Chapter 6
Creating Supportive Workplace Environments for Older Workers

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The U.S. population is growing older. Due to lower birth and mortality rates, experts predict that persons over 65 years of age will increase in coming years, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the population (Moody and Sasser 2012; Marshall and Altpeter 2005). The number of those 65 and older is expected to double from 39.6 million in 2009 to 72.1 million in 2030 (Administration on Aging 2011; Sanders et al. 2008).

Retirement policies and labor force participation have changed in line with the aging of the U.S. population. Recent years have seen declining birth rates after the baby boom generation born from 1946 to 1964, increasing retirement ages, increasing financial incentives for delayed retirement, and abolishment of Social Security earnings tests for workers between full retirement age and 70 years old (Gustman and Steinmeier 2009; Klay and Steen 2008). As a result, the full-time labor force participation of those aged 65–67 years of age has increased by over 9% between 1992 and 2004.

As labor force participation by older workers increases, there will be fewer 16–24 year olds to replace the millions of workers reaching retirement age (Leonesio et al. 2012). Between 2008 and 2018 it is projected that the number of workers aged 55 and older will grow by nearly 43% (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). The rate of unemployment for older adults is at a record high of 7.3%, with 2.2 million of the 14.9 million unemployed individuals aged 55 years of age or older (Rich 2010). Coupled with the aging of the population, increased global competition, business deregulation, technological changes, and corporate mergers and acquisitions, changes in the composition of employment and the workforce are taking place (Sparks et al. 2001).

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Influence of Demographic Shifts on the Workplace

These aging population trends will inevitably increase the importance of organizational workplace structures and polices on older worker employment (Gibson et al. 2010; Klay and Steen 2008; Neumark 2008). Lower labor force participation by younger workers necessitates that employers turn to older workers to ensure companies' economic and financial stability. Organizational structures and public policy must reflect this change. As older workers comprise an increasing share of the nation's labor force, there is a greater need to consider how older workers fare in their workplaces.

These demographic shifts in favor of older populations and workforces are also taking place globally. These shifts in the world's aging population challenge traditional retirement structures, employment and social policies, labor market trends, global workforces, organizational work environments, and social insurance programs (AARP 2007). Organizational practice strategies aimed at developing and maintaining age-friendly work environments are imperative. A recent survey that examined multi-stakeholder views on recent demographic changes to the workforce across different countries revealed vast challenges and opportunities for governments, individuals and employers. Many older workers want to, and must, remain productive members of the workforce. At the same time, employers will have to rely more heavily on older workers. With an aging workforce it will be necessary to develop intergenerational and cohesive work environments (AARP 2007).

A number of companies have recognized this imperative and have implemented flexible work policies, created attractive opportunities to promote and maintain employment, and redesigned workplaces to accommodate older workers. Many businesses have devised strategies for the retention of older workers. These strategies allow companies to adapt to changing labor market demands. In addition, they can increase U.S. economic output and tax revenues (Eyster et al. 2008). Although many company-sponsored retirement plans provide large worker incentives to retire, employers should nevertheless evaluate the personal circumstances of individual older employees. For example: Are these older workers willing to continue to work? What happens when they return to work? Do they find their jobs fulfilling? and, Will they be financially secure after retirement?

Impact of Ageist Beliefs in Society and the Workplace

Contemporary society is characterized by stereotypes that associate old age with physical and mental decline. Changes to organizational culture and climate that might help older workers are often limited due to a lingering negative perception of age. Common misconceptions of older workers, although inaccurate, pervade today's workplace. Such misconceptions include the beliefs that older workers: take more time off; have decreased performance; have more accidents; are less adaptable;

are merely waiting to retire; take jobs away from younger workers; and are incapable of learning new things (AARP 2007). Additional misconceptions are that older workers experience greater fatigue; are more resistant to change; unenthusiastic; less knowledgeable; less interested in receiving training; and less willing to gain new knowledge when compared to younger workers (Bulter 2010). These ageist stereotypes deny older workers opportunities and resources. Thus, policy analysts and employers must be aware of these stereotypes in order to understand the labor force participation of older workers.

