

EXPERIENCE AND PROVEN SKILLS SCORE OVER YOUTHFUL EXUBERANCE: EMPLOYERS SHOW PREFERENCE FOR OLDER WORKERS OVER YOUTH



The job market is improving and there is good cheer all around.

Even the older workers, who were getting the bad end of the bargain when jobs were really scarce, are finding that jobs are coming back and employers are putting out the welcome mat for them. Reports show that the number of elder workers above 55 years of age increased by 3.5 million between September 2009 and September 2012. Why this Labor Department statistics is important is that over this period the total number of workers, both young and old, saw an increase by 4.2 million, which means that the older workers far surpassed the younger ones in jobs, regained. Analysts believe that this is because of two factors. One, there are more Americans getting older than those who are reaching employable age. In the last three years, 86 percent of the population growth among people between 25 and 69 was for people from 55 to 69. The increase is primarily because of the baby boomers who at the turn of the century turned 55, says Richard Johnson, director of the program on retirement policy at the Urban Institute, a nonprofit research group. Employers have also begun to realize the worth and value that the older workers bring to the workplace. Their skills and experiences positively impact the company's bottom lines and they are more productive and functional. However, it is not all hunky-dory for the elders. Even though their unemployment rate is lower, their unemployment periods last longer than their younger counterparts, when they are laid-off or lose their jobs for any reason. On an average the older generation stays unemployed for 35 weeks while the younger ones have to wait 10 weeks less for getting re-employed. It seems that the age bias has not been totally fixed, even though extra jobs for the older people are a heartening sign for them. Hiring managers are cautioning that the elder workers should try and avoid making certain mistakes. They feel that the older generation has a very high opinion of their abilities and experience and demand higher salaries and better benefits. They look to flexible working hours and a flexible working schedule. Moreover, they are weaker in selling themselves during interviews when compared to the younger generation. Furthermore, they are not as technologically upfront as the younger generation, which is one area that they could be overlooked for a potential job-opening. These are some areas that provide job opportunities for older workers: Education reforms especially at the K-12 level seek people with experience and the type of skills and knowledge that the elders bring to the workplace. Banks and Insurance companies have a positive outlook about the aging workforce and feel that they have a lot to contribute to them. Jacquelyn B. James, director of research at Boston College's Sloan Center on Aging and Work says, "They've been trying to offer more possibilities to older workers to work more flexibly, to reduce their hours when they decide that's what they want to do." Health-care companies have always faced a shortage of appropriate workers. There is an increasing need for doctors, nurses and health technicians but there is also a need for accounts people and other health-care areas. In the world of consulting and professional services the experience that the older workers bring is a huge plus. Ms. Greaner of Towers Watson says, "There's not really a stigma about being older." It seems that employers have realized that the older people are the ones who have a lot of life experience and professional acumen and they make for the best workers.