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ABSTRACT
         This booklet is a practical guide to help employers
develop ways to train midcareer and older employees to work to their
full potential. Section 1 discusses the older worker advantage.
Section 2 focuses on dealing with older workers, the half-life
effect, and three common problems that reduce productivity: career
burnout, career plateauing, and career obsolescence. Section 3
concerns career management, the first line of defense against those
problems. Section 4 discusses three common and complimentary
approaches to identifying training needs: organizational analysis,
task analysis, and personal needs analysis. Section 5 focuses on
designing a training program. It describes the following types of
programs offered by companies: scientific and technical training,
management development, training for production and administrative
employees, total quality training, informal training approaches, and
programs to prepare for retirement. Some specific examples follow of
companies that have done some creative training to help their
experienced workers meet new job challenges. Section 6 on motivation
discusses building self confidence. Section 7 addresses training
approaches, including the following: on-the-job training, behavior
modeling, setting goals and objectives, adapting training techniques
for older employees, and transferring of skills. Section 8 is a
checklist of policy makers and managers. Ten selected readings are
listed. (YLB)

*H*OW TO

OLDER WORKERS

AARP

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HOW TO TRAIN OLDER WORKERS

Business Partnerships
Work Force Programs Department
American Association of Retired Persons

Contents

Preface

In today's world, American business is faced with the challenge of maintaining a skilled and productive work force so as to meet or beat the competition. Training employees to work at peak capacity is necessary for survival.

The need for training is complicated by demographics. The average age of the work force is increasing. The fastest-growing segment of the American population is the group 35 to 44 years old. By the year 2000, only 39 percent of the work force will be under age 35, versus 49 percent in 1989. The number of people age 50 to 65 will increase at twice the rate of the overall population. Figures like these tell us that much of tomorrow's training will have to be aimed at developing, preserving, and renewing the skills and talents of middle-age and older workers. Training older workers is a new challenge for employers who must begin to address such concerns as:

☐ How to identify employees who need training and help with career develop ment;

☐ How to motivate employees to take advantage of training programs;

☐ How to improve the flexibility and capacity of employees to learn new skills;

☐ How to modify training to accommodate employees with special needs; and

☐ How to determine the cost-effectiveness of training and employee development.

This booklet addresses these concerns. It is a practical guide to help you develop ways to train mid-career and older employees so they can work to their full potential.

The Older
Worker Advantage

The days of fresh young workers annually replenishing labor's ranks are gone for the foreseeable future, victim to the lower birth rates of the late 1960s and 1970s. One result is a labor force that is growing older; in the 1990s the average employee will be 40 years old. A second consequence is looming labor shortages in some occupations such as engineering, computer technology, and health care delivery.

In the past, federal legislation encouraged early retirement as a means of opening job opportunities to younger workers. In recent years, however, with an eye to the rising pressures on income security programs, Congress passed legislation designed to encourage older workers to stay on the job longer. Mandatory retirement is now prohibited in most occupations. The 1983 changes to the Social Security Act gradually increase the age of full eligibility from 65 to 67 over the next 20 years. And the 1986 amendments to the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ensure that employees who remain on the job past "normal" retirement age continue to accrue pension benefits.

However, few employers have altered their early retirement programs. In fact, they rely on them even more than before to accomplish work force reductions necessitated by increasing global competition and the 1990s recession. Nonetheless, demographic factors alone suggest employers will be forced to confront issues raised by the growing proportion of older workers in the labor force. First, however, employers must overcome some age-related stereotypes that have taken hold in the past several decades. Consider the following stereotypes:

Stereotype: *Older workers are less productive, efficient, and motivated than younger workers.*
Fact: Research shows that in most jobs productivity remains constant until well after the traditional retirement age.

Stereotype: *Older workers are inflexible and resistant to change.*
Fact: Research shows that such behavior is not related to age and that older workers want to keep their skills and knowledge current.

Research shows that in most jobs productivity remains constant until well after the traditional retirement age.

