

The Mat-Su Messenger

Vol. 3, Issue 3 ** Valley Chapter, Society For Human Resource Management **Nov/Dec 2005

EMPLOYERS EXPLORING WAYS TO RETAIN OLDER WORKERS

By Pamela Babcock, October 2005

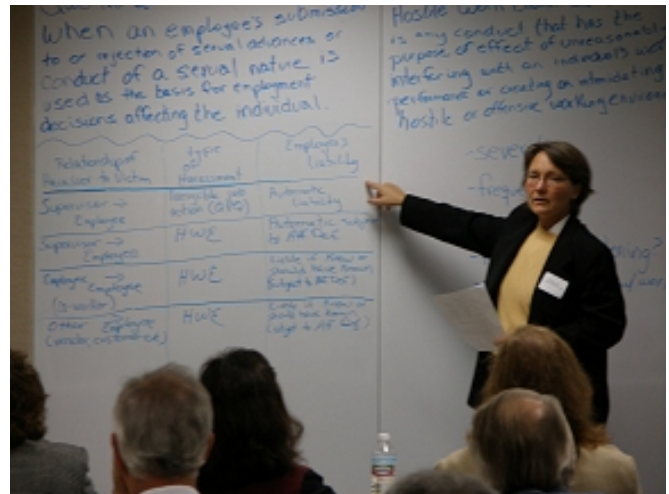
More employers are finding that investing in mature employees, particularly high-performing ones, makes good business sense. For starters, the move can help companies ensure they don't face an insurmountable recruitment hurdle caused by a mass exodus of workers due to retirement. At the same time, companies can retain more of their intellectual capital by keeping their most valued workers past traditional retirement age.

But what companies must do to entice these workers to stay around is just beginning to be explored. "Older workers are going to leave you, and the ones you want to keep will be the first to leave unless you train and value them," according to Marian Stoltz-Loike, CEO of the Jamaica, N.Y., human resources firm SeniorThinking, who conducted an Oct. 27 session at the Conference Board's recent HR Leaders & Practitioners New Tough Issues Forum held in New York.

An estimated 64 million baby boomers are poised to retire by the end of this decade, according to a

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Valley Mini-Seminar is Resounding Success!



Our inaugural mini-seminar, addressing *Sexual Harassment Awareness*, was held on September 22 at the Wasilla Sports Complex. The seminar was attended by 35 Valley business owners, HR representatives, and interested parties. Facilitated by Ms. Jill Dean and Jay Johnson, the seminar provided an opportunity for attendees to learn how to develop company policies supporting an harassment-free work environment and aiding compliance with applicable laws against hostile workplaces. Combining lecture materials, video, and a question & answer session (as well as superb food and beverages!), the seminar also offered networking opportunities to participants. Positive feedback and suggestions for future seminars were elicited at the conclusion of the evening ❖

A Positive Outlook

"In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me lay an invincible summer."

- Albert Camus

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recent Conference Board study titled [Managing the Mature Workforce](#). But the anticipated “brain drain” that could occur as a result can be averted—or at least eased—if more experienced senior employees are given the reason and opportunity to remain working beyond traditional retirement years.

Stoltz-Loike encouraged organizations to rehire retirees and to focus on employee engagement, work/life issues and generational diversity, as well as flexible work arrangements customized to baby boomers’ needs. Companies also need to make sure older workers “are clear about their value to the company,” she said.

“Make sure [that] the people you want to stay with your company do,” Stoltz-Loike said. “Don’t write them off because they’re 50 or 60 [years old].”

Technology can be the “enabler or obstacle to retaining mature talent,” Stoltz-Loike noted. Offer older workers technology training since they want work they find “meaningful,” she said.

Perceptions of Older Workers’ Value Slowly Changing

More than one in every six U.S. workers is currently over the age of 55 and one in every 2.5 workers is 45 years or older, Stoltz-Loike said, citing figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. By 2008, almost 27 percent of the workforce will be over the age of 50.

Meanwhile, 4.6 million people age 65 and older are still employed, which equals 13 percent of all people in this age group—a 55 percent increase since 1980, she added.

The Conference Board’s study also found that more older workers want to stay at their jobs for personal fulfillment and financial reasons. In fact, more than half (55 percent) of the respondents said they weren’t planning to retire because they find their jobs interesting. Seventy-four percent also cited not having sufficient financial resources as a reason they were continuing to work, while 60 percent said they needed benefits coverage.

“How older adults and workers are being looked

at is completely changing, and demographics are pushing changes in the workforce,” Stoltz-Loike said. But in the business world, there’s still room for improvement. Pick up an annual report, and you’ll likely find images of older workers. But visit a company web site, and you’ll be hard pressed to find anyone “older than 38,” Stoltz-Loike said.

Nevertheless, there are companies that are implementing flexible-work and career development initiatives that aim to attract and retain mature employees.

For example, 10 percent of IBM employees, or about 40,000 of its workers, have no desk. “Some work at a client site, others at home,” Stoltz-Loike said. The “untethered workforce can work anywhere” and is a good fit for older workers seeking flexible work options.

IBM also is finding it difficult to recruit young engineers to fill open positions, so they’re “looking at rehiring retirees,” Stoltz-Loike said.