These stereotypes are rooted in long-standing and pervasive public attitudes. According to Clark (1997), the term "old age" has held various meanings over time based on what he calls the *decline model*. The decline model views old age as a time of decay, decline and disengagement. Old age is viewed as a period of life in which older persons lose their health, power, authority, credibility, vital energy and morality. It is perceived as a period of physical and mental decline (Clark 1997). Due to a loss of intellect and understanding, individuals are assumed to no longer have interests in work, events, society or people. Others assume that such lack of vital energy and mental capacity dictates a withdrawal and separation from society in old age, regardless of health. Many workers believe they should retire before old age, and therefore many retire long before they become incapable of working. Schrank and Waring (1989) argued that Americans are ambivalent towards older workers: on one hand, they honor them for being productive into old age; on the other hand, they believe that older workers are disengaged, dependent, and unproductive. These beliefs are reflected in workplace policies and practices.

This chapter considers the impact of these stereotypes on older adults' workforce participation, productivity and satisfaction. It offers practice strategies for administrators and managers to support older workers and foster age-friendly workplace environments.

Age-related organizational policies are inconsistent and tend to revolve around the false notion that older workers cost more and are less productive than younger workers (Posthuma and Campion 2009). The realities of older workers, especially those from the baby boomer generation, dramatically contradict this misconception. According to Gibson et al. (2010), baby boomers are characteristically loyal and competitive workers and hold values influenced by the economic prosperity following World War II and the Vietnam War. These workers are likely to be in better health, better educated, trained in technologies, and able to compensate for the chronic illness and disabilities common among older workers in the past. Compared to younger workers, older workers are often sick less often, get hurt less often, have fewer absences for dependent-care obligations and fewer distractions that interfere with work-related commitments. Organizations often want to rid their companies of older workers in an effort to obtain "new blood" and therefore older workers are encouraged to leave for no legitimate reason. It is ageism, rather than labor cost and performance considerations, that is the reason corporations force out older workers. Despite a lack of evidence that younger workers are more intelligent, creative, dedicated or productive, they are often favored (Posthuma and Campion 2009).

Workplace Environments

Historically, policy makers have focused on opening doors so that older adults can enter into employment. Much of the literature has therefore focused on policies and practices that create barriers for older workers seeking jobs (Gibson et al. 2010; Posthuma and Campion 2009; Stark 2009). Today policy makers are more interested in what happens to older adults in the workforce. As evidenced in this book, ageism, abuse and harassment in the workplace are realities. There is little emphasis, however, on subtle and indirect ways older adults experience obstacles to full participation in their workplaces. These often result from unintentional practices that reflect ageist stereotyping. Some are by-products of the aging process itself.

A workplace environment reflects the beliefs, vision, and leadership style of top management; these determine workplace practices. Organizational leaders influence workers' commitment to their jobs and to their organizations, worker satisfaction, and productivity. In human resources departments, the attitudes of personnel to their work situation and to their coworkers also affect how staff relate to clients or customers and to their effectiveness in serving them (Garrow and Hasenfeld 2010).

The quality of the workplace environment is determined by the extent to which older workers are valued as contributors and are able to experience job satisfaction. The climate and culture of organizations can create a workplace environment that either is supportive and satisfying for older workers or is inhospitable and hostile for them (Chernesky 1998; Denison 1996). *Organizational culture* refers to the deep structure of organizations, rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions of organizational members. It is established through socialization to a variety of identity groups that converge in the workplace. Interaction reproduces a symbolic world that gives culture both stability and, at the same time, a precarious and fragile nature rooted in the dependence of the system on individual cognition and action. The culture of an organization is reflected in the pattern of beliefs, values, and expectations shared by organization members that establish norms and rules governing acceptable and unacceptable employee behaviors. The standards against which behavior is evaluated are that of the majority culture, and reflect the attitude and values of those who hold positions of authority and power. Persons who are perceived as different or outsiders may not measure up to the standards, and therefore may not be allowed to participate fully in the organization and reap its benefits (Chernesky 2005).