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In fact, surveys show that many employers see older workers as stable, reliable, and careful, with high morale and strong commitment to the organization. Labor force studies show that workers between the ages of 50 and 60 stay on the job an average of 15 years and that their attendance rates are equal to or better than those of most other age groups. In most occupations, older workers also have lower on-the-job accident rates; workers 55 and older make up 13.6 percent of the work force but account for only 9.7 percent of on-the-job injuries.

Surveys of older workers themselves show that they want to contribute fully to their organizations.

Training is the most direct way of extending the productive careers of older workers. The challenge for managers is to make the fullest use of older workers' talent and experience through counseling, training, development, and career management and by creating a supportive climate.

Surveys show that many employers see older workers as
stable, reliable, and careful, with high morale and strong
commitment to the organization.

Dealing With
Older Workers

Two Conflicting Philosophies

There are two philosophies regarding employees' abilities: depreciation and conservation.

The *depreciation* philosophy sees employees as assets with a decreasingly useful life. It assumes that a person's value to the organization peaks during his or her early career, plateaus at mid-career, and declines steadily thereafter. Investments in training and development beyond mid-career are not considered cost effective.

One of the flaws of this philosophy is that it ignores the high cost of employee turnover. Recruiting, selecting, and training new employees is expensive, and the odds are good that a newly hired college graduate will leave the organization within five years.

The *conservation* philosophy sees a person's value to the organization developing gradually and, if properly managed, being maintained at a high level throughout the person's career. This philosophy recognizes that a 50-year-old will probably stay with the organization for the remainder of his or her career. It favors investing in career planning, training, and development for employees of all ages.

The Half-Life Effect

Many older employees suffer from what is called the *half-life effect*. A half-life, a term borrowed from nuclear physics, is the time it takes an employee to lose half of his or her competence because of changes in knowledge and technology. The half-life of information workers, engineers, and scientists may be as short as five years.

In a rapidly changing business environment, obsolescence is costly and can lead to poor decisions, inferior products, alienated clients, and demoralized employees. The psychological costs to an individual who feels outdated include insecurity, stress, and the loss of self-esteem.

When such costs are multiplied by the number of employees whose skills and job knowledge have gradually declined, the cumulative costs to an organization can be staggering.

Three Common Problems

The mid-career and older employee has three potentially serious problems that reduce productivity. These problems are career burnout, career plateauing, and career obsolescence.

Recruiting, selecting, and training new employees is expensive, and the odds are good that a newly hired college graduate will leave the organization within five years.

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Problem 1: Career Burnout

Career burnout is caused by emotional and physical exhaustion. It is commonly found in jobs with intense pressures and limited support systems.

Some Solutions to Career Burnout

Nip it in the bud. Look for excessive absenteeism, uncharacteristic poor attitude, disregard for the quality of work, and complaints about work overload. When burnout is diagnosed early, managers can take steps to prevent it from derailing careers. Some steps to take are:

☐ Job redesign or job rotation;
☐ Special temporary assignments;
☐ Reassignment as mentors or trainers;
☐ Stress management training; and
☐ Sabbatical leaves.

Problem 2: Career Plateauing

Employees quit trying or let up when there is little probability of promotion.

Some Solutions to Career Plateauing

☐ Assign employees to projects that use their special skills.
☐ Use performance appraisals to alert employees of problems on the job.

☐ Provide alternative career paths.
☐ Provide opportunities for training and development.
☐ Set up a job posting and bidding system.

Problem 3: Career Obsolescence

Career obsolescence occurs when the skills and knowledge needed to do a job well have become outdated.

Some Solutions to Career Obsolescence

☐ Retrain to sharpen existing skills or teach new skills.
☐ Encourage employees to become active in professional organizations.
☐ Encourage employees to take courses to keep up with new developments.
☐ Establish or upgrade a career planning and management system.
☐ Encourage older employees to consider their career options and develop career contingency plans.
☐ Hold career planning workshops.
☐ Start a career information center.

