



Strategic Planner

ORMC Newsletter Fall 2009

Managing Age Differences at Work

As a manager in today's workplace, you may be supervising workers in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and beyond – a challenging job since each age group has its own distinct needs, values, and goals.

There has never before been so much age diversity in the workplace. What accounts for this change?

People are working later into life. The concept of retirement has changed. Millions of people nearing "traditional retirement age" feel as creative and energetic as ever, and are even more committed to their careers now that they are finished with earlier family responsibilities.

Retirement is expensive. The economic downturn has had a big impact on retirement accounts and plans. Many workers simply can't afford to retire yet.

People are living longer. The average lifespan in the U.S. has reached almost 79 years – a record high. On the whole, people are healthier, more active, and want to remain "in the mainstream." And that takes money!

UNIQUE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES...

Managers often have to deal with intergenerational problems like:

Communication issues. Conflict between older and younger workers who don't understand each other's expressions or vocabulary.

Resentments. Bitterness on the part of senior workers who must report to younger supervisors, as well as young

employees who feel "held back" by their seniors and "old" procedures.

Bias. Prejudice between age groups because they look, act, or speak differently.

Intolerance. Disagreements and clashes over differing work ethics, goals, or values.

ORMC CAN HELP!

The management resource consultants at ORMC are at your service as you try to manage these problems. ORMC can help you:

- Learn the keys to relating to all generations at work.
- Build an environment that motivates each generation for better results and improved commitment.
- Brainstorm management and communication problems so you can feel more confident in dealing with employees of all ages.
- Offer management trainings that address differences between age groups and help develop practical skills to interact with different generations.
- Arrange consultations to discuss cases where employees are provocative or hostile to each other.

The workplace generation gap is a reality. Let the ORMC help you manage differences effectively and constructively. Remember: free help from ORMC's management consultants is just a phone call away.

ASK A MANAGEMENT EXPERT

We have recently lost a number of younger employees – mostly in their twenties. With today's tough job market, it's puzzling to me that young workers would walk away from a steady paycheck. Can you think of anything our company might do to change this trend?

You've hit on an important point: workers in different age groups are motivated by different things – and it's not just about their paychecks. Here are some tips for managing and retaining younger employees.

- First, accept the fact that today's young adults are not afraid of change, including changing jobs. They've grown up in a fast-moving world where change is the norm, not the exception.
- Above all else, young workers need approval and a sense of feeling valuable. Find ways to recognize and praise.
- Give frequent job reviews – as often as once a month – to keep employees engaged and informed of what they're doing well, and what they could do better.
- Provide ongoing opportunities to improve and learn new skills.
- Increase responsibilities, and try to promote from within your own ranks so young workers can see that their hard efforts can pay off!

ACCESSING THE ORMC

Holiday Stress? Call the ORMC!

As we approach the holiday season, employees and managers of all ages experience feelings that may include happy anticipation and excitement, as well as anxiety and depression. Family pressures, social expectations, and financial worries contribute to major stress during the holidays. It's a time of year when coping skills are truly tested!

For some, "coping" includes using drugs and alcohol – which can create safety and productivity issues at your workplace. If you have workers who may be endangering themselves or others, or are creating company liability due to their personal stresses, call the ORMC. We are always ready to help you sort out the appropriate actions to take, or to become involved in a "hands on" manner if necessary. We can also provide onsite trainings on stress management. Call the ORMC any time of year for help!

WEB FOCUS:

In the coming months, Horizon will be presenting free webinars on the following topics:

October - Generational Differences in the Workplace – tips on getting along with workers of all ages.

November - Making Your Visit to the Doctor Count – suggestions for improving communication with your doctor.

December - Surviving the Holiday Season with Your Sanity Intact – ideas for keeping it all in perspective during the most stressful time of the year.

In addition, webinars are added to the schedule on an "as needed" basis to address important current events including changes in the economy, swine flu advisories, topics relating to military families, and other emerging concerns.

At Horizon, we are dedicated to keeping you informed. Check your EAP website often for updates, and to register online for all webinars.