more permanent decision regarding their future workforce participation.

Case Study—Carpentaria Shire Council

The Carpentaria Shire Council is one organisation which has taken to the new trend of employing older workers seasonally.



Carpentaria Shire Council seasonal employees John Richter and Helen Short.

The North Queensland region has thousands of people pass through its visitor information centre's doors each year.

So why not make the most of those willing to stay on?

Council corporate services director Jane Ticehurst said she had been working with seasonal workers for a number of years.

"You can pick up experienced staff and for us it fills a really busy time of the year," Mrs Ticehurst said.

"We are quite seasonal so we pick up that extra staff.

"Experience in a specific area is handy and quite often these new employees can pass on that knowledge to a local employee."

Doing just this are John Richter and Helen Short.

The pair, who are in their late 50s, have devoted their life to travelling in their caravan. A good chunk of that time is spent in the Carpentaria Shire town of Normanton.

In 2007 Ms Short took up the job of tourism officer to help launch the region's new visitor information centre. She returned next season to provide advice to other travellers.

Meanwhile, Mr Richter has joined the council's road crew.

"We did go home to Victoria for two months at Christmas and we spent another month on holiday but now we'll be here until November," Ms Short said.

"We have been travelling around Australia for four years.

"It's a beautiful country and we love the uniqueness of this area.

"It's a great opportunity."

(Written by Candice Holznagel APNAP search4jobs.)

Voluntary reduced level

Older employees may be interested in working in a job at a lower level as a flexible retirement option. This could involve a reduction in management responsibility in order to focus on a special project; becoming responsible for a range of mentoring based activities or a specific ‘handover’ of knowledge and skills based role.

The basis for an employee initiated reduction in level could include:

- appointment to substantially different job at a lower level following a selection process to fill a particular available vacancy
- redeployment to a similar or like job at a lower level, or
- conversion of the employee’s existing duties and responsibilities where work organisation factors permit. For example, an employee may phase out of certain responsibilities and utilise their knowledge and skills in other ways, such as through mentoring and coaching. This option may require a job evaluation to determine the relative worth of the converted job.

The idea of an older employee opting to work at a lower level may not always be encouraged by the prevailing culture in the workplace. Employers and other staff may be more comfortable with, and accepting of, older employees making a clean break from employment to retirement. Potential participants may be concerned about the impact on their superannuation benefits and accrued leave entitlements. Co-workers may feel uncomfortable at the thought of working alongside someone who was previously their supervisor. Others may have been anticipating a vacancy that is now being made available to someone who has ‘already had their turn’ at working at that level and so on. However the positives of developing and promoting this strategy are:

- lower staff turnover
- improved employee morale and commitment
- reduced stress and improved productivity
- a more flexible workforce
- fulfilment of equal opportunity objectives
- good corporate citizenship and an enhanced corporate image.

Possible strategies:

Job redesign	Redesign a job to create ‘special skill and knowledge transfer’ roles for particularly skilled employees who are interested in working at a reduced level of management or supervisory responsibility where the particular skill and knowledge transfer is critical to ensuring future organisational capability (see Health and wellbeing).
Financial implications	Make sure all employees have access to basic information about the superannuation and any leave entitlement implications, including long service leave, of working at a lower classification level as part of a flexible retirement strategy.

Aggregating and averaging ordinary hours of work

Aggregating working hours enables employees to work varied weekly hours, provided that at the end of a stated work cycle, such as three months, the employee has worked the total ordinary hours.

Averaging working hours arrangements enable employees to average ordinary hours of work over a cycle with differential daily and weekly hours. For example, in a two-week work cycle an employee (whose ordinary hours are 38 per week) may work 45 hours in the first week and 31 hours in the second week.

Overtime arrangements and penalty payments apply only to time worked in excess of the agreed hours of duty depending on the relevant industrial instrument such as award provisions or certified agreement.

Considerations

Aggregated hours arrangements are designed to cater mainly for seasonal work or industries that experience discernible peaks and troughs in work loads at different times of the year, for example, audit functions, rural fire fighting, gardening related functions.

