

## No Rest for the Weary

### The benefits of bringing retirees back into the workforce

April 04, 2007

By Maya Dollarhide

As baby boomers reach their golden years, only 25 percent of them are planning a "traditional" retirement, according to a recent survey by Career Outlook. This is not surprising given the rising cost of living and increase in life expectancy—and smart companies are capitalizing on the new influx of these "retirees" re-entering the workforce.

"Hiring mature workers is an automatic, smart investment," says Bernadette Kenny, senior vice president of HR at Adecco Staffing, the country's third-largest employer. "These workers have experience, intelligence, technological savvy and solid work ethics."

For the past three years Adecco was named Best Employer for Workers over 50 by AARP, thanks to Adecco's Renaissance Program, which places seniors in jobs, provides training and offers one-on-one career support. "There are some myths about hiring retirees—that they will cost a company too much, they don't have technical skills and that they're inflexible—it's all untrue," says Kenny.

Even their age is helpful. "In our business, it behooves us to use employees who mirror our customers," says Steven Wing, director of government programs at CVS/Pharmacy. "Many of our customers are older, so they seek out our older employees to help them with suggestions for their aches and pains. This gives us an edge over the competition."

So how can managers woo talented seniors? Experts say that companies must create support systems that should include flexible hours, work-from-home options and practical retirement plans. And don't forget to encourage them. "They need to feel valued and be paid competitively," says Kenny. "Companies who want to hire and retain senior workers must provide flexible schedules and solid retirement planning."

Managers should also seriously consider how a retiree's skills and talents from a previous career could transfer to a completely different type of job. "Retirees account for about 20 percent of our agent population," says Chris Carrington, CEO of Alpine Access in Golden, Colo., which staffs home-agents for a variety of high-end clients. "It's great working with seniors because they are anxious to utilize their existing skills. We've hired former horticulturalists to work for 1-800-Flowers and retired office managers to handle Office Depot accounts."

An additional benefit: Managers report that senior workers inspire their younger counterparts. "In every sense, the knowledge senior workers have accumulated through life and professional experience results in a better customer experience and better financial results for our clients," says Carrington.