

The aging workforce: 6 challenges and solutions

Now more than ever you see a wide range of ages present at any given company. According to the [Census](#), by 2030, 1 in every 5 residents will be older than 65 years old. Not all of these older people will be in retirement. That means you'll frequently see those from Generation Z working right alongside Baby Boomers. This multigenerational workforce presents its challenges but also has many opportunities for greatness.

To ensure that the aging workforce continues to be supported and appreciated alongside the up and coming generations, it's crucial that you both acknowledge the potential struggles and learn how other companies are managing their multigenerational workforce.

3 challenges associated with an aging workforce

While many aging workers are still highly skilled with the ability to continue doing their job at a high level, you'll often find various challenges that come along with their remaining in the workforce. According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the employment-population ratio over 65 rose to over 18% in 2015 and 2016. That number will continue to grow, so it's essential to both acknowledge and address any current or potential problems.

1. Present bias

Every age group has stereotypes associated with them, and those in the silver tsunami are no different. While some of these biases might ring true for certain people, it's typically unfair to expect that everyone fits these same roles. When a culture of bias toward the aging workforce is present, it can make it uncomfortable for them to remain in their roles and discourage the company from bringing on new aging employees for fear that they fit specific characteristics.

Instead of running away from these stereotypes associated with aging employees, face them head-on. When there are conversations about your workplace culture, bring up any biases, and share how having unconscious and blatant bias negatively impacts all employees. Review your data as it relates to layoffs, promotions, leadership opportunities, and more to see if there might be some hidden biases reflected in your company choices.

2. Frequent absenteeism

Another challenge often associated with the aging workforce is absenteeism. Many Baby Boomers and beyond tend to take more days off of work than other age groups with no exact cause notated. While you could come up with a list of stereotypes that would explain why this is the case, it's better if you go to the source and ask why your employees are taking days off. If you can find the root cause, you might be able to come up with a solution, so the company continues to run efficiently, and your employees are happy.

Some companies are finding that employees are taking off due to discomfort and pain while at work. To offset this issue, they've implemented the use of ergonomic office furniture to make the workplace more comfortable.

Others are offering more extended break periods and even more flexible schedules to accommodate various needs.

3. Postpone retirement

Another common struggle comes when you want to request that members of your aging workforce postpone their retirement to continue working with your company.

This is a delicate conversation to have and should be handled with a strategy in place because asking employees to delay their retirement is a significant ask. When the topic of delaying retirement pops up, be sure to add your aging workforce to the conversation along with others who'd be involved to hear their viewpoint and ask how they would best like the situation to be handled.

What would encourage them to do so? How would they want their role to look? Would they be interested in full-time, part-time, or contract employment? When you have conversations with those involved instead of guessing what they want, it can help you to make the best decision regarding the topic at hand.

Bridging the gap in a multigenerational workforce

One global challenge associated with the aging workforce is bridging the gap between multiple generations present in one company. All employees must be able to function well together and to do that, you want to put actions in place to bridge the gap, so everyone feels comfortable working alongside the next regardless of their birth year.

Incorporate reverse mentoring

There's a lot that the younger generations can learn from the older generations and vice versa. Younger generations come into the workforce with a new crop of ideas and skills. You can implement reverse mentoring as a way to build new relationships across multiple generations and spread beneficial skills throughout the company.

Reconsider your salary process

One way to bridge the gap in a multigenerational workforce is to reconsider how you give raises and bonuses. Instead of using tenure as the primary way to make more money, look at other factors to determine how much an employee should be paid. If you base pay rate on reaching goals and the value they bring to the company, you might find that the younger generation won't always make less than those who've been at the company longer. Doing this evens the playing field and allows the gap to close more between those in multiple generations.

Allow multiple generations to represent

Finally, to bridge the gap between multiple generations, be sure that they are represented in various parts of the company. You want to serve those from various age groups on your teams, in your departments, and on various boards, if possible. When opinions of those with different levels of experience are considered, it can provide significant benefits to the company and aide in helping to reach goals.

It's time to embrace the aging workforce

There's a lot to learn from each generation still in the workforce, including those in the silver tsunami. You must continue to embrace those who are aging in your company while building a multigenerational workplace culture that's welcoming and accepting of all. When you acknowledge the challenges and put strategies in place to overcome them while consistently taking steps to ensure that your aging employees feel accepted and

respected, your company will reap the benefits.