Averaging hours arrangements are designed to cater mainly for consistently fluctuating demands over regular (and usually short-term) periods. For example, payroll functions aligned to fortnightly pay periods that involve a ‘busy’ week and a ‘quiet’ week.

In both instances, the total number of ordinary hours worked over a defined period are rearranged, rather than reduced or increased. These arrangements are specifically intended to enable a business to open to best suit the client in order

to improve service delivery, and to assist individual employees to balance their work and other life commitments if organisationally viable. There may also be the broader benefit of improved productivity, for example, altered hours patterns to align with internal cyclical demands.

These options need to be assessed first to ensure the outcomes benefit all concerned. Any arrangement needs to be recorded and agreed between the employee and the employer with any changes also agreed and recorded.

“Ken was a retired traffic engineer who left Brisbane City Council with special expertise the City Assets branch could not replace. Ken came back after 12 months in retirement to work three days a week, taking three months off at a time to travel. Ken’s return meant he was able to document and pass his knowledge on. He has now decided to return into retirement but the City Assets branch is now in a better position to maintain the role.”

– Paul Cotton City Assets branch Manager, Brisbane City Council.

Re-entering the workforce / un-retirement

Another workplace trend is ‘un-retirement’ or re-entering the workforce after a period of retirement, particularly on a part-time basis. Reasons range from financial (e.g. insufficient savings for retirement and inadequate pension income) to personal (e.g. preference and/or physical ability to remain actively engaged in the workforce rather than in leisure activities).

Engagement of former employees under different arrangements such as temporary, casual or contract work is therefore becoming more common as people’s attitudes to retirement and/or their financial circumstances change.

Note: Where a decision is being made to engage a former employee as a temporary or casual or on contract for a fixed term, both the employer and employee need to make themselves aware of the impact this may have on their taxation and superannuation arrangements and their superannuation entitlements. Prospective former employees should be advised to seek financial and superannuation advice before committing to re-enter the workforce subsequent to formally ‘retiring’ from the workforce.

Encourage retired and former employees to return to your business

Re-entry register	Establish a re-entry employment register open to former employees who are interested in future temporary, casual or contracted employment opportunities. Re-entry employment registers should be open to interested former employees of all ages. A re-entry register could be used to assist employers to fill temporary vacancies due to leave, to address peaks in production cycles or to better respond to the demands of special projects.
Alumni program	Set up an Alumni Club of all former staff to receive a regular newsletter. This opens up avenues for maintaining contact and conveying workplace information and social and work opportunities to ex-employees.

Case Study – Queensland Transport

Seventy-seven year-old Shirley Johnstone retired in her 60s after working for 20 years managing a busy radiology clinic in Sydney but continued with relief work.



Queensland Transport's Principal Customer Service Officer Shirley Johnstone.

“I got bored out of my brain,” Shirley said.

A few years later, Shirley moved to Queensland to be with her son and family and started working in a casual position with Queensland Transport at the Logan Customer Service Centre, moving to a full-time position at the Brisbane City Customer Service Centre eight years ago.

“I quite enjoy it here—there’s a good mix of generations and I like the face-to-face aspect—it keeps you alert.”

Centre Manager Vilma Amaya said Shirley motivates the rest of the customer service team members who deal with about 600 customers each day.

“Shirley can really adapt to all generations,” Vilma said.

“The youngest we have working here is 18-years-old and Shirley has no problems relating to younger people —everybody respects and appreciates her.

“Even difficult customers are different with Shirley.”

Shirley said having six grandchildren and one great-grandchild enabled her to mix with different age groups.

“There was one young girl I worked with who wanted to adopt me as her grandma,” Shirley said.

Vilma said Shirley adapts easily to new systems and databases which are constantly being updated at the centre.

“We recently had a new database for licensing transitions which everybody had to learn and Shirley is using it the same as everybody else,” Vilma said.

“I use it all the time,” Shirley said.

“If you don’t use it you lose it!”

Shirley works a nine-day fortnight and despite travelling for an hour to and from the other side of Beenleigh to Brisbane each day, is not tired of working. She also ensures she has a 30 minute walk into the city each morning, getting off her train early at the South Brisbane station.

