

Catering to the Boomer Crowd

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New methods for attracting the largely untapped baby boomer demographic are sprouting up around the country.

A growing number of companies, being served by niche job boards and staffing agencies, are trying to penetrate the boomer demographic to fill key staffing shortages and maintain a competitive edge.

In the past few years, more and more companies are realizing that by the year 2010, almost one in three workers will be at least 50 years old.

For example, the Home Depot has partnered with the AARP to [1] [recruit](#) mature workers, even offering benefits for part-time employees.

[2] [The Refirement Group](#) is working to help redefine the attitudes and expectations of the boomer workforce. Through workshops and consulting to both employers and employees, the organization's mission is to "retire the concept of retirement [that is] not even as old as television. It was created for a male industrial workforce that literally needed to rest after 65."

Reinventing Retirement

Boomers, those born between 1946 and 1964, "have reinvented just about everything in our society, and they will continue to reinvent retirement, too," says Lisa Coppinger, owner of [3] [Continuing Careers.com](#).

In November 2006, Coppinger started [4] [networking](#) on ERE, offering recruiters and companies free promotional emails and free listings for 90 days. The niche job board now counts companies such as AAA, Cumberland Farms, Select Comfort, and T-Mobile as major clients.

"We post the jobs and direct the applicant to the company's website. We wanted to make this as easy as possible for the job seekers," says Coppinger. "We don't collect resumes or maintain a resume database, because then the hiring companies are competing with each other for applicants."

Continuing Careers has a variety of projects in motion as it continues to grow, such as increasing the diversity of job postings, available services, training resources, and how-to articles for easy training in various technology tools and features.

Yet she is quick to point out that the technology issue is not inclusive to the older generation. Some older workers are very tech-savvy, she notes, while some younger workers are still learning to navigate smoothly online.

"I even know some thirtysomethings who don't know how to use basic computer programs, such as how to attach a file to an email. It's not just inclusive to the older generation, but a lot of the older workers think that it's just them, so it might prevent them from using the technology," says Coppinger.

Leave Your IDs at Home

Another company tailoring to the boomer demographic is The Boomer Group, a staffing company that matches boomers looking for either part-time or full-time work with employers who need experienced help.

In early 2004, Stephanie Klein set up the company because she felt boomers were being underserved in the temporary work community.

[5] [The Boomer Group](#) specializes in recruiting and placing workers between 40 and mid-60s, "but we don't check IDs at the door," says Klein, founder and president of the Denver-based company.

The company prescreens, evaluates skills, checks references, verifies employment, and all of the other research tasks that traditional staffing firms conduct, except "the difference is that this older

generation has different experiences and value sets around work. There is value in having their perspective in the workplace. The people who we send are professional. We're pulling from a pool that our competition doesn't even look at," she says.

Battling Misconceptions

Klein says she finds two common misperceptions about boomer workers:

- **Older employees are a bad investment.** Companies think they are expensive, and once hired, they'll either retire or quickly become bored and leave as soon as another more senior-level job becomes available. "For personal, emotional, or financial reasons, many are postponing retirement. One main reason is they can't afford to retire," she says. Klein points to a September 2006 report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showing that employees aged 55 to 64 have low turnover rates and have remained in their current positions almost three times longer than their younger counterparts. The Bureau's study indicates that workers aged 55 to 64 have been with their current employers for a median of 9.3 years, whereas Gen Xers and Millennials have been with their current employers for a median of 2.9 years.
- **Older workers are less productive, or out of touch with current customer demands.** In fact, Klein says her clients report that the workers show a solid work ethic, a desire to demonstrate value to the company, strong problem-solving skills, and effective time management skills. Perhaps most important, boomers have "proven skills and demonstrated experience, values that are especially important in today's increasingly demanding workplace, making boomer candidates the kind of highly motivated employees a company can depend on," she says.

Balancing Work-Life Demands

More and more companies will have to reevaluate schedules and corporate structure to attract and retain skilled workers of all ages.

"Companies will find that boomers are going to want the same thing as the younger generation, because they are at a point in their lives where they don't want to work 70 hours a week. Companies need to come up with solutions, whether it's job-sharing, sabbaticals, or flex time," she says.

As soon as companies feel the bottom-line impact, she notes, they are going to be forced to make these changes.

"You have to manage people differently, but any employer that doesn't pay attention to the overall trends is going to be in trouble because the demographic of available talent is changing," says Klein.

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[1] recruit: <https://careers.homedepot.com/cg/content.do?p=/aarp>

[2] The Refirement Group: <http://www.refirement.com/index.html>

[3] Continuing Careers.com: <http://www.continuingcareers.com/>

[4] networking: <http://www.ere.net/ERENETWORK/PERSON.ASP?USERID=115617568>

[5] The Boomer Group: <http://www.theboomergroup.net/>