

Project Mature Worker

Understanding the Older Worker



The Need for Older Worker Training and Employment:

One in four adults between the ages of 55 and 64 has saved less than \$5,000 for retirement. They will have to work in retirement to meet their financial needs.



"It's time to create a culture of lifelong learning so that older workers can stay on top of technological changes and work part-time or seasonally."

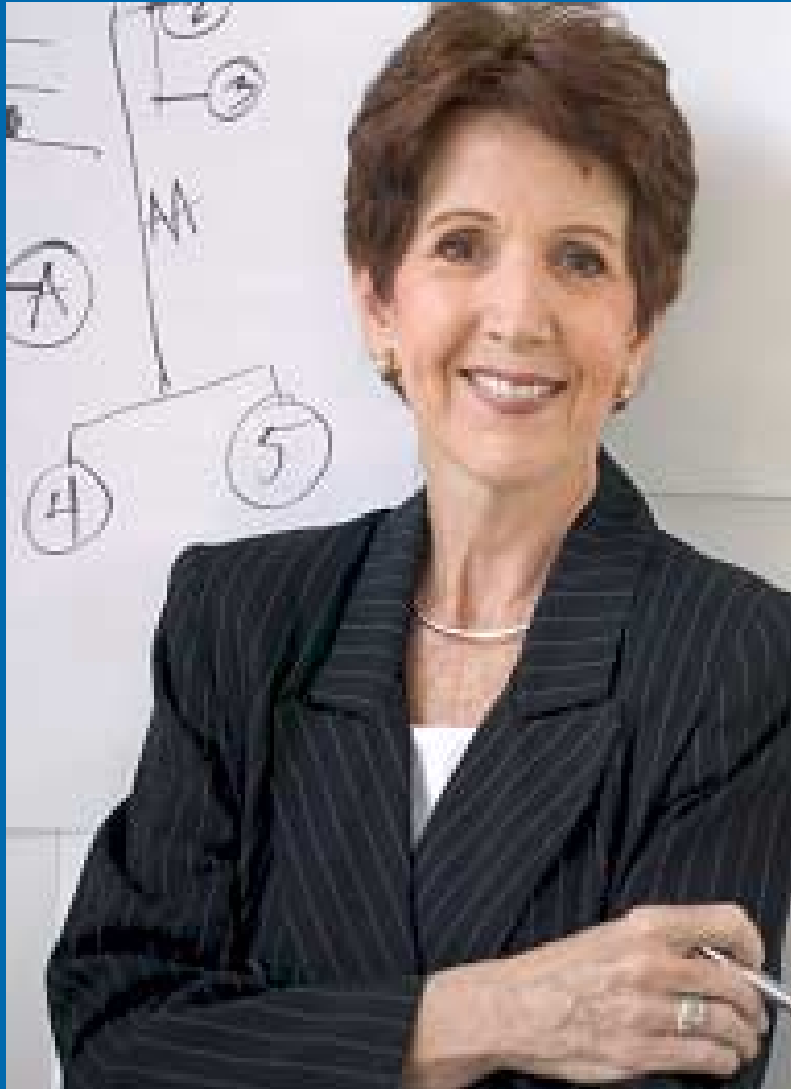
Thomas Donohue U.S Chamber of Commerce





- Worker shortages will require industry to make adjustments related to older workers.
- Older workers are increasingly seen as recruitable, retrainable, and retainable.

Studies Show Older Workers:



- **Have fewer accidents.**
- **Exhibit lower turnover.**
- **Have more dedication to the workplace.**
- **Have more positive work values.**
- **Are Absent less frequently.**
- **Are capable of learning new skills.**
- **Are flexible and can adapt to new technology and new situations.**

How to Effectively Work With Older Workers:



- **Speak clearly and slowly**
- **Be patient**
- **Create an effective learning environment**
- **Use appropriate sizing and color contrast in written materials**

Things to Keep in Mind:

The aging eye has difficulty adjusting to distance and reading small print. Hence material used for the older worker should use larger print. Older eye's have more difficulty differentiating between certain colors. The older person finds it difficult to differentiate between green and black or blue. Hence posters should be used that contrast colors such as yellow and black, or orange and blue.





Hearing changes with aging. High pitch is first lost in hearing as we age. It also becomes more difficult for the older person to make distinctions between sounds. In addition, the older person will find it difficult to hear well if there is background noise or distortions. The instructor should speak clearly, annunciating in a moderated voice. An increase in voice volume increases the pitch and hence what one gains in volume one loses in pitch.



