



# How best to motivate and engage older workers

The experience of employers from other countries can provide some useful ideas on how to get the best out of your ageing workforce – it seems that for many, flexibility is the key.

## ANZ Bank

The bank implemented a 'Career Extension Programme' for phased retirement aimed at retaining older workers considering retiring, by giving them alternatives to full retirement from work. This initiative offers flexibility in a way that benefits both the employee and the business. ANZ has a number of options, including:

- part-time work
- job-sharing
- mentoring/coaching roles
- working from home
- purchased leave
- career breaks
- 'lifestyle' leave.

The business also offers an alumni programme, giving retired employees and those taking a break from work the option of re-entering the workforce. The business has seen a decrease in turnover rates for over-55s as well as an increase in the average retirement age.

## Lip Bled

Lip Bled is a medium-sized, privately owned wood-processing company employing nearly 700 workers with an average age of 41. They have put in place a voluntary policy aimed at redeploying older workers to less demanding positions, at the same time allowing them to retain their previous (or higher) salary levels. Those over 50 can make a request for reassignment and back this up with medical evidence. The new position takes into account the employee's age and existing ability to work. About half of employees over 50 have opted for reassignment. While the business finances the difference in earnings of the redeployed workers, the gross costs per employee are relatively low. These costs are balanced by the fact that employees' productivity in their new position generally increases, their quality of work is better, they fulfill targeted goals and standards, and the level of sickness absence declines.

## Box Marche

This small Italian packaging company employs 56 workers. Most workers are young because there are few qualified job applicants in the area. However, older workers are respected and promoted in the company and are valued for the knowledge they can transfer to younger colleagues.

Box Marche introduced the 'skill passport' initiative, which awards a financial bonus to all workers, regardless of age or sex, who meet company requirements. It involves a task analysis intended to increase productivity, reduce inefficiency, qualify, motivate and reward workers. The award consists of variable added earnings, including a partially fixed 20% consolidation for the next year.

The new bonus was determined by the achievement of team productivity objectives, defined by management and workers together using a number of indicators, including:

- attendance
- flexibility
- punctuality
- sharing of company values
- new ideas
- expertise.

If all objectives are achieved, a bonus of 15% of annual gross salary, paid at six-month intervals, is awarded to the employee.

## Mazda Motor Corporation

Mazda have put in place an intensive training programme to instruct a new generation of workers and ensure the company retains corporate memory. The programme includes training in the production of sand moulds, the heat treatment of metal parts, lathe operation and engine assembly. As part of the programme, trainees are allowed to leave their production line jobs for two years and during this period a skilled, experienced instructor is assigned to teach two trainees.

Engagement is now one of the buzz words in employment – as business recognises that committed employees add real value to business performance. Singapore employers have the experience of companies from around the world to help them gain the benefits of older workers.

#### Top tips

- 1 Talk to existing workers to build a picture of the different needs of different age groups.
- 2 Look to maximise the opportunities for different kinds of flexibility in working, whether it is in hours or in where work is carried out – for instance, teleworking or homeworking.
- 3 Put in place consistent and transparent performance indicators so that the business can fairly assess the contribution of all individuals.
- 4 Ensure that pay and reward mechanisms are linked to performance and not based on time served.
- 5 Help line managers to understand the concepts of employability and encourage them to support workers in maintaining and developing skills.
- 6 Develop a redeployment policy that gives opportunities to retain skills, knowledge and experience, but allows employees a chance to minimise stress, and so on.
- 7 Encourage workers to think about their future and put in place support on career and post-work planning.
- 8 Put in place a flexible retirement policy, up to and beyond normal retirement age.
- 9 Remove retirement age altogether and send a strong signal to all employees that age is not a barrier to successful employment.
- 10 Where pensions are part of the reward package, investigate whether there are options for workers to take part pension and continue in employment.

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

#### ANZ Bank

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2003) *Flexible working practices: case studies and examples [online]*. Available at: <http://www.jobwise.gov.au/Jobwise/Employers/PracticalGuide/casestudies.htm>

#### Box Marche

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#### Mazda

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