“I’m not thinking of full retirement—if I’m healthy I’ll keep working,” Shirley said.

“After two months off on long service leave, I was happy to get back to work.

“Although I’ll admit I’m always glad when my four-day week comes around.”

Shirley also has a very busy family life, looking after three of her young grandchildren most weekends.

“I was lucky to be born with good genes—my father worked in the building industry until he was 78,” said Shirley.

Knowledge transfer and retention



Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland mature-age trainee John Mansaray

Knowledge transfer and retention

It is essential that the valuable corporate knowledge and on-the-job experience of an organisation's older workers is effectively captured and/or passed on to other employees.

Smart employers are putting measures in place such as succession planning and mentoring to ensure their corporate and workplace knowledge is not lost.

A recent survey revealed 48 per cent of employees aged 50 years and over plan to progressively reduce their hours and days at work in a phased retirement, with all anticipating having commenced scaling back by 2014. One in three plan to cease work immediately upon retirement age. However, 86 per cent had not discussed succession planning with their employers.*

* (from *Benefits Outside the Square* – Mercer 2008)

Succession planning and management

Succession planning and management focuses on the establishment of the future capabilities and staffing needs of your business, and the development of strategies and methods to manage them. This is achieved through the development of skills and capabilities in groups of employees through a transparent, equitable and meritorious process.

When applied appropriately as an integral component of workforce planning, succession planning and management will:

- enhance the transfer of skills and knowledge
- facilitate the retention of corporate knowledge
- ensure that there is a suitable pool of applicants when positions become available
- make transparent the possible career paths in a business
- reduce perceived 'career blocks' and job stagnation.

The ageing workforce presents a challenge to succession planning and management. As well as the increase in number of employees who are eligible to retire there is:

- a trend for younger employees, the so-called X and Y generations, not to remain in the same job for as long as their predecessors and to have quite different work needs and career aspirations, and
- a tendency for the nature and types of jobs available in a business to change significantly and repeatedly due to rapid technological and economic changes.

Succession planning and management needs to focus on the skills needed rather than developing people for specific current job requirements. It is more likely to be integrated with normal business learning strategies while ensuring the availability of a good supply of suitable skilled employees from both within and outside your business. It will need to have a future focus which could be difficult as entirely new jobs may be created in the future.

Most importantly, succession planning and management practices are to complement merit based employee selection principles by ensuring that anyone who has the necessary skills is able to compete for promotion opportunities based on merit.

In an ageing workforce, succession management strategies need to ensure that older workers formally pass on the skills and knowledge they have gained to others in your business before they withdraw from the workforce. Simply briefing the next person in the job about the status of the work underway will not be sufficient to ensure all knowledge and information is passed on.

Possible succession planning and management strategies:

Forecast pending retirements	Identify whether or not your business faces a potential exodus of a significant number of older employees due to retirement in areas where expertise and skills are not readily available from outside your business and where these are not likely to be the focus for development anywhere outside the business. Consider how you will address the impacts on your business's capability.
Forecast skill requirements	Implement a formal succession planning process that engages senior management in the discipline of regularly reviewing the future skill requirements of your business.

Implement knowledge transfer	Develop specific plans, policies, systems and processes for passing the knowledge and experience of older workers on to others before they fully retire from the workforce, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying critical 'at risk' knowledge areas and positions • conducting skill and knowledge audits • introducing knowledge transfer based training and mentoring • job shadowing • job-sharing • knowledge mapping • team based work practices.
Develop skills for the future	Offer leadership and skill development opportunities that build key identified future capability or skill requirements across all levels of your business.
Foster ambition	Encourage interested employees with opportunities for higher duties and project work.
Encourage job-sharing	Encourage job-sharing between employees who may be staying and employees who may be leaving.

There is evidence to suggest that where employees feel there is a lack of promotional opportunities or opportunities for new or interesting work (career blocks) there may be increased stress-related health problems in affected workers. By reducing these problems, succession planning and management may bring financial benefits in terms of a decline in workers' compensation claims for stress-related health issues, and a decrease in the rate of staff turnover and early retirements.

