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the workplace wellness conference

The Aging Workforce

The landscape of the American workforce swells with Baby Boomers. As retirement looms for many, potential retirees keep on working.

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Michael Longyear, DC, DACNB, CCSPH



Many employers fear the possibilities of negative impacts associated with this trend. On the one hand, they are concerned that having age-gifted workers on the job may mean escalating age-related healthcare costs, workers' compensation, and pension liabilities.

On the other hand, they worry about impacts on quality and productivity or an impending shortage of skilled labor as skilled, experienced veteran workers retire. However, these concerns have not been paralyzing. Employers are positively looking at the aging workforce issue and have implemented policies and practices that support a more competitive, sustainable, and safer workforce, regardless of its overall age. We will share strategies from our experience and our client's experiences.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 25% of the workforce will be over 55 in 2020. That is one in four workers — up from one in every five workers just two years ago. Why? In addition to Boomers, eliminating mandatory retirement and enacting age discrimination laws accounts for some of this trend.

Better life expectancy and health are partly responsible. Moreover, for most, early retirement is essentially a thing of the past. Many workers now choose to or must remain in the workforce longer than initially planned.

So what about health and safety concerns related to the graying of our offices, retail outlets, and factories? There is no consistent relationship between aging and work performance. Although older workers are more likely to have chronic health conditions and physical limitations, these factors are not directly related to decreased work performance in most cases. Moreover, there are many advantages to maintaining and hiring older workers. They generally have more experience, better relationships with co-workers, and report less stress at work. Older workers also have fewer non-fatal injuries than their younger counterparts. Nevertheless, when an injury occurs, it tends to be more severe, and it takes longer for the worker to recover.

Work is beneficial for many of us as we age. Work may provide access to better healthcare benefits. Emerging research shows a positive relationship between working longer, better cognitive function,

and a longer life span. Work keeps us engaged and socially connected with others. It keeps us more technologically savvy and current with the world around us.

The good news is that a well-designed workplace with favorable policies and programs to optimize the health of aging workers benefits everyone.

When workstations and job tasks match the capacity of each worker, everyone benefits. Maximizing workplace flexibility, when organized with personal health and well-being principles in mind, and when workplace policies consistently are viewed through their health effects on workers, employers and workers both win. By preventing stresses or injuries that, over time, can have cumulative adverse effects on a worker's ability to work safely and productively, an employer can help assure that the U.S. continues to have a capable, experienced workforce.

Many effective workplace solutions are simple, do not have to cost very much, and can have significant benefits if implemented properly with worker input and support throughout all levels of management. Consider the strategies below for preparing the workplace for an older, healthier, and safer workforce.

Prioritize workplace flexibility. Workers prefer jobs that offer more flexibility over those that offer more vacation days. To the extent possible, give workers a say in their schedule, work conditions, work organization, work location, and work tasks.



Match tasks to abilities. Use self-paced work, self-directed rest breaks, and less repetitive tasks.

Avoid prolonged, sedentary work – it is not suitable for workers of any age. Consider sit/stand

workstations and walking workstations for workers who traditionally sit all day.

Manage noise hazards (including excess background noise), slip/trip hazards, and physical hazards, conditions that can challenge an aging workforce more.

Provide ergo-friendly work environments — workstations, tools, floor surfaces, adjustable seating, better illumination, and screens and surfaces with less glare.

Utilize teams and teamwork strategies for aging-associated problem-solving. Workers closest to the problem are often best equipped to find the fix.

Provide health promotion and lifestyle interventions, including physical activity, healthy meal options, tobacco cessation assistance, risk factor reduction and screenings, coaching, and onsite medical care.

Accommodate medical self-care in the workplace and time away for health visits.

Invest in training and building worker skills and competencies at all age levels. Help older employees adapt to new technologies.

Proactively manage reasonable accommodations and the return-to-work process after illness or injury absences.



Having pets around can be calming and good for employee morale, but you have to take into consideration the legal liabilities and potential for disruption. — Getty Images/mixetto

Pet-friendly workplaces are becoming increasingly popular among employers and employees alike. In fact, a LiveCareer study found that 94% of respondents were supportive of having Fido or Fluffy in the office, with 52% reporting that “pet-friendly benefits and policies are important when considering an employer.”

If you’re considering opening up your office to your employees’ furry friends, here are some considerations to keep in mind. The pros and cons of a pet-friendly work environment.

A pet-friendly work environment offers employees and companies a host of potential benefits, including:

- Reduced stress levels. Multiple studies have found that pets help lower stress. Employees with lower stress levels are less likely to experience burnout and stress-related health conditions.
- Better work-life balance. Employees may feel guilt or experience logistical challenges around leaving their pets at home for extended periods. Allowing pets in the office can eliminate this problem altogether and bring more “life” balance into the workplace.
- Increased employee morale. Having animals in the office can encourage employee bonding and break

the ice among coworkers. Over time, this can improve relationships and facilitate collaboration.

However, there are some potential drawbacks to allowing pets in the workplace, too.

- **Allergies.** For employees who are allergic to pet dander, the presence of animals could negatively impact their comfort and health. Before adopting a pet-friendly workplace policy, survey your employees regarding pet allergies. Designating a single room or specific space for pets can also help limit allergen spread.
- **Distractions.** Young, noisy, or high-energy pets can require a lot of attention — and can distract both the pet owner and others around them. Setting aside space and time for food and bathroom breaks for pets, as well as limiting the number of animals in the office daily, can help reduce potential disruptions.
- **Potential liabilities.** As an employer, you may be responsible for any pet-related injuries in the workplace, such as bites, slips, or falls. Consider retaining insurance or having employees sign a waiver to protect your company against legal liability.

Establishing a pet policy

Before bringing any pets into the office, create a pet policy that is fair and consistent and communicate it clearly to employees. Here are a few essential points to include in your corporate pet policy:

Requirements for office pets

Workplace safety must remain top of mind, so any pets on the premises must be clean, up-to-date on

vaccinations, and well-trained. Delineate requirements for office pets, including behavior (i.e., potty-trained and with no history of aggression) and a minimum age (for health and socialization concerns). Consider providing resources for training and education around responsible pet ownership.

How conflicts will be addressed

Detail how you'll handle pet allergies, noise disturbances, or aggression, including any legal ramifications or liability. This section can also highlight preventative measures, such as designated "no-pet zones" and limits on the number of pets in the office at one time.

Accommodations for those who cannot bring their pets to work

Not all employees will be able to bring their pets into the office. Providing accommodations for those individuals, such as flexible work arrangements or alternative pet care options, can help ensure everyone's furry friends are receiving the same support.

Legal considerations

Allowing pets in the workplace comes with multiple legal considerations. Here are a few tips for remaining compliant:

Review local regulations and ordinances

Contact your local board of health for information on what a company must do to comply with city or town requirements. These may also vary by industry — for example, food service companies may not allow pets due to potential health code violations.

Put everything in writing

If you lease your office, request an addendum to your contract so you have written permission for

pets on the premises. When you write your pet policy, clearly delineate corporate policies and pet owners' responsibilities, such as providing vaccination records.

Obtain the proper liability insurance

In the event of a bite or any other on-premise incidents, liability can fall on the employer in addition to the pet owner. Check your current general liability coverage, and consider having employees provide their own insurance covering pet-related damages or injuries.

Article from US Chamber of Commerce

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Danielle Fallon-O'Leary is a writer and social media specialist who loves using her creativity to fuel her passion for communication. She also holds a Master's Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and works part-time as a pediatric speech therapist.

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EARLY BIRD

SPEAKER HIGHLIGHT



Michael Longyear, DC, DACNB, CCSP

Dr. Longyear is a board-certified Chiropractic Neurologist. There are few who have achieved the level of clinical success with complex cases as he has in such a short time. Having graduated in 2013, he has completed his certification as a Chiropractic Sports Practitioner; his diplomate in chiropractic neurology, and developed a keen sense of innovative technologies in patient management. Dr. Longyear not only enjoys the clinical arena but also has a passion for post-doctoral education and research. He co-teaches the Functional Neurology Series with Dr. Hall and has received outstanding reviews from his peers. He has been the lead clinical at the NeuroLife Institute at Life University since 2014.

Dr. Michael Longyear is a Functional Neurology Clinician. Dr. Longyear will discuss the relationship of movement to brain function and improving cognition and efficiency in the classroom or workplace in easy to understand terminology. This session is for all levels.