- **Strength is lost with the aging process. People lose 15 to 20 percent of their strength from the ages of 20 to 60. ***
- **As people age they do lose some range of motion and flexibility. They may find it more difficult to do labor that requires the flexing of their body.***

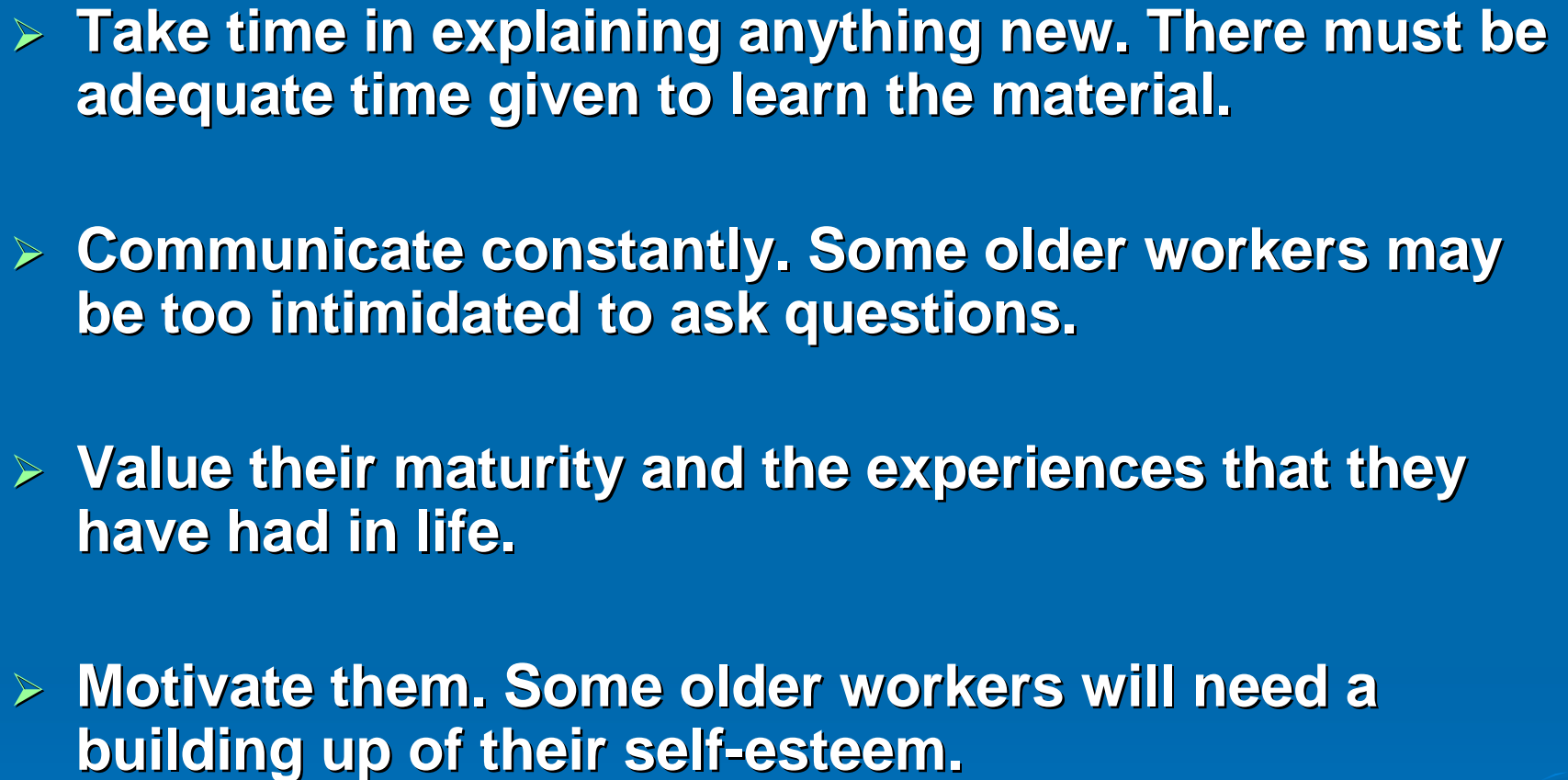
* Many older persons compensate for these losses through regular exercise and/or by regulating the time in which they perform tasks.

Fluid intelligence (analytical ability – the ability to make quick calculations) may decrease in some persons as they age. Crystallized intelligence (knowledge which is learned and accumulated through experience) may increase. However, the evidence also indicates highly educated and intelligent persons may lose no intellectual abilities at all. Training of older persons should take into account that rapid need for quick calculation under pressure may be detrimental in a training/process.



Create an Effective Learning Environment:

- **Make sure that posters are at eye level because many older persons have bifocals and have difficulty looking up to read any display materials.**
- **Written material should have large print and sharp color contrasts**
- **Allow for time to use the bathroom, or just to stand and stretch.**

- **Take time in explaining anything new. There must be adequate time given to learn the material.**
 - **Communicate constantly. Some older workers may be too intimidated to ask questions.**
 - **Value their maturity and the experiences that they have had in life.**
 - **Motivate them. Some older workers will need a building up of their self-esteem.**
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- **Speak clearly and slowly. A fast method of speaking may make learning difficult for some older workers.**
- **Make sure that there is enough light. Older workers need more light than younger workers.**



In Summary:

- **The field of employment is changing and older workers are increasingly being seen as recruitable, retrainable, and retainable.**
- **Although older workers possess some physical limitations there are ways to compensate for this by drawing upon their experience and strengths.**
- **Older workers are a valuable asset to the workplace. Training and employment assistance is key to the successful utilization of older workers within the modern workforce.**