Case Study— Sound Control

Sixty-two year-old Dom Taraborrelli has been a boilermaker with acoustic engineering company Sound Control for 12 years and has been associated with the company for nearly 30 years.



Sound Control boilermaker Dom Taraborrelli and apprentice Jacob Sewell.

Sound Control's Production Manager Paul Bennett said 40 per cent of the company's employees were over 45-years-old and several were in their late 50s or over 60 years old.

"All the older workers do exactly the same job and tasks as the younger workers," Paul said.

"We need them here to pass on to the younger workers the experience and the traditional skills that aren't taught in college.

"Dom particularly has a long history with the company and has the respect of everyone on the floor, including our clients and external quality inspectors.

"He's multi-skilled and can do anything – I often seek his advice on designs – he thinks through a job the whole way through."

Dom also has a solid track record with apprentices – his last apprentice, Gavin Fentiman, received a bronze medal at the 2002 World Skills Olympics.

"It's not just the trade skills he passes on, it's life skills - he sets them on the right track in life, even bringing a healthy lunch in each day."

Dom's latest apprentice Jacob Sewell agrees and plans on staying with Sound Control after completing his apprenticeship to continue learning from Dom.

"I want to work with Dom for as long as I can," Jacob said.

"When you work with Dom you really work with him – he doesn't just tell you what to do he shows you."

Dom is modest about his status in the workshop and does not intend on slowing down or retiring.

"I don't think I'll retire – as long as my health is good," Dom said.

"I feel excited to come to work each morning."

Dom is extremely dedicated to the job working six days a week and always putting his hand up for overtime.

"Dom is a beacon - if we had a workshop full of Doms we wouldn't need as many guys," Paul said.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a relationship which gives people the opportunity to share their professional and personal skills and experiences, and to grow and develop in the process.

Typically, it is a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and a less experienced employee. It is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

Why a mentoring program?

Mentoring is an effective strategy which can contribute significantly to the career development of employees. It has particular benefits for members of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) groups, who historically have not had good access to employment-based mentoring.

There are good reasons to consider a mentoring program:

- Mentoring is a relatively easy to administer strategy which can improve the self-esteem and job competitiveness of women and other EEO group members.
- Mentoring is an effective method for the transference of professional, technical and management skills and knowledge.
- Mentoring focuses on developing employees' skills and potential, and can therefore enhance the diversity of the workforce to reflect the business's client groups.
- Mentoring benefits all concerned — the business, the mentorees, mentors and other employees — by increasing the skills, flexibility and knowledge of all participating employees.
- Mentoring is conducted in-house and so can meet the particular needs of the business.

The benefits of mentoring programs

Structured mentoring programs can offer the following benefits to mentorees, mentors and employers:

Benefits to the mentoree

- increased skills and knowledge
- increased potential for career mobility and promotion
- improved understanding of their roles in the business
- insights into the culture and unwritten rules of the business

- a supportive environment in which successes and failures can be evaluated
- a smoother transition through management levels
- a powerful learning tool to acquire competencies and professional experience
- potential for increased visibility
- networking opportunities
- development of professional skills and self-confidence
- recognition and satisfaction
- empowerment

Benefits to the mentor

- opportunities to test new ideas
- enhanced knowledge of other areas of the business
- renewed enthusiasm for their role as an experienced employee
- challenging discussions with people who have fresh perspectives
- satisfaction from contributing to the mentoree's development
- opportunities to reflect upon and articulate their role
- improved ability to share experience and knowledge

Benefits to the employer

- improved productivity through more informed and skilled staff
- application of knowledge gained from mentoring
- reduced recruitment and selection costs as a result of higher employee retention
- progress towards equal opportunity in the workplace
- improved communication between separate areas of the business
- support networks for employees in times of organisational change
- managers with enhanced people management skills
- successful mentorees often become mentors and better people managers.

Developing a mentoring program

Plan

Draw up a plan for your mentoring program including:

- the aims
- the desired outcomes

- performance indicators
- how many mentoree/mentor pairs will be in the program
- the level of training and support to be given to mentorees and mentors
- how long the program will run (usually nine to twelve months).

