



Finding the best people

Identifying and retaining talent are key priorities for employers around the world. One overlooked group are older workers. These examples of good practice might give your business some ideas.

Fahrion Engineering

This medium-sized metal and machinery business began to focus on the recruitment of older, highly qualified engineers because it was hard to find suitable staff – as the company had very specific qualification requirements and due to skills shortages in the area. The company posted a job advertisement appealing to older engineers, foremen and technicians, reading: ‘Too old at 45 – superfluous at 55?’ In response, the company received over 700 applications and hired 19 engineers (mostly unemployed), of whom 15 were older than 50 years. Since then the company has not needed to advertise nor has it had any recruitment problems as it is still drawing from the applicant pool it generated at that time.

Fahrion offers only permanent contracts, demonstrating the value it places on the work and experience of all employees and that it wants to retain them for as long as possible, regardless of age. The company also has a performance-based pay scale that does not take employee age into account.

Coca-Cola Enterprises Ltd

Changing demographics made Coca-Cola realise it needed to work with an age-balanced team to continue to grow its business. All its employees already have the right to work beyond retirement age, and they do.

Coca-Cola has age-neutral application forms and an official equal opportunities policy that includes age. During the application process, the company focuses on skills and ability and uses competency-based interviews. When recruiting, it doesn't specify age restrictions. It also:

- briefed, wrote guidance and set up a regular audit process with recruitment agencies
- eliminated references to years' experience
- redesigned the application form and developed a CV template for its website.

Segmüller

When the company opened a new furniture store in Weiterstadt in August 2004, it had difficulty finding suitable staff. Segmüller believed that older advisers could draw upon their life experience and professional knowledge, and would be able to approach the customer with greater credibility and in a more target-oriented manner.

In co-operation with the federal employment agency the company looked for unemployed people, focusing on skilled older persons, who would agree to train as certified furnishing advisers over six months.

Segmüller first briefed the agency about the necessary capabilities of future employees. Interested applicants were invited to attend a company presentation and suitable candidates were shortlisted. Candidates were then sent on a week-long aptitude assessment programme, during which training courses for the next selection of candidates took place. Only those who remained after the last selection could advance to the six-month certification programme.

The agency financed the six-month certification programme with the help of the local institute of further education. Segmüller paid the costs for the three-week practical training course and commuting expenses to the training location. In addition, Segmüller guaranteed jobs for all participants who successfully completed the certification programme.

Many employers in Europe, the USA and Asia-Pacific have now recognised the value that recruiting older workers can bring to their business – here are some top tips on how to maximise the opportunities for different age groups to join your business.

Top tips

- 1 Work with colleagues – particularly in recruitment and hiring teams – to ensure that they are age-aware. Ensure all agencies and recruiting partners understand that your business is interested in skills and abilities and not age.
- 2 Develop partnerships with government and others to source applicants that you might have not previously considered.
- 3 Think about targeted recruitment campaigns – being creative in the use of different media and outlets.
- 4 Redesign application forms, websites and other materials to limit age bias and to be more attractive to workers of different ages.
- 5 Design competency- and capability-based assessment processes to avoid missing out on skills and talent.
- 6 Train all managers to avoid bias and not to make assumptions about candidates' experience or future plans, for instance during interviews.
- 7 Carry out research with existing employees – establishing what attracted them to your business. If you can, find out why others did not join your business.
- 8 Take a strategic look at what your business offers candidates. Consider introducing greater flexibility, a different range of benefits – why would they want to work for you?
- 9 Consider how ex-employees might be attracted back, for instance with retraining or mentored upskilling courses.
- 10 Think about retaining existing employees by redeploying rather than recruiting or using a retired-worker pool to help you over short-term skill gaps.

Want to know more about these examples of good practice? Here are the links:

Fahrion Engineering

EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS. (2006) *Fahrion Engineering GmbH & Co KG, Germany: recruitment, training and development [online]*. Dublin: Eurofound. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/cases/de004.htm>

Coca-Cola Enterprises Ltd

AGE POSITIVE. (No date) *Case study: Coca-Cola Enterprises [online]*. Moorfoot: Age Positive. Available at: http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/case_studies/coca_cola.asp

Segmüller

EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS. (2005) *Segmüller, Germany: Recruitment, training and development [online]*. Dublin: Eurofound. Available at: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/cases/de014.htm>



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