In summary, the best way to minimize older employee career problems is to help them maintain their old skills and develop new ones.

Career obsolescence occurs when the
skills and knowledge needed to do a job well have
become outdated.

Career
Management

Effective career management is the first line of defense against career burnout, plateauing, and obsolescence. Unfortunately, until recently, managers have given it a low priority. Employers who neglect systematic career management risk under-utilizing mid-career and older employees.

If you cannot answer the following questions you may need to give career planning and management greater consideration:

1. What organizational changes are likely to affect the way my unit, department, or organization will operate in the next few years?

2. Which employees would benefit most from training and development to stay productive?

3. What are the career aspirations and personal development intentions of each employee in my department?

4. Are these career plans realistic, given the organization's plans?

5. How can I help my employees mesh their career aspirations with the company's long-term goals?

A growing number of employers recognize that company-wide career management pays dividends in employee commitment and productivity. Many companies are experimenting with multiple career paths, on-the-job development opportunities, career planning workshops, individual career counseling, and mentor-protege relationships.

Effective career management also requires a cooperative effort between management, labor, and older employees. A well-designed career management system allows for the full use of older employees' special skills, talents, and experience and encourages them to take responsibility for their own careers. This pays off for employers and employees.

Effective career management also requires a cooperative effort between management, labor, and older employees.

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Determine Your Training Needs

To have an effective training and development program, you must first assess your training and development needs and then design training programs to meet those needs. There are three common and complimentary approaches to identifying training needs:

Organizational analysis. This approach focuses on company strategy. By examining sales forecasts and expected changes in production, distribution, and support systems, employers can determine which skills will be needed and to what degree. A comparison with current skill levels is used to estimate staff and training needs.

In the past, managers who made these calculations could predict with reasonable accuracy how much training would be needed. Their estimates were based on the assumption that older employees would retire by age 62 or 65, as in many cases retirement was mandatory.

Mandatory retirement is now prohibited by federal law, but some managers still assume that most workers will retire in their early 60s or sooner. This picture is changing, and many employers already face the need to keep and train their older workers.

A serious consideration in analyzing training needs is the company's obligation to older employees. In many cases, older employees have invested most of their work lives with the company, and they may have very limited job mobility. Their economic and psychological stake in the company goes well beyond the next paycheck. Employers' obligations to their long-service employees can best be met by providing training opportunities that will enable them to remain productive.

Younger employees note how older employees are treated. Their loyalty, as well as their morale, is affected by what they see.

Task analysis. This technique requires identifying the elements of current or future tasks to be done and developing a training program accordingly.

Personal needs analysis. A newer technique, this involves asking employees and managers, either in an interview or in a questionnaire, to analyze their training needs.

Research suggests that agreement between managers and employees tends to be low, so it is important that decisions about the training needs of older employees be agreed to by both parties.

Mandatory retirement is now prohibited by federal law, but some managers still assume that most workers will retire in their early 60s or sooner.

Designing Your Training Program

1. *Building Long-Range Plans*. Managers regularly review the company's training and development needs. They estimate the mix of skills and experience needed in every unit and department to meet their goals and objectives. By comparing projected needs with information about each employee's performance, potential, and career aspirations, managers identify employees who appear to have the motivation and ability for additional training and development.

2. *Reviewing Performance Appraisals*. Performance appraisals are an important source of information for training and development planning. Performance appraisals give early warnings of needs for skills upgrading or retraining. Alert managers use performance appraisal data to establish specific training requirements for individual employees, groups of employees, or for entire departments. Early intervention with employees whose performance appraisals show a decline in productivity or quality often prevents more serious future performance problems.

3. *Surveying Training Needs*. Periodic surveys of the skill levels of executives, managers, and employees are helpful, pinpointing special interests and problem areas. Surveys also enable employees to evaluate their own present and future training needs which in turn helps the company set training priorities.

