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Demystifying the Myths of Hiring Older Workers

There are still companies that hold the conventional wisdom that hiring younger employees is the preferred recruiting model. In fact the opposite may be true. Consider the following myths of hiring an older worker.

Myth #1: Boomers are not a good investment.

The investment in hiring a more mature worker not only pays for itself but will help to offset the costs of training younger candidates, especially those who hop jobs and industries with frequency and pride. Boomers' aged 50-65 stay on the job an average of 15 years.

Myth #2: Older workers are unproductive

Towers Perrin, a Human Resource consulting firm, released a comprehensive study on the value of older workers. The research showed the productivity of older workers meant they were very cost effective. The report also highlighted older workers' tendency to be highly engaged in their work and motivated to exceed expectations on the job. Because of past experiences older workers are more confident and tend to have better decision making skills. Older workers' transferable skill sets and experience are what make the older worker more valuable.

Myth #3: Older workers cost more

Yes, salaries and healthcare costs may be slightly higher, but if you factor in the cost of decreased turnover and the decreased cost of training, the older worker is still a bargain. Older

workers tend to have lower absenteeism rates. Older workers will typically not miss work for illness, the 'perfect ski day', a concert or for a sick child (they are grown and out of the house).

Myth #4: Older workers are out of touch with current customer demands and trends

As the population is aging, the products and services offered by most companies need to appeal and accommodate the needs of their older and more mature customer base. Who else but the older worker knows how to create and identify programs to do that best?

Boomers are loyal and dedicated and able to handle crises calmly and have a strong appreciation for providing excellent customer service.

Myth #5: Older workers, once hired, will be bored and leave as soon as another more senior level job becomes available. Some older workers are seeking senior level, responsibility laden career opportunities. Others however, are seeking a position where they can add value, enjoy their work, but job advancement is not their primary motivation. Each person is unique and brings a different perspective and motivation to work.

Bottom line, successful organizations recognize that it takes all kinds of employees to make a successful and profitable business. Moreover, many employers are discovering that hiring older workers makes good, strategic business sense.