Some workplaces are hostile and offensive environments. In such workplaces, discrimination, harassment, slurs, jokes, and unintentional acts that reinforce biases, differences, and disparities among individuals are tolerated. These workplace characteristics pollute the work environment, disrupt productive work, and lead to burnout (Chernesky 1998). An organization's culture can be tolerant of behaviors that discriminate or harass, thus making the workplace inhospitable and offensive to workers who are not members of the majority group. Older and disabled workers may face hostile workplace environments due to discrimination based on age and disability. These forms of workplace discrimination are widespread (Rampell 2011a). The situation today is complicated by an increasing number of on-the-job discrimination complaints, fueled perhaps by employee anxiety and insecurity in the workplace due to the tight economy with its resulting real or potential layoffs.

Women and minority older workers face additional challenges in the workplace. They may be the targets of *micro inequities*. Micro inequities or micro aggressions are unjust actions taken against individuals based on stereotypes related to race or gender. They are often unintentional acts that reinforce biases, differences, and disparities among individuals in organizations. They marginalize targeted workers who are then not accepted and acknowledged by their co-workers, supervisors and employers (Laporte 1991). They are a form of subtle discrimination, either conscious or unconscious, and are common in the workplace. They are usually so subtle that it is difficult to know how to counter them. Examples include: a woman who speaks up at a meeting and later finds that her remarks were attributed to the man seated next to her; and the African-American professional who is mistaken for a support person instead of a higher-level employee.

Many situations exist where slurs, jokes and epithets, although not threatening, pollute the work environment. Humor and joking can relieve tension or frustration, reduce boredom, reinforce status levels, establish roles, and provide a means to express feelings where there are no other socially acceptable outlets. However, if these insults are frequent, or implicitly or explicitly condoned by management, they are likely to violate Title VII or other fair employment laws (Chernesky 2005; Laporte 1991). Organizations with a high frequency of such insults may be characterized as *toxic organizations*.

Organizational toxicity is defined as "the outcome of emotionally insensitive attitudes and actions of managers and the practices of their companies… [that act] as a noxious substance, draining vitality from individuals and [the]…..entire organization" (Frost 2003, p. 13). Toxicity is present to some extent in all organizations. If ignored, it can significantly disrupt innovative and productive work. Whether introduced into an organization from outside or within, if it is not handled well, managers and workers can "lose heart", stop thinking creatively, and become anxious and fearful (Bailey et al. 2008). Toxic workplaces tolerate micro inequities and micro-aggressions (Chernesky 2005) that allow tensions and conflicts among workers to dominate, and make it possible for toxic elements to fester (Frost 2003). In such poorly-managed workplace environments, workers may become detached and experience burnout (Maslach 1998). Unhappy and stressed workers are also at higher risk of health problems (Sutton 2010). Such toxic environments are not only damaging to employees but also increase costs and undermine company performance (Sutton 2010).

Organizational climate, in contrast to organizational culture, "is widely defined in terms of employees' perceptions of their work environment" (Glisson 2000, p. 196). The climate of any given organization is an aggregation, a synergistic combination, of individual psychological climates. Organizational climate is important because of its impact on workers' behavior and attitudes. It also can influence organizational effectiveness and efficiency. How supportive an environment is perceived to be by workers will determine their productivity and the quality of their performance. Managers in supportive workplace environments recognize that the conditions of work have a profound impact on workers' capacity to fulfill their own needs (including basic security, relational, self-fulfillment and actualization); on their attitudes about work and co-workers; and ultimately, on how they perform their jobs (Garrow and Hasenfeld 2010).

Culture and climate are powerful because they affect relationships among workers, and interactions between workers and to whom they provide services, clients or customers (Hemmelgarn et al. 2010; Glisson and Hemmelgarn 1998). Rampell (2011b) found that older workers think of younger workers as lazy slackers. Older workers, unlike younger ones, have a strong sense of separate spheres for work and play, and preference for working independently rather than turning to colleagues for help. Thus, a cultural clash between younger and older workers is not unusual (Rampell 2011b). Older workers with younger co-workers, supervisors, or bosses may perceive them as "kids" who feel "entitled" and who are not serious about their jobs. Unless diffused, this causes intergenerational conflict and tension (Daily 2011). Even perceptions of courtesy, civility and rude behavior are likely to have a generational dimension that can affect worker relationships (Tugend 2010).