Home Depot and Borders also have created jobs for “snowbirds,” or older workers who spend a large portion of the colder months in Florida and other warmer climates and then head north the rest of the year.

United Technologies has devoted \$60 million to its Employee Scholar Program. “People in the program are just as likely to be 62 as 22,” Stoltz-Loike said.

And MITRE Corp. is finding it difficult to locate new hires familiar with some older technologies, such as radar technology; the company is turning to older workers who are “still familiar with it,” she said.

Stoltz-Loike cautioned against making assumptions about what older workers want when it comes to retirement plans.

“The story I hear from a lot of companies is ‘We had an employee in his 50s and we thought he was going to retire so we gave that job as head of a project team to someone else,’ ” she said.

YOU MISSED IT!

At the break during our September mini-seminar, Valley SHRM members Elizabeth Larson (l.) and Sharon Hein (r.) take time to catch up the latest Valley employment news. >>>>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THIS MONTH'S MEETING – NOVEMBER 9, 2005

“Peer Review for Achieving Excellence”

BILL WOOD, *ACCESS ALASKA*

NOTE- LOCATION CHANGE PLACE: JOB CORPS CENTER,
750 COPE INDUSTRIAL PARKWAY IN PALMER
TIME: 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM

DECEMBER MEETING - ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

LOCATION/TIME/DATE - TBD

VISIT THE VALLEY SHRM WEBSITE
AT:

<http://www.orgsites.com/ak/matsushrm/>

JAY JOHNSON, CO-PRESENTER AT THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AWARENESS SEMINAR →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→

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But the former “high performer” felt slighted and his job performance declined. He later told his manager he wasn’t thinking of retiring and expressed interest in taking on more responsibility. When another project management position opened, he got it and is now “an effective contributor to the company,” Stoltz-Loike said. ❖

Pamela Babcock is a freelance writer based in the New York City area. She has worked as a reporter for The Washington Post and the News & Observer in Raleigh, N.C., as well as in corporate communications.

(From the SHRM [Recruiting & Staffing](#) Focus Area)



AFFILIATE OF



Valley Chapter - Member Profile

Jay Johnson - Jay entered the U.S Army in 1983, and has held various positions of increasing responsibility for more than 20 years in the HR field. He has served at the following locations: Fort Clayton, Republic of Panama; Denver, Colorado; Camp Zama, Japan; Columbia, SC; Fairbanks and Anchorage, Alaska. Jay received his commission as a Second Lieutenant from Officer Candidate School in January 1992. He received his MBA in Human Resources Management from Touro University International; and received his BS in Business Administration, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. His other honors and recognition include: Selected as a Member of the 1998 International WHO'S WHO of Professional Management; Member, Chi Delta Chi National Honor Society; Member, Golden Key National Honor Society. After serving his country for more than 20 years, Jay retired from the US Army in Palmer with his wife Erica. Since 2004, he has held the position of Senior HR Representative for FedEx Express in Anchorage, concentrating on Employee Relations. ❖

OUR LEADERS!

We are very pleased to announce our new Board of Directors and Volunteer Chairs for 2006, as of January 1st:

President – Kathi Berntsen
Treasurer – Lyn Hedrick
Secretary – Angela Stein
Past President – Heidi Frost

Foundation Chair – Elizabeth Larson
Hospitality Chair – Alice Williams
Legislative Chair – Dusty Silva
Membership Chair – Kim Brown
Newsletter Chair - Elizabeth Larson
Diversity Chair – Jeanne Bussey
School-to-Work Chair – Heather Wagner

Thanks for volunteering! It's gonna be fun!

November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month

It is estimated that currently four million people in the United States may have Alzheimer's disease. This awareness initiative seeks to help those with Alzheimer's disease, as well as provide support for loved ones.

What Is Alzheimer's Disease?

In Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, problems with memory, judgment, and thought processes make it hard for a person to work and take part in day-to-day family and social life. Changes in mood and personality also may occur. These changes can result

in loss of self-control and other problems.

Some 2 to 4 million persons have dementia associated with aging. Of these individuals, as many as two-thirds have Alzheimer's disease. Although there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease at this time, it may be possible to relieve some of the symptoms, such as wandering and incontinence. The earlier the diagnosis, the more likely your symptoms will respond to treatment. Talk to your doctor as soon as possible if you think you or a family member may have signs of Alzheimer's disease.

Research is under way to find better ways to treat Alzheimer's disease. Ask your doctor if there are any new developments that might help you.

Possible Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

- **Learning and remembering new information.** Do you repeat things that you say or do? Forget conversations or appointments? Forget where you put things?
- **Handling complex tasks.** Do you have trouble performing tasks that require many steps such as balancing a checkbook or cooking a meal?
- **Reasoning ability.** Do you have trouble solving everyday problems at work or home, such as knowing what to do if the bathroom is flooded?
- **Spatial ability and orientation.** Do you have trouble driving or finding your way around familiar places?
- **Language.** Do you have trouble finding the words to express what you want to say?
- **Behavior.** Do you have trouble paying attention? Are you more irritable or less trusting than usual?

Remember, everyone has occasional memory lapses. Just because you can't recall where you put the car keys doesn't mean you have Alzheimer's disease! ❖