

## Tips for Engaging the Aging Workforce

In 2006 on average, 7,918 Americans turned 60 years old every day. More than 78 million Baby Boomers live in the U.S. and nearly 20 million of them have at least one college degree. By 2014, the workforce will be comprised of 21 percent of workers ages 55 or older. As these Boomers approach retirement, they are redefining the workforce and retirement. Many will choose to work well past the age of 65, either for the same employer or in a completely new area. These workers are saying, “I’ve earned my retirement, now let me decide what work I really want to do.”

This new group of workers has realized there are many choices other than continuing to do the same job at 100% or not working at all. The large numbers going back to school are leading many of colleges and universities to build elaborate retirement communities that are tied to the institution. Many of the schools offer reduced or free tuition for those over the age of 60 and are finding that more than a few seniors are taking advantage of these opportunities. These seniors are gaining even more skills and knowledge that they can add to their years of work experience.

Forward-thinking employers see the writing on the wall. The expanding economy is evolving toward widespread labor shortages, and Boomers represent a ready-made source of highly experienced and educated workers. They can be a tremendous value in terms of contribution to the organization. The challenge is how to attract and optimize this very lucrative human resource. Employers are finding the answers by asking the Boomers. Here is what they said:

- Consider more vacation time, both paid and unpaid. Seniors may want to do some traveling but not all year. For example, allow them to take the normal vacation or Paid Time Off, plus have additional unpaid leave without losing seniority and benefits.
- Identify positions where they can best teach and share their knowledge. This can provide satisfaction beyond the salary for many.
- Identify job-sharing possibilities. You may be able to have the benefit of two workers for the price of one.
- Identify Work-From-Home jobs.
- Find ways to continue to challenge older workers. Jobs that are challenging and interesting may look more attractive than “the old grind” at higher pay.
- Design jobs that allow people to ease into retirement over time.
- Consider hiring seniors on a contract basis or as consultants. These options provide flexibility and choice for the employer and the worker.

Older workers will be the fastest growing population for many years to come. They can be a vital part of the solution to concerns about the decreasing number of younger workers.

First Sun organizational consultants are dedicated to working with you to create solutions for this and many other issues that could affect your workplace. Just give us a call toll free at **1-800-968-8143** or in Greater Columbia **(803) 376-2668**.

For more information on this and other topics, please see our website at: [www.firstsuneap.com](http://www.firstsuneap.com).