Company executives meet with key department heads, project managers, and union officials regularly to talk about training priorities. The objective of these surveys and meetings is to identify business trends and what they mean in terms of future training and development.

After training needs have been determined, the next step is to design training programs to meet those needs. Resources for training and development are often limited. Some managers deal with this by considering suggestions for training and development programs, developing budget estimates for each program, assigning priorities, and then implementing the programs expected to contribute most to short- and long-term organizational goals.

Some companies develop ongoing programs for scientific and technical employees, managers, administrators, and production employees, and managers are always on the lookout for informal ways to teach and coach employees. The objectives are to prepare employees for promotion, counteract career burnout, help employees break through career plateaus, and combat managerial and technological obsolescence. Programs offered by some companies include:

1. *Scientific and Technical Training*. Scientists and engineers often find it particularly difficult to keep up with innovations and breakthroughs in their fields

Surveys also enable employees to evaluate their own present and future training needs which in turn helps the company set training priorities.

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and greatly benefit from upgrading and retraining programs. They are also encouraged to participate actively in professional associations, with the employer paying for association dues, journal subscriptions, and attendance at conferences and workshops.

2. *Management Development.* Another group often selected for development is managers. To deal with a diverse group of employees with a variety of technical specialties, managers must know the most up-to-date techniques for planning, goal setting, motivation, and conflict management.

Management training and development takes a variety of forms. Some companies offer in-house workshops on current management issues, including stress management, negotiating, and creative problem solving. Often, senior managers attend a longer management development program with a special concentration on simulated planning. Companies also support and encourage managers to attend short courses offered through local university executive development divisions.

It makes sense to individualize management development, fitting training and development to the special needs of each manager. Many companies use a management-by-objectives system (MBO) for evaluating a manager's performance. In MBO, managers are required to establish not only job perfor-

mance goals, but goals for their own personal and career development. The achievement of personal and career goals is rewarded in the same way as the achievement of sales or manufacturing goals.

3. *Training for Production and Administrative Employees.* Many companies currently are phasing out some manual operations and replacing them with automated assembly processes. Employees who will be displaced in these phaseouts are sometimes given technical training for new jobs or are given tuition assistance and a training stipend to attend evening programs at technical institutes. A relatively new concept, skill-based pay rewards employees who have mastered a variety of job skills with salary increases. Creating a work force with a broad range of skills allows for greater flexibility in job assignments and less resistance to change.

4. *Total Quality Training.* Organizations are investing in training programs for all employees to promote continuous improvement in the quality of their products and services. Employees learn statistical control procedures, problem-solving skills, and self-management techniques.

5. *Informal Training Approaches.* Maintaining a productive work force often goes beyond formal training sessions. Informal training and development approaches in use include job rotation, internship programs, and on-the-job coaching.

Maintaining a productive work force often goes beyond formal training sessions.

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Age barriers often disappear in job rotation and internship assignments. Where this happens, you would be just as likely to find a senior employee collaborating with or working under the supervision of a young scientist, engineer, or manager as to find a senior employee mentoring a junior colleague. Internships and temporary job assignments allow employees of all ages to add to their skills and knowledge, and to get exposure to new corporate problems.

Some companies maintain a library of books, cassettes, videos, and computerized self-instructional materials to help employees keep up with new developments.

Each foreman, supervisor, manager, and executive should expect to be an informal job coach for employees. By delegating challenging assignments and including key employees in participative decision-making, supervisors at every level can help to sharpen the skills and job knowledge of their employees.

6. *Programs to Prepare for Retirement.* Programs can focus not only on retirement planning, but also on alternatives to total retirement and on post-retirement employment options and second-career opportunities. For example, some companies place retirees in a temporary help pool. Retirees who wish to work part-time give their availability and assignment preferences to the pool coordinator. Where necessary, refresher courses are offered to employees who have been away from the job for some time. Retired secretaries get training in word processing, and retired accountants take refresher courses in tax law. Retirees are also called on to fill in during vacation periods or to consult on special projects. Employees skilled in "critical need areas" are sometimes offered post-retirement, part-time jobs, or consulting positions.