Select and match participants

There are various models for matching mentorees with mentors. In deciding which method is best for your mentoring program, consideration will need to be given to the aims of the program, the needs of the mentoree group that the program is aimed at and the culture of your business.

Sometimes, a mentoree and mentor independently form pairs. Usually, however, the participants will need assistance to form pairs.

One strategy is to hold a meeting at which all parties outline their needs and expectations. Subsequently, either the mentorees only or all participants confidentially indicate their first and second preferences for their partner. This process can be facilitated by previous distribution of the career details, strengths and preferences of the mentors to mentorees.

This method will not suit all situations, for example with some cultural groups, and for some employees who would experience the process as too open and threatening.

Another approach is where a facilitator matches mentorees and mentors based on information supplied on a confidential form. Details can include career aspirations, what is hoped to be gained from the program, 'demographic' data such as age, particular skills/expertise held, and other information relevant to the program objectives. The facilitator can be assisted in the matching process, as required.

Much has been said and written about male/female pairs. In general, the attributes of the potential mentor are more important than her/his gender. The effectiveness of the mentoring relationship is the crucial issue. However, some mentorees will feel more comfortable with/want to be matched with a mentor of a certain gender, and it may be wise to include scope for this.

In matching mentorees with mentors the following factors need to be considered:

- The mentor should be a person with greater experience and knowledge and, for the first mentoring experience, usually working in the same area as the mentoree.

- The mentor should have a flexible and progressive management style, particularly in people management.
- The mentoree must trust the mentor, and know that confidence will be kept.
- The mentor needs to be a person who will enjoy helping the mentoree develop skills and knowledge, and be able to share knowledge and experience openly and honestly.
- The mentor acts as the mentoree's guide, consultant and coach. While friendship may evolve, it is not the primary goal of the relationship.
- It is recommended that the mentor be someone other than the mentoree's immediate manager, in order for the mentoree to expand networks, and to avoid potentially conflicting roles. It is important, however, that the manager be involved in the process and kept informed, so that she/he can contribute to the process.

Provide training

Research suggests that the most successful training approach is one which has both separate and combined sessions for mentorees and mentors. Some organisations have also invited the mentorees' managers to the mentor sessions to make them familiar with the process and encourage their co-operation with the program.

It should be acknowledged that not all those selected to be mentors are totally confident in the role. A mentors' support network can provide a recognised forum for discussion and mutual support.

Monitor, support and evaluate

Support should be offered, particularly in the first two months, but care should also be taken to avoid intruding into the establishment of the mentoring relationships.

Expect your program to develop and change as your organisation gains more mentoring experience. Programs need to be fluid and flexible to meet the changing attributes and needs of the participants and the business.

All development programs can become more effective with experience and evaluation, but recognise the successes of the program, particularly when communicating results to the rest of your staff.

Case Study—J.J. Richards & Sons

Dirk Wagensveld has worked for waste management, recycling and environmental services company J.J.Richards for over 30 years and at 65 years of age Dirk has a wealth of experience, skills and knowledge.



J.J.Richards supervisor and trainer Dirk Wagensveld (right) and trainee Lelan Harrington.

Dirk works a compressed four-day week at the engineering plant in Underwood and for one of those days he mentors trainees from Woodridge State High School.

Dirk is passing on his valuable skills and experience to students who will move into jobs with the company once they have finished their schooling.

“I’m not ready to stop and I get satisfaction seeing a kid get a leg up,” Dirk said.

“If I can make someone’s job easier I’m happy to show others.”

Dirk said he would rather be at work than retired at home.

“It’s better than taking up a hobby, which usually costs money - I like working with my hands, I find it very satisfying and I can come to work and get paid for it.”

Dirk’s employer has redesigned his job to reduce the heavy work and given him the option to cut back to three days a week further down the track if he wants.

“I’m still here for a bit more,” Dirk said.

“There are a lot of nice people here and I still have a few things to offer.”



Blue Care Pine Woods Aged Care Centre's Shirley Robinson and Sue McCoy.

