

MANAGING AN AGEING WORKFORCE



The world has changed. Gone are the days when an employee would reach 60 and shuffle off to tend their garden or play golf, living out their days on a tidy retirement package. There are multiple reasons why people are working longer and multiple benefits to be gained by employers who embrace an increasingly age-diverse workforce. Here we offer some top tips for making the most of your Wisdom Workers.

Treat everyone individually, regardless of their age. Not all older people are the same. Variation exists within all age groups, and age is not necessarily related to ability. Lead attitude change and create a workplace culture that values and respects age and experience as well as creativity and innovation.

Ensure that business leaders communicate the need to proactively manage an ageing workforce. Emphasise how mature workers are a way to increase the labour pool and solve skill shortages, help reduce turnover and hold down recruitment costs, retain vital knowledge, and match customer profiles.

Knowledge is a valuable commodity and one that is worth its weight in gold when it comes to welcoming new staff, particularly those transitioning into the workforce for the first time. Such employees are able to benefit from the wider institutional know-how and life experience of wisdom workers who often make great mentors.

Make sure you know the age profile of your workforce. Consider running surveys or initiating conversations about their needs and plans. Don't assume that older workers aren't interested in career planning and advancement and only focused on retirement. How many people do you know who are set to retire at 60?

Provide diversity training and communication regarding age, especially for managers. Challenge discrimination, age stereotyping and unconscious bias in your organisation. Link these concepts to key performance indicators, and ensure age is incorporated into your diversity strategy.

Audit all policies and procedures through an age lens, especially those with a focus on health and wellbeing and work-life balance. Wherever possible offer flexible working arrangements including reduced hours, extended leave and carer's leave, phased retirement, special projects, and home-based work.

Ensure the working environment and conditions are appropriate and supported, making any necessary adaptations to meet the needs of older workers. Don't limit their aspirations with assumptions about physical or technological capability. Plenty of over 60s are regular gym users and know how to use Facebook!

Extracted from the fully-referenced report *Older Workers: Challenging Myths and Managing Realities*, available on request from Diversity Works New Zealand.