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Examples of best practice

By PW

AARP (www.aarp.org) is a non-profit association focused on issues around ageing. Its international awards recognise non-US-based employers who have made efforts to address issues relevant to older workers. The following 15 organisations received the 2011 award:

BMW Group

69,518 employees; 23.1 per cent over 50

The German automotive group's "Today for Tomorrow" programme addresses demographic change. It comprises initiatives in health promotion, training and knowledge management, work environment, and retirement models. When staffing a new plant a few years ago, BMW targeted older job seekers to ensure a well-balanced age structure, for example.

Bundesagentur für Arbeit (German Federal Employment Agency)

95,900 employees; 35.2 per cent over 50

Flexible work arrangements and long-term working time accounts provide opportunities for extended leave of absence. This can benefit older workers caring for family members or moving into retirement. BA also regularly re-employs retired staff with specific skills for special projects.

Centrica

27,564 employees; 14.8 per cent over 50

The UK energy company's Age Awareness e-course, which educates employees about age, is designed to make the workplace more age-friendly. Centrica promotes an age-diverse workforce through work:wise – a flexible working and carer's programme, which allows employees to optimise work-life balance.

Daikin Industries

8,149 employees; 24.2 per cent over 50

This Japanese manufacturer of air conditioning systems promotes opportunities for personal development from the time of employment to retirement. It offers flexible work options for

staff with care-giving responsibilities, including extended family leave. Daikin also re-hires employees wishing to continue working past the statutory retirement age.

DB Services

10,160 employees; 45 per cent over 50

A subsidiary of Germany's railway system, it promotes older workers through DB Services Academy, a training camp designed to help older job applicants and the long-term unemployed re-enter the workforce. It maintains an administrative business unit designed to employ workers in less physically demanding posts.

Dortmunder Stadtwerke

1,904 employees; 32.3 per cent over 50

The public transport agency offers re-training or alternative positions to employees no longer able to perform their original jobs. It also offers physical and mental health initiatives, and a programme that promotes regular age structure analysis and raises awareness of demographic change in the workforce.

Elkerliek Hospital

2,226 employees; 29.3 per cent over 50

This Dutch hospital's approach to workforce management is based on a Work Ability Index analysis. It enhances the ability of its workforce by "job-carving" – separating tasks from several existing positions to create a new position fitting the needs of an employee with a disability. Elkerliek also establishes individual risk profiles for each employee to manage physical and psychological stress.

Jena-Optronik

145 employees; 42 per cent over 50

The aerospace engineering company's workplace culture is based around fair treatment. It promotes the employability of its older workers through its comprehensive "55plus" framework. Features include flexi-time accounts, training modules designed for older workers, and active promotion of mixed-age work teams.

Lam Soon Edible Oils

1,456 employees; 20.1 per cent over 50

Among the Malaysian company's best practices, older workers in each function are designated "subject matter experts". Their role as facilitators and trainers helps raise the profile of older workers and contributes to a culture shift. Flexible work opportunities to remain employed beyond the statutory retirement age are also attractive to older workers.

Marks and Spencer

63,992 employees; 33.23 per cent over 50

The UK retail group offers a partial retirement scheme allowing older workers to draw company pension benefits while continuing to work part-time. This has helped double the number of employees over 65. Health promotion initiatives include a web portal offering health information, discussion boards, and a chance for employees to make health pledges.

National Australia Bank

27,460 employees; per cent over 50 N/A

The bank's MyFuture initiative helps workers over 50 to extend careers by educating them on flexibility, work-life balance, and managing change. MyFuture promotes healthy ageing, with health check-ups, an interactive health portal providing online wellness programmes, and confidential support services. It also includes training for managers to help them retain older workers.

National Environment Agency

3,338 employees; 47.9 per cent over 50

Singapore's NEA uses older workers to mentor younger staff and as instructors for internal training. Employees are encouraged to work beyond Singapore's statutory retirement age and most are re-hired. NEA also launched a consultancy arm that will deploy experienced older workers for temporary overseas projects.

Raffles Institution

545 employees; 15.6 per cent over 50

This Singapore secondary school promotes alternative work options to meet employees' work and family commitments and to accommodate health conditions. It promotes health and well-being of staff, with screenings, counselling and information, healthy food options, gym access, etc, and reimbursement of up to \$1,500 for spending on anything that promotes health or work-life balance.

Salzburg

2,136 employees; 34.2 per cent over 50

The Austrian energy and infrastructure company has adopted a life-cycle approach to employee management through Project Genera, that aims to accompany employees through different phases of their life. Another initiative addresses fields of action identified by employees, which has led to various recreational offerings. Its "Health Circles" programme also solicits older employees' feedback and suggestions.

The Co-operative Group

95,448 employees; 24.6 per cent over 50

The group seeks to remove barriers for older workers. Measures include flexible pension options for workers who wish to remain employed beyond pensionable age, mandatory training for managers on the benefits of age diversity and anti-age discrimination measures, and changes to recruitment practices to ensure older applicants have equal opportunities.

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