Health and wellbeing

Some employers are already realising that to become an employer of choice they need to provide benefits and options to their employees that go beyond financial incentives and contribute to improving the health, safety and wellbeing of employees.

Employers who consider appropriate workplace health and safety measures for the changing physiology of older workers, support them to develop career paths within the company through training and retraining, assist them to make healthy lifestyle choices, and are mindful of the family responsibilities they may have, will be more likely to retain their valuable older workers.

Career and lifestyle planning

Research suggests that employees are more likely to make sound decisions regarding their careers and retirement options if they are able to access relevant information on career paths, financial planning and lifestyle planning. They are then in a position to make informed decisions and plans with a long-range view. Following are some suggestions as to how you might assist your employees in their career and retirement planning while taking into consideration work/life balance issues.

Career planning for all employees	Provide career planning and job enrichment for all employees in your business, as the ageing workforce does not only affect mature-age employees.
Implement effective strategies	Ensure managers in your business are trained, involved and committed to implement strategies designed to address the needs of an ageing and diverse workforce.
Financial and lifestyle planning	Encourage all employees to manage their careers and future by providing access to financial and healthy lifestyle planning.

Develop skills for the future	Offer leadership and skill development opportunities that build key identified future capability or skill requirements across all levels of your business.
Retirement plans	Encourage employees to prepare for their future by completing retirement plans that consider lifestyle and financial planning.
Access retirement information	Encourage employees to attend retirement seminars. Centrelink provides a range of seminars and advice on how to maximise retirement income through investments and government benefits.
Superannuation assistance	Encourage employees to consult with their superannuation fund to estimate the effect of pre-retirement strategies on their final superannuation benefit. Liaise with relevant superannuation funds to ensure that you are aware of the superannuation implications associated with implementing pre-retirement strategies in your business.
Work life balance	Conduct a work/life balance survey within your organisation. Some of the issues that you might like to explore include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the retirement intentions of employees? • Are there indications that a relatively large number of employees intend to retire over the next 10 to 15 years? • What occupations will be most affected by these reported retirement intentions? • How do I ensure I have the right mix of skills amongst my employees to maintain a healthy and growing business?

Healthy workplaces

Despite evidence that age related physical changes may make older workers more vulnerable to workplace injuries, the ABS work-related injuries survey does not indicate that injuries and disease increase with increasing age. This may be because older workers are more likely to be aware of safety issues, have developed their own means of avoiding injury due to experience on the job or may have in fact moved out of industries where the risk of injury would otherwise increase with age.

The more healthy workers are, irrespective of their age, the more productive they will be in the workplace.

Possible healthy workplace strategies (for all workers) include:

Modification of work/ job task design	Improve job and work task design by avoiding the use of excessive work rates and production workload targets. For example, self-paced work is preferable to machine-paced work or time limits imposed for handling call centre based inquiries. Research indicates that employees experience lower anxiety, lower depression and higher job satisfaction when they have higher control over the timing of their work and methods they use in their work. Adequate control can enable older workers, particularly, to adopt performance strategies to minimise problems that may be associated with age related reductions in processing and response speed.
Training	Offer training about the easiest and most efficient methods for task performance. This should be available for all workers, regardless of age.
Workplace adjustments	Adjust aspects of the job or workplace to match workers' needs in terms of mobility, ergonomics or other requirements.
Getting into shape	Encourage employees to take on healthy physical activities during the day like routine stretching breaks; bring in an instructor to take pilates or yoga classes during lunch periods; support a walking club during lunch periods.
Find out more	Contact Workplace Health and Safety Queensland for more information on 1300 369 915 or visit: www.worksafe.qld.gov.au

“In our environment, a potentially hazardous work area, older workers could be at risk of a lot of chronic injuries but we’ve turned that around. Because of the age of our workforce we had to make modifications in the workplace – the ageing workforce is forcing us to look at that now. The older guys have helped us with that and our injury rates are low.”

– Noel Hoelscher Employee Development Manager, O-I Brisbane plant.

Caring responsibilities: elder care, spousal care and caring for grandchildren

Older employees may have a wide range of family obligations that impact on their working lives. The care of ageing parents, partners or other relatives are responsibilities that are often taken on by family members. Elder or spousal care may take a number of forms, ranging from direct care-giving to the handling of medical, financial and legal issues. In other cases, older employees may wish or need to spend some time caring for grandchildren.

Some employees will be concerned about how to manage these responsibilities while continuing to work full-time and may benefit from being able to access information about what forms of government, private and not-for-profit assistance is available. Others may be interested in reducing their working hours or varying their starting and ceasing times to better suit their caring commitments. It is important to ensure all employees have work/family balance; this is a key area in the retention of staff.

The extent to which employers accommodate the needs of employees with family responsibilities is an emerging issue. The *Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* now prohibits discrimination on the basis of the attribute of family responsibilities. This attribute was added by amendment effective from 1 April 2003. Family responsibilities include a person's responsibilities to care for or support a dependant child of the person or any other member of the person's immediate family who is in need of care or support.

Possible strategies:

Communication	Encourage employees to talk to you or their supervisors about any concerns they may have about balancing work and family responsibilities.
Flexible work options	Flexible work practices, special responsibility leave for caring purposes and employee assistance programs may be able to assist. For more information about flexible work practices see ' <i>Flexible Work Options</i> '.
Information and support	Ensure supervisors are trained to provide individual employees with information about where to find out about elder care support services or child care services. Elder and spousal care support services include information about being a carer, community services, respite care, counselling and financial entitlements.

Carer support services

These organisations may be able to assist employees with caring responsibilities:

- Centrelink for carer information and assistance including financial support: visit www.centrelink.gov.au
- The Australian Government site Seniors.gov.au provides information about government and non-government services for people over 50 including information for carers: visit www.seniors.gov.au
- The Queensland Government's Department of Communities has information for carers including access to the Carer Business Discount Card: visit www.communities.qld.gov.au

Case Study— Blue Care

With over 39 years experience working in community health and aged care services throughout rural Queensland, Robin Goddard is too busy to think about retirement.



Blue Care's Carelink Team Leader Robin Goddard.

"I like gardening but I would become very bored if I did not come into work," said Robin.

"And professionally I think I still have a lot to offer."

Sixty year-old Robin Goddard is Team Leader of six staff at Blue Care's Carelink stream of the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre in Toowoomba, sharing her valuable knowledge and experience in rural Queensland's aged care industry while carrying out an important role in the community.

“We cover an area of 440 000 square kilometres helping people to find the aged care services they require, whether that’s residential care, care in the home, or a variation,” Robin said.

She works full-time, compressing her week into a nine day fortnight so she can care for family members on her day off.

“Blue Care could not have been more helpful when I approached them about this arrangement.”

Blue Care Executive Director Stephen Muggleton said Blue Care is investing in higher wages and better work conditions for frontline staff to retain experienced mature-age workers.

“With the nationwide shortage of skilled health care workers, valuing the staff we have and ensuring we retain them is vital,” Mr Muggleton said.

“Providing flexibility in work hours and superannuation benefits for mature-age staff are just a couple of ways of achieving this.

“We are also developing new recruitment strategies to attract mature-age workers back as direct care staff and we encourage innovation and support for their learning.”

Job redesign

It is natural to expect that in an ageing workforce it will be necessary to redesign some jobs to suit the changing physical capabilities of older workers. Where this is not practicable, retraining and redeployment to a more suitable role may be a good way to retain an older worker’s valued experience and knowledge. Age and gender balanced workplaces offer a healthy and diverse workplace environment.

Job redesign may simply be a matter of re-organising procedures so that an older worker is not lifting heavy equipment, or has clearer visibility in their work area. Or there may need to be more comprehensive planning and adjustment in order to improve your employee’s work/life. Whatever measures you need to make to ensure your experienced employees remain with your company will ultimately benefit all your employees, improve productivity and make for a happier workplace.

Factors to take into consideration when developing or redesigning a job for an older worker include:

Employee control	Ensure the employee has some control over their work, particularly key aspects or tasks. Work with them individually to negotiate any changes in their work.
Reduce physical loads	Older workers will be more able to perform effectively and without undue risk of injury if physical loads are reduced to match reduced physical strength. This is particularly important if repetitive movements are combined with postures that take effort to maintain, or with fast or forceful movements.
Avoid extreme conditions	Avoid an older employee's exposure to extreme hot or cold conditions. This should be done with any employee.
Good visibility	Ensure good visibility of task-related information. Eyesight often decreases with age, so the working environment may need to be modified to meet the changing visual capacities of older workers.
Reduce postural demands	Reduce postural demands for workers of all ages. Postures that take effort to maintain are one of the most commonly experienced risk factors for musculoskeletal injuries. For older workers the problems associated with such postures can be worsened by age-related reduction in joint mobility. Consideration should be given to lengthy seated work, continuous standing in the one position, squatting or kneeling.

Job redesign should occur in consultation and in a positive environment with your employee, particularly if it is established that the employee can no longer effectively and/or safely perform their current duties. You should allow individuals time to adapt to changed work requirements and monitor those changes with the worker.

Retraining and redeployment

It may be more appropriate to retrain and redeploy an older worker into a different role where their knowledge and experience can still be utilised. Depending on the new role your employee may only need to learn several new job tasks which can be taught within your organisation. Otherwise, more formal training may be necessary. Any retraining and/or redeployment should be done in a safe and positive environment for the worker, ensuring they don't feel less valued or that their job is at risk.

Despite some outdated myths, older workers are adaptable to change and very capable of learning new things. Very often older workers are keen to embrace new training opportunities.

Benefits for employers in retraining their older workers include:

- increased skill-base within their business
- higher retention rate of older experienced workers
- improved productivity
- reduced need to recruit new staff
- injured employees can be redeployed and the employer retains the skills and knowledge
- possible State and Federal Government funding incentives.

Training is a long-term investment that will pay off through the skills employees acquire for your business. You are also likely to have a lower staff turnover when you provide training options as employees feel valued no matter what their age. As well as this, other employees are likely to see the fairness afforded to older workers which may help the image of the organisation.

Mature-age apprenticeships and traineeships

Mature-age apprenticeships and traineeships are becoming more common in the workforce as more people are choosing to make a career change over the age of 45. They are an effective training option for employers as they not only improve staff retention but are often supported through government incentives and allowances.

For more information visit www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au or www.training.qld.gov.au

Case Study— Simon National Carriers

Simon National Carriers has branches throughout Australia including Brisbane, Toowoomba and Townsville employing 325 people including linehaul and local drivers.



Simon National Carriers drivers Gordon Paul (left), George New and Christopher Ratcliffe.

National Compliance and Safety Officer Merry Manton says close to 80 per cent of drivers are mature-age and many are long-term employees.

“People grow up with the company and are very much part of the family,” Merry said.

Simon offers employees flexible work options including varying their roles or tailoring rosters to fit in with family commitments.

“We allow drivers flexibility in their roster so they can be home when they need to be.

“And if a driver needs to come off long distance work, for family reasons perhaps, we bring them in locally.”

The company also provides training opportunities to all employees, irrespective of age.

“Training is open to everyone – no-one is too old to learn.

“We offer traineeships in frontline management, warehousing, road transport and apprenticeships in mechanics.”

Despite the labour shortages already experienced in the transport industry Simon has no problems finding staff, particularly since the State Government introduced the Transport Operation Road Use Management Regulations (TORUMS), which ensure that companies value their drivers and do not put unrealistic time frames on their deliveries.

“Everyone comes to us because we do the right thing,” Merry said.

Long-term employees are celebrated by the company which recognises the combined years of staff knowledge adds value to the business.

“Recently the company celebrated some staff members whose employment with Simon totalled over 100 years of service,” Merry said.

“That knowledge is valuable – it’s hard to replace that experience.”

Further information

For further general information on the *Smart workplace strategies: An employer's guide for managing an ageing workforce*, please contact the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation:

Telephone: 1800 630 647

Website: www.experiencepays.qld.gov.au

Telephone interpreter service: 13 14 50



Acknowledgments

Australian Industry Group (Ai Group)

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