Here are some specific examples of companies that have done some creative training to help their experience workers meet new job challenges.

The Aerospace Corporation

A federally funded research and development center, The Aerospace Corporation, based in Los Angeles, applies science and technology to national security programs. The corporation operates an extensive training program in which older workers often participate.

It offers two types of training: management and technical. Management training is particularly useful because of the policy of internal promotion that moves engineers into managerial positions. Also, Aerospace supports a variety of full-time tuition reimbursement plans and short-term educational assignments.

Some companies maintain a library of books, cassettes, videos, and computerized self-instructional materials to help employees keep up with new developments.

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These individualized educational plans allow employees to design a series of special studies which may last from 90 days to six months. During that time, the employee receives normal pay as well as reimbursement for educational expenses. At one time, a 55-year-old engineer designed such a program in order to study the feasibility of wind-generated power sources.

AT&T Bell Laboratories

AT&T Bell Laboratories, headquartered in Holmdel, NJ, has a longstanding commitment to the continuing education and training of its employees. This research and development arm of AT&T offers a variety of technical education and training opportunities to its employees through the AT&T Technical Education Center.

The Center offers continuing professional training through in-house and sponsored university programs. Opportunities include technical courses and graduate study. Among training opportunities most relevant to experienced workers is the Continuing Education Program (CEP).

The CEP was introduced in 1969 to help employees stay up-to-date with rapid technological changes, to prepare them for new jobs, and to improve performance on current jobs. An increasing number of organizations within AT&T are now requiring employees to satisfy minimum annual training and education requirements.

Courses are taught mostly during working hours by AT&T staff members, university faculty, and outside experts. There are numerous courses that focus on areas such as telecommunications, data networking, software engineering, and programming. Many of these courses are highly specialized and advanced and are not generally available in the academic community; many introductory level courses are also available.

Another training organization within AT&T, namely the AT&T School of Business, addresses the leadership, business, and management training needs of AT&T employees. It also offers courses to help employees as they transition through career stages, such as individual contributor to supervisor or first line manager. The School of Business also provides training in such topics as career planning and interpersonal skills to help employees improve their performance and stay career competitive.

These companies have found that investing in the growth, development, and maintenance of older workers pays dividends in productivity, quality, and commitment.

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NOWIS

An excellent source of information on special programs for older workers is NOWIS, the National Older Workers Information System. It is a data bank developed by the University of Michigan and now maintained by AARP. NOWIS contains information on more than 150 older worker programs in the business sector. For information on NOWIS, contact Business Partnerships, AARP Work Force Programs Department, 601 E Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20049.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Training assistance for older persons with limited incomes is available through two federal programs administered by the DOL, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). For information on these programs in your area, contact the JTPA State Liaison in the Office of the Governor.

Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) Programs

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) provides job training and related assistance to economically disadvantaged individuals, dislocated workers, and others who face significant employment barriers. Their goal is for JTPA to move program participants into permanent, self-sustaining jobs. JTPA functions through a public/private partnership which plans, designs, and delivers training and other services. Private Industry Councils (PICs), in partnership with local governments are responsible for providing guidance for and oversight of job training activities in the area. Contact the governor's office for referral to the agency or department overseeing the program in your state.

An excellent source of information on special programs for older workers is NOWIS, the National Older Workers Information System.

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The Matter of Motivation

Older employees may be less likely than younger employees to seek opportunities to learn new skills. They see training and development opportunities as mixed blessings. On the one hand, training, and development offer them a way to avoid career plateaus and to acquire skills. On the other hand, training and development opportunities often stir up insecurities. Older employees may ask themselves:

☐ Is this training worth the time and trouble it will take?

☐ Can I master the new skills?

☐ Will I be the oldest person in the class?

☐ If I successfully complete the training how will I be rewarded? Will I be eligible for a promotion or a new job?