Practice Strategies for Age-Friendly and Abuse-Free Workplace Environments

Supportive workplaces promote worker motivation and satisfaction. Managers should ensure that the organizational climate and culture support older workers and enable their companies to reap the benefits of employing older workers. Through the use of proper strategies, managers can reduce or prevent toxic work environments. They can augment worker strengths, protect workers, and amplify worker resilience to adverse organizational conditions (Zunz and Chernesky 2000). In the following discussion, the authors describe a number of such strategies.

AARP Initiatives

As discussed earlier, demographic shifts are producing profound changes to workplace environments. As the proportion of younger workers declines, employers increasingly want to attract and retain mature employees. AARP has helped in this regard by advocating for older workers to remain productive and powerful members of the workforce. In turn, older worker labor force participation has yielded increased economic growth and social progress (AARP 2007).

AARP initiatives have been designed to assist employers in evaluating their workforce needs and developing effective aging workforce strategies. These strategies highlight the importance of developing age-friendly workplace environments. Through the International Innovative Employer Award, AARP has recognized 15 non-U.S.-based employers for implementing best practices to attract and retain older workers (AARP 2011a). Award recipients are acknowledged for enhancing the retention of older workers through policies such as: flexible work arrangements; lifelong learning, training, and recruitment; and the promotion of health and diversity (AARP 2011a).

In 2011, the title of this award program was changed to the AARP Best Employers for Workers over 50 Award. The award recognized 15 non-U.S.-based employers whose workforce and/or human resource practices were successful in addressing relevant issues pertinent to workers aged 50 and older, and created roadmaps for attracting and retaining tomorrow's aging workforce (AARP 2011b). The award has both U.S. and international components and is given on a bi-annual basis in an effort to allow employees time to implement and test innovative strategies to meet the needs of the aging workforce.

Other innovative company practices include: pre-retirement seminars; time off for family care giving; employer-provided elder care services; corporate retirement housing options; and self-confidence and employability training. In an effort to retain older workers, some employers have worked to identify factors that lead to workers' decisions to retire. They have identified skills transferable across job categories; targeted the health needs of mature workers; provided on-site technical assistance; instituted workforce literacy training; and provided flexible work and retirement options (Foggs 2001; NCOA 1991). Some employers have also designed programs to teach employees about generational differences in real-world situations to create respect in the workplace so that people from all generations can work together efficiently. Employers increasingly recognize the importance of a hospitable workplace climate for their older workers and ensure that all practices are age-neutral (Fogg 2001; NCOA 1991). A handful of organizations have begun to ignore age in identifying new work opportunities and measuring performance; instead, they have focused on job competence and performance (Standing and Baume 2001).

AARP (2011a, b) selected award winners who have successfully implemented such strategies through the 2010 AARP International Innovative Employer Award and the 2011 Best Employers for Workers Over 50. Awards winners included:

Adecco Employment Services Limited: Toronto, Canada
Winning Years: 2009, 2010
Adecco implemented a national hiring strategy that actively targets job seekers aged 50 and older through collaboration with its "Established Worker Career-Connections Program" and the Canadian Association for Retired Persons (CARP). This strategy ensures the hiring process is free from age discrimination, even providing paper applications to those not comfortable using computers. Those candidates re-entering the workforce are offered training on interviewing practices and techniques to market their skills.

BMW Group: Munich, Germany
Winning Year: 2011
BMW Group created a program including measures addressing demographic changes in the workplace to ensure a well-balanced age structure workforce. This program includes initiatives related to health management, training and knowledge management, work environment, and personalized retirement models.

BT Telecommunications: London, United Kingdom
Winning Years: 2008, 2009, 2010
Through its "Achieving the Balance" program, BT helps older employees transition from full-time employment to retirement. Through its "Career-Life Planning Tool", BT helps employees in developing their careers at every stage of employment.

Bundesagentur für Arbeit: Nürnberg, Germany
Winning Years: 2010, 2011
Through its flexible work schedules, Bundesagentur für Arbeit (BA) offers over 500 work schedules to accommodate the specific needs of their employees. Long-term working time accounts are also offered, allowing employees to extend their leaves of absence for issues such as caring for family members and transitioning into retirement. BA also employs a comprehensive health promotion strategy including re-integration programs, which allow employees to return to the workplace following a long-term sick leave.

Centrica plc: Windsor, United Kingdom
Winning Years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011
Through its "Age Action Group", Centrica aims to create an age-diverse workforce through having managers from each of the different business units create a plan addressing the company's aging workforce. Additionally, Centrica created an "Age Awareness" e-learning package that raises awareness about age-diversity for managers and employees.

Deutsche Lufthansa AG: Hesse, Germany
Winning Year: 2010
A variety of flexible work arrangements and continuous learning and training are offered to employees, allowing for part-time schedules, job sharing, telecommuting and e-learning. Individualized elder care solutions are offered to employees with caregiving responsibilities as well as counseling services for those facing personal challenges and crises. Partial retirement and intermediate pensions are provided, which cover the years between stopping flying and retirement.

Daikin Industries: Osaka, Japan
Winning Year: 2011
Opportunities for individual capacity building, personal development, and flexible work schedules are offered to employees. Extended family caregiving leave options and rehiring of those wishing to work past the statutory retirement age are offered to all employees.

DB Services: Berlin, Germany
Winning Year: 2011
Older workers are promoted through a training camp, the DB Services Academy, which helps older job applicants and the long-term unemployed re-enter the workforce. Those employees who are unable to continue to work in their physically demanding positions are referred to their administrative business unit, designed to employ these workers.

DSW 21: Dortmund, Germany
Winning Year: 2011
Retraining and alternate position options are offered to employees who no longer have the capacity to perform their original jobs.

Elkerliek Hospital: Helmond, Netherlands
Winning Year: 2011
Workforce management is based on the Work Ability Index (WAI) analysis, which focuses on creating new positions that fit the needs of an employee with a disability. Risk profiles are also created for each employee in order to manage physical and psychological stress.

Galeria Kaufhof GmbH: Cologne, Germany
Winning Year: 2010
A "Fit for the Future" program focuses on individual training for older employees, which works to enhance qualifications, employability and confidence. "Health days" are offered to workers over age 55 to promote the company's holistic health program. Additionally, a Demography Officer works to ensure all employment policies are congruent with the latest demographic analysis.

Guernsey Post: Guernsey, United Kingdom
Winning Year: 2010
The changing needs of older workers are accommodated in reploying staff to positions that are less physically demanding. Pre-retirement training, occupational health promotion, and in-house physiotherapy are offered to mature workers, although Guernsey Post has no compulsory retirement age.

Hansgrohe AG: Schiltach, Germany
Winning Year: 2010
Diversity in work environments is promoted through Project MUMM, which was designed to increase the motivation and participation of mature workers through computer training, flexible work policies, health promotion, and alternative working hours.

Henkel AG & Co: Düsseldorf, Germany
Winning Year: 2010
Flexible work arrangements are offered and those approaching retirement are given a 5-year, part-time schedule, which cuts their hours up to 50% but allows their social contributions to be paid on a full-time basis. Health promotion events are held regularly and generational knowledge transfers are supported through multigenerational roundtable discussions.

Jena-Optronik, Gmbh: Jena, Germany
Winning Year: 2011
A "55plus" comprehensive framework promotes a positive internal working atmosphere and the employability of older workers and includes features such as flexible accounts, training modules, and active promotion of mixed-age work teams.

Lam Soon Edible Oils: Shah Alam, Malaysia
Winning Year: 2011
Older workers are designated as subject matter expects and serve as facilitators and trainers. Flexible work arrangements and the ability to remain employed beyond statutory retirement age are offered to employees.

Marks and Spencer plc: London, England
Winning Year: 2011
Partial retirement schemes, health promotion initiatives and discussion boards contribute to the retention of older workers.

National Australia Bank Limited: Melbourne, Australia
Wining Year: 2011
The MyFuture initiative offers education on flexibility, work-life balance and managing personal change to enable mature workers to extend their careers. Health promotion initiatives such as check-ups, interactive health portals, and confidential support services help retain older workers.

National Environment Agency: Singapore
Winning Year: 2011
Older workers serve as mentors to younger staff and instructors for internal training programs. Experienced older workers are given the option to deploy to temporary overseas projects as consultants.

National University Hospital: Singapore
Winning Year: 2010
The "Active Edge" program aims to increase the mature workforce. Pre-retirement planning and counseling are offered to employees at least 3 years prior to age 62. A variety of re-employment opportunities and alternative work arrangements and benefits are then offered at age 62.

PUB: Singapore
Winning Year: 2010
Flexible work options, paid caregiver days, pre-retirement consulting, and health promotion workshops aim to maintain a mature workforce. Re-employment of workers passed the statutory retirement age is stressed to allow workers to continue their same job or be hired for a new one.

Raffles Institution: Singapore
Winning Year: 2011
A reimbursement of up to $1,500 is provided for spending on anything that promotes health or work-life balance. Alternative work options are provided to help employees' manage work and family commitments.

Salzburg AG fur Engergie, Verkehr und Telekommunikation: Salzburg, Austria
Winning Years: 2010, 2011
Life-long learning and training and health promotion are offered to employees via the "Genera Generation Management" and "Giving Energy-Living Energy" programs. Needs and concerns are assessed through employee surveys and a number of courses are offered to address these needs.

SICK AG, Industrial Equipment/Commercial Machinery: Waldkirch, Germany
Winning Year: 2010
Mixed-age training groups and project teams have older workers serve as mentors for younger employees. Healthy aging in the workplace is stressed through an emphasis on flexible work options.

Sozial-Holding der Stadt Mönchengladbach GmbH: Mönchengladbach, Germany
Winning Year: 2010
The company's models benefit older workers with care giving needs and offer a variety of courses for older workers, including holistic mnemonic training and retirement transition preparation.

University of Central Lancashire: Lancashire, United Kingdom
Winning Year: 2010
Through its "Fresh Step" program, employees over 50 are encouraged to reflect on their lives through various activities, such as mentoring younger colleagues. Recruitment focuses on age-neutrality and many positions are offered on a job-share basis.

The Co-operative Group: Manchester, United Kingdom
Winning Year: 2011
Measures implemented to remove barriers for older workers include flexible pension options, mandatory training for managers on the benefits of age diversity and anti-age discrimination and recruitment practices aimed at equal opportunities.

Analysis of AARP Initiatives

A deeper analysis of why such model programs are selected by AARP can illuminate program and organizational structures and elements that contribute to work environments that are age-friendly and mutually beneficial to younger and older workers alike.

The structures and elements of workplace programs used in AARP's analysis center on positive workplace policies for mature workers; further, they recognize employees' long-term commitments. Each structure and element highlights the importance of education and training for promoting the employment of older workers. Table 6.1 outlines a number of structures and elements common to AARP-awarded age-friendly programs, and can serve to guide employers in crafting age-friendly workplaces

Another strategy for best practices in managing a multigenerational workforce is the model titled, Make time to discuss; Explore differences; Encourage respect; Take personal responsibility (M.E.E.T) created by VisionPoint Productions Inc. In recognizing that successful organizations excel via productivity, working relationships and customer satisfaction, M.E.E.T capitalizes on common characteristics influencing this success. Therefore, the model focuses on making time to discuss workplace

Table 6.1 Programmatic and organizational structures and key elements of age-friendly work environments

Programmatic + Organizational structures	Key elements
Flexible work and retirement arrangements	Transition from part time to full time; Pre-retirement seminars; Flexible scheduling; Flex-time; Part-time employment; Seasonal work; Consulting; Telecommuting; Job-sharing; Phased retirement; Short-term/special assignments; Restructured salary/benefit packages; Compressed work weeks; Remote working; Mentoring
Lifelong learning opportunities	Openness to continuing success and career development; Education and job-training opportunities; Recognize all forms of learning; Motivate self-directed learning; Ensure all employees have an equal opportunity to excel; Providing honest, rapid, frequent feedback; On-the-job training; Matching skills needs with individual educational status of older employees
Training	Confidence and employability training; Identifying areas at risk for retirement and transferable skills; Foster respect through diversity training (sexism, racism, ageism training); Create an age-diversity task force; Conduct a cultural and demographic audit of your company; Training methods need to take into account changes in information processing with age; Offer development opportunities, such as tuition reimbursement, online training, and certification classes
Recruitment	Focus on potential not age; Utilize placement agencies for mature job seekers; Conduct informational seminars tailored to the older community and places older adults frequent; Form an older worker task force and ask current older employees for referrals and suggestions on how to attract/retain older workers
Promotion of health and diversity	Education on generational differences to create respect in workplace; Ensuring practices are age-neutral; Processes are free from age-discrimination; Addressing demographic changes in the workplace to ensure a well balanced age structure workforce; Smoking cessation programs; Blood pressure testing; Health risk assessments; Fitness classes/health club memberships; Disease management; Weight-reduction programs; Nutrition counseling; Eldercare-oriented benefits; Long-term care insurance; Elder care vouchers; Nursing home care subsidies; Wellness benefits; Accommodations for employees with caregiving responsibilities; Offering unpaid, short-term leave for child and eldercare; Employer-provided elder care services; Corporate retirement housing options

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued)

Programmatic + Organizational structures	Key elements
Innovation	Encourage and leave room for innovation and allow greater dialogue and engagement among all employees; Find ways to embrace employees' lifestyle realities, rather than just tolerating them.
Consistent with AARP's public policies and values	Commitment to enhancing the quality of life for people as they age in ways that benefit societies as a whole; improve economic security, health care and quality of life
Workplace culture	Build morale; Decrease workplace stress; Improve intergenerational relations; Promoting positive images of aging; Build trust and engagement on the part of the workers; Create an appeals process for grievances (confidential and neutral resource)
Workplace design	Ergonomic work stations or facilities to reduce physical stress on the body; On-site technical assistance; Appropriate workforce literacy; Accommodations including installing ramps and elevators, appropriate lighting; redesigning work spaces, and using technology to assist hearing and vision-impaired workers; handrails; slip-resistant walking surfaces; the use of color contrast between stairway risers and treads
Retiree relations	Creating opportunities for retirees: inviting them to organizational events, recognizing them on anniversaries of their retirement
Work Arrangements and Work-Life Balance	Work schedules; Supervisory relationships; Decision control; Information transfer; Avenues for conflict resolution; Empowerment of the workforce; Autonomy; Delegation of control; Good relations between management and workers; Low stress; Low grievance rates; Encouragement of long term commitment to the workforce
The social context of the work	Greater needs for public transportations, car pools or telecommuting

Chart adapted from AARP (2007, 2010a, b, 2011a, b), Ballone (2007), Ekerdt (2010), Silverstein (2008), and UNECE (2011)

problems, exploring differences, encouraging respect and taking responsibility. This program is designed to help employees understand generational issues in the workplace, work successfully within a multigenerational workplace, minimize the negative impact of generational differences, and maximize opportunities for individual and organizational success (VisionPoint Productions 2006).

The "M.E.E.T. Model" enables employees to recognize how individual and generational differences influence approaches to work, communication, and work/life balance priorities. While learning about these issues and negative stereotypes and assumptions about age, employees are able to recognize how they may affect productivity, teamwork and customer relations.

Because some management styles can be unintentionally offensive to workers from different generations, management and organizational policies must provide a framework for professional behavior that recognizes value differences among workers from different age groups. Additionally, employers must mitigate barriers for job mobility for older workers and work to retain the talents of these workers. This may be accomplished by providing worker and employer information on age discriminations laws; and legislation to discourage early retirement. Employers can also provide information on state-financed training and retraining programs; subsidies for hiring older workers; and information campaigns to build awareness about mature workforce issues (AARP 2007).

Strategies and Policies

Workplace policies and programs can be adjusted to make organizations attractive, safe, and fulfilling for older workers. AARP (2007) has identified eight strategies that can be used by administrators and managers to create age-friendly workplaces. These include:

1. Offer workers maximum work flexibility to respond to the changing needs of the workforce in all stages of the employment lifecycle.
2. Create healthier work environments, ergonomic working conditions, and additional access to health promotion programs.
3. Promote visible leadership related to aging workforce issues.
4. Provide management training that enables leaders to recognize the unique needs of various employee groups while teaching them how to manage and lead a multigenerational workplace.
5. Conduct research related to employees to aid in the understanding of employee behavior, changes in employee perceptions and needs, and the effectiveness of organizational investments and workplace programs.
6. Eliminate age-related stereotypes and empower innovative thinking throughout the workforce.
7. Focus performance requirements on job-related and not age-related characteristics for hiring, promotion and/or retention; and
8. Devote careful attention to strategic talent deployment issues through ensuring equality of opportunity in training and development and providing lifelong learning and growth to employees of all ages to maximize individual and organizational performance.

Additional strategies might incorporate the assessment of ethnicity and values reflected in current organizational practice; survey common assumptions held by managers, supervisors and workers related to age of workers and productivity; analyze workforce socio-demographics and patterns of hiring, firing and leave-taking; survey workers' perception and self-perception of ageist attitudes and treatment; and evaluate programs (if any) in place to address ageism and abuse of workers, including older

workers. Examples of strategies include training; human resources department standards; counseling availability; flexible work schedules; improvements in the physical space environment; and intergenerational conflict resolution.

The authors hope that these businesses and models will raise awareness of the reality of the aging workforce as well as effective practices to create supportive work environments that leverage the human capital of older workers (AARP 2007). Although some employers have recognized the importance of effective age management in the workplace, managing an aging and age-diverse workforce remains a growing challenge for many businesses. Employers must recognize the implications of demographic trends and changing views of retirement, and offer flexible and competitive working arrangements and environments to attract, recruit, engage, and retain older workers. In order to create age-friendly working environments, workers must be judged on the basis of skills, competences, motivation and output, and not on age itself. Work environments and legislation need to be revised to accommodate the needs of older workers and eliminate misconceptions about them (Stark 2009). Many employment policies and practices have implicit age biases with regard to recruitment, selection, performance appraisal and assignment to training opportunities. Several authors have highlighted the societal and organizational ambivalence about aging and resultant policy inconsistencies regarding older workers (Gibson et al. 2010; Posthuma and Campion 2009; Stark 2009).

National and local employment policies that are not biased against older workers do exist. Although these policies have the potential to promote age-friendly employment practices and older worker retention, their effectiveness in doing so has not been demonstrated. For example, two recent policy changes have been designed to facilitate the retention of older workers in the workforce: modifications in the U.S. Social Security Program that create incentives for older workers to remain employed; and civil rights legislation to protect older workers from unfair practices and dismissal due to age. To date, policy makers have yet to demonstrate that these policy changes have resulted in retention of older workers. The inability of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to bring age discrimination cases to the courts within required time limits and the lack of federally funded job training for the elderly highlight the low priority of this vital issue.

Ekerdt (2010) argued that, with the surge in the elderly population, policies must target sensitive issues regarding the labor market's ability to accommodate, sustain and expand employment of older workers. According to Posthuma and Campion (2009), older employees need to remain in the workforce longer to facilitate national economic growth and the health of the financial system. Therefore, strict policies must be implemented to reduce the ageist stereotypes that inhibit older workers from remaining an active part of the labor force. The economic and social implications of age discrimination in the workplace, retirement and social security are all on the forefront of numerous national debates. In the face of population aging, the demographic and economic projections of older adults must be incorporated into public policy analysis Singer and Manton (1998), and organizational changes to promote supportive work environments.

According to Ekerdt (2010), retirement is a societal practice that primarily manages succession within social institutions, such as families, labor markets and organizations. It should be structured to incorporate the capabilities of the rapidly increasing population of older individuals into our national economy. In addition to the imperative to incorporate these workers into the labor force, the fiscal implications of this growing population have developed into a point of political contention, with a contemporary trend to reduce social programs for old age security (Ekerdt 2010). Paralleling one of the worst economic recessions is the retirement of the baby boomers. Although new policy directions and population demographics encourage the retention of older workers within the workforce, policy makers must also address structural, cultural, and personal forces influencing workplace environments, with the goal of making all workplaces fair and friendly to older workers.

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