

WORKFORCE HORIZONS

Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY

“Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere.” – Ronald Reagan

MOTIVATING AN AGING WORKFORCE

With the imminent retirement of large numbers of Baby Boomers being forecast, many organizations are focusing their recruiting and retention efforts on Generation X and Generation Y. But a large segment of the current workforce consists of Baby Boomers moving into their fifties and sixties. They will continue to constitute a large segment of the workforce for some time.

Furthermore, many Baby Boomers continue working after they become eligible to retire. Even when they do retire, many wish to return to paid employment at some point, even if they don't have to work for financial reasons, although often it is part-time and frequently in a different profession or field of work from that in which they were formerly employed. They do this because work provides a meaning to their life that cannot be found elsewhere.

This is a good thing because the supply of Generation X and Generation Y employees simply isn't going to be large enough to fill all the jobs. But the meaning and purpose of work for older workers differs from that for members of other generations. They require different motivation and retention strategies.

Psychological studies¹ show that early in their careers employees focus more on self-development and achievement and career advancement up the organization hierarchy. By midlife and as they age, they make a shift in their orientation and tend to focus more on others toward what psychologists term a communion orientation. This is particularly true of persons who retire and then return to the workforce.

How can organizations capitalize on this information about older workers? Here are some tips adapted from Thomas Calo's recent article in *Public Personnel Management*:¹

Include Older Workers in Career Planning and Development

The development programs of most organizations focus on younger workers and are designed to improve their job performance or prepare them for future advancement. In many cases, older or mid-career workers are neglected or overlooked. In fact, there is a general belief that cognitive and intellectual abilities decline with age although research has shown that this is not the case.

Organizations need to expand their career planning and development to address the particular needs of older workers which are different from those of Generations X and Y. This includes continued development of professional job-related skills but also development of other life skills not as job specific but meaningful to the individual. Organizations need to create cultures that encourage older workers to be more ready to grow and develop as this benefits both the employee and the organization.

Make Pre-retirement Planning About More Than Finances

Currently the pre-retirement planning of most organizations focuses exclusively on financial planning. This is important and necessary. But retiring transforms a person's life in many ways, not just financially. There are health issues that must be faced as well as psychological and social changes. There is a need for additional pre-retirement planning that addresses the physical and psychological well-being of the prospective retiree. Good pre-retirement planning shows that the organization cares for its employees. This tends to motivate current employees to stay and to be productive. Pre-retirement planning can also benefit the organization by including

communication with employees about ways they may continue to contribute to the organization after they retire, such as coming back as a part-time employee, mentor, or consultant.

Use Older Employees as Mentors or Ambassadors

Employees who are at midlife or beyond and who have been with the organization for many years possess vast knowledge of the organization and its business. They know the technical aspects of the business inside and out, and they also know the history, precedent, practices and unwritten rules from their long experience. Although these employees could often best serve the organization by helping to develop other employees at all levels and ages, both professionally and personally, they are often not used in that way, and this knowledge remains untapped or not used very effectively. This results from the hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of most modern organizations (even in the private sector) which forces individuals to move up or out.

To make effective use of this untapped knowledge, organizations need to shift some of these older workers from a power role in the hierarchy to one of consultation, wisdom and guidance. This actually fits in with the psychological shift to a communion orientation that midlife workers are going through. They are psychologically ready for this type of change at this stage of their careers. Research shows that given the appropriate circumstances and opportunity, individuals in an organization are able and willing to have their power role diminished and changed to a focus on guiding and serving others.

These workers may be used effectively as mentors passing on their wisdom and

knowledge to other employees or may be used as ambassadors to clients or public outside the organization. Who better to represent the organization to clients or public than a person who has committed a lifelong service to the organization?

Be Careful of Age Bias

Organizations should review their policies for signs of age bias and take appropriate action. These signs can often be subtle. Offering early retirement incentives, for example, could be regarded as ageism. Aside from policies, organizations need to be careful in the wording of job announcements, recruitment fliers or even when conducting normal business meetings that in their zeal to attract and accommodate Generation X and Y that they do not state or imply that older workers are not valued or important. This is a litigious time. Limit your risk and don't put up any red flags.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth." – **John F. Kennedy**

WORKFORCE PLANNING TIDBITS

Returning Military Personnel Can be a Regular Source of Applicants – About 200,000 persons are discharged from the military each year.² In many cases, these people are highly trained, dependable, punctual and industrious – all traits employers want in employees.

Will Rising Fuel Costs Lead to a Four-Day Work Week? – Governor John Huntsman of Utah has announced that the state will be going to a four-day work week beginning in August 2008 as a result of soaring energy costs.³ State offices will be closed on Fridays except for essential services. Utah

estimates that closing 1,000 to 3,000 state buildings on Fridays will save energy costs by 20% in addition to reducing pollution from traffic. The state of Minnesota is considering a similar move. Working four ten-hour days a week may be the wave of the future.

Workforce Planning Facts **Retirement Eligibility of Louisiana's** **Classified State Workforce**⁴

13% eligible to retire within one year
19% eligible to retire within 3 years
26% eligible to retire within 5 years

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Comments and submissions: We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

Current and Back Issues may be viewed by going to the workforce planning portal of the Civil Service web page at www.civilservice.louisiana.gov

¹Calo, Thomas J., Ed.D., "Boomer Generativity: An Organizational Resource," *Public Personnel Management*, Volume 36 No. 4, Winter 2007, pp. 387-395.

²Walzer, Philip, "Service Members are in Demand in the Private Sector," *McClatchy Tribune Business News*, June 26, 2008

³Marquez, Jessica, "Energy Costs Push Utah to Move to Four-Day Workweek," *Workforce Management*, June 27, 2008

⁴ Taken from June 2007 *Governing* magazine survey. Excludes Higher Education.