Ways to overcome those insecurities include:

☐ Explaining why the training is necessary.

☐ Linking training to valued rewards.

☐ Helping trainees extend their sense of self-responsibility for their own training needs.

Your objective is to create a win-win situation, where you and your employee agree that training or retraining pays off for *both* of you.

Building Self-Confidence

Even when older employees realize they need to learn new skills, they sometimes feel insecure about their ability to learn. They may not have been in a classroom for many years and they may fear that their learning abilities have become rusty. This is espe-cially likely to happen when training focuses on skills that require learning complex patterns of eye-hand coordination, such as computer operations.

Recent research suggests that older workers are often afraid of failure when they are in competition with younger, more recently educated trainees. To address this, managers should focus on building trainees' self-confidence. It is important to understand that:

☐ Older learners see themselves as autono-mous, self-directing, and self-responsible.

☐ Older learners have unique and valuable *experience* that greatly influences their attitudes, interests, needs, and desires. The trainer can increase their confidence by allowing and encouraging older trainees to use their skills in new learning situations, because new ideas and experi-ences can be given greater meaning when they are used to relate to and build on current experience.

☐ Active participation in the learning process allows the older trainee to share in the responsibility for the success of the learning experience.

☐ Training and rewards go together. If a trainee works hard and masters a skill, he or she should be rewarded or know that rewards are in the offing. If high-perfor-mance training is not followed by re-wards, the trainee is likely to become resentful and alienated.

Your objective is to create a win-win situation, where you and your employee agree that training or retraining pays off for both *of you.*

Training Approaches

Tips on Instruction Techniques for On-The-Job-Training

One way to teach specific job skills is the on-the-job training method (OJT) developed by the Training Within Industry program during World War II. OJT helps people incorporate new skills in a job or learn an entirely new job. Here are a few practical ideas from OJT to guide you in instructing a new employee or a present worker on a new job or a new task.

FIRST, get ready to teach the job.
1. Decide what the learner must be taught in order to do the job efficiently, safely, economically, and intelligently.
2. Have the right tools, equipment, supplies, and materials ready.
3. Have the workplace properly arranged, just as the worker will be expected to keep it.

THEN, you can instruct the learner using the four basic steps:

Step 1 — Preparation
1. Put the learner at ease.
2. Find out what he or she already knows about the job.
3. Get him or her interested and desirous of learning the job.

Step 2 — Presentation
1. Tell, Show, Illustrate, and Question in order to put over the new information and operations.

2. Instruct slowly, clearly, completely, and patiently, one point at a time.
3. Check, question, and repeat.
4. Make sure the learner really knows.

Step 3 — Performance Try-Out
1. Test the learner by having him or her perform the job.
2. Ask questions beginning with why, how, when, or where.
3. Observe performance, correct errors, and repeat instructions if necessary.
4. Continue until you are sure that the learner knows.

Step 4 — Follow-Up
1. Put the learner on his or her own.
2. Check frequently to be sure the learner follows instructions.
3. Taper off extra supervision and close follow-up until the learner is qualified to work with normal supervision.

Behavior Modeling
Behavior Modeling is similar to OJT and is among the most effective types of training. In behavior modeling, specific skills are demonstrated by the trainer or in a video. It differs from traditional training because it puts the emphasis on *how* to perform new skills rather than *why*. It assumes that trainees will be more interested in the "why" after they have learned the "how."

First, get ready to teach the job. Decide what the learner must be taught in order to do the job efficiently, safely, economically, and intelligently.

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In behavior modeling, the trainer typically performs the job flawlessly. However, watching a perfect job performance, particularly a complicated technical task, might intimidate some trainees. A more realistic model may show a person who displays some anxiety, makes a simple mistake, and then is able to carry out the job successfully. Trainees see that perfection the first time isn't always possible (or, perhaps, expected). Watching a person fail and then succeed can give a trainee the confidence that he or she