

POTENTIALITIES AND PROBLEMS OF OLDER WORKERS *abya*  
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The mounting shortage of workers as a result of the defense effort, plus the growing numbers of old people, make pressing the need for determining whether older workers may not fill certain labor needs and find in this situation unusual opportunities. The following material reports simple direct approaches to these problems, planned as service projects for the cooperating firms.

1. Value of older persons as extra workers in a department store. A large department store made available its personnel records of extra or part-time workers, who play an essential part in the operation of the store, as in sales. The following table shows ages when hired of those available in January, 1951, and of former extra workers who withdrew during 1950.

Department Store Extra Workers of Each Sex and Their Ages When Hired

Age When Hired	.....Number of extra workers.....					
	Current		Current		Former	
	Sales		Non-sales		Extra Workers	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
14-30	94	300	464	258	382	460
31-45	34	192	104	173	71	157
46-60	17	98	56	79	31	47
61 up	4	7	11	7	10	5
Total	149	597	635	517	494	669

A considerable number were hired for the first time by the company when over 45, some over 60, and 7 when they were over 65.

Since training costs about fifty dollars per worker and turnover is otherwise inefficient, the longer an extra worker is available on call the more desirable he is. The next table shows progressively longer time available with increasing age when hired.

Average Work Days Available of Extra Worker in Each Age Group

Age When Hired	.....Average days available.....					
	Current		Current		Former	
	Sales		Non-sales		Extra Workers	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
14-30	105	103	119	100	60	61
31-45	109	196	248	157	69	94
46-60	264	305	463	217	103	84
61 up	331	412	476	312	192	276

The company gives extra workers wage increases on the basis of merit without reference to age or length of service. The third table shows, especially for the women, that the older the worker the more wage increases.

Age When Hired and Wage Increases

Age When Hired	..Percentage receiving one or more wage increases....					
	Current		Current		Former	
	Sales		Non-sales		Extra Workers	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
14-30	12	11	8	16	5	6
31-45	3	21	21	25	10	11
46-60	24	33	32	30	13	13
61 up	50	57	17	57	10	60

It is concluded that in the growing labor shortage, young people will be less available for extra work, but that old people may increasingly be used for this purpose and may well prove more satisfactory than younger.

2. Satisfactoriness of older workers in a manufacturing company. The company studied makes careful appraisals of workers when they leave. The following shows the number who left in a fourteen-year period for whom satisfactory records were available, and major causes for leaving. Older workers were less often discharged, less often left because of dissatisfaction or for similar reasons; even over 60 only about one-fourth left for reasons of health; and a few even of those over 60 left for better jobs.

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Numbers and Types of Separations as Related to Age at Leaving					
Age at Leaving	16-30	31-45	46-60	61 up	
Number of separations					
Males	685	413	437	163	
Females	619	634	380	29	
% that were Discharges					
Males	11	15	11	2	
Females	8	6	4	7	
% Quits for Better Jobs					
Males	19	26	20	7	
Females	8	9	5	3	
% Quits for Physical Reasons, Including Health					
Males	3	8	14	28	
Females	7	13	16	17	
% Quits because of Dissatisfaction					
Males	12	11	8	7	
Females	13	10	11	7	
% Quits for Family Reasons or Leaving City					
Males	9	6	3	1	
Females	22	16	14	17	

The company also has their foreman rate these workers, when they leave, as excellent, good, fair or poor in ability, attendance, and attitude. The foreman also checks in the records as to whether he considers each worthy of rehire. The next table shows no clear change in abilities with age, and gains in attendance and attitude. More than half of those leaving when over 60 were considered worth of rehire.

~~Number of~~ cases rated by foreman at time of Separation as Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor in Ability, Attendance, and Attitude, ~~and~~ percentages rated as Excellent or Good.

Age at Separation	16-30	31-45	46-60	61 up
Percentage Excellent or Good (a) in ability				
Males	67	65	57	62
Females	60	63	61	67
(b) in attendance				
Males	53	56	58	65
Females	51	57	65	62
(c) in attitude				
Males	58	61	57	67
Females	61	65	64	67

The company has not been taking on new workers over 30. It is concluded that since the older workers are thus satisfactory, more effort should be made to hold them, and that new workers over 30 might well be taken on.

In total it is concluded that service studies regarding employment of the older worker suggest ways in which he may be of major service in the national emergency. He may fit in admirably as an extra worker. The older person who has left a job after 45 may well have been an excellent employee well worth consideration for other employment.

3. Relation of accident and illness rates to age. Accident and illness records of the above-mentioned company for 1950 were as follows:

Relation of Age to Frequency of Industrial Accident and Non-Industrial Illness Claims for which Compensation was Given and Days of Disability, During 1950 in a Mid-Western Manufacturing Company

Age in 1950	Number Employees		Industrial Accident						Non-Industrial Illness					
			Total Claims in 1950		Frequency of accidents per 100 Employees		Average Days of Disability		Total Claims in 1950		Frequency of Illness per 100 Employees		Average Days of Disability	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
16-30	174	110	38	16	22	14	2.1	1.1	26	31	15	28	27	43
31-45	247	174	44	22	18	13	2.1	1.1	26	35	10	20	28	46
46-60	190	81	24	7	13	9	2.6	6.7	45	29	23	36	36	37
61 up	77	12	10		13		3.2		12	3	16	25	34	40
	688	377	116	45					109	98				

Accidents decreased in frequency with age, and duration of disability increases only slightly. Illness rates and durations increased only slightly with age. The older worker is thus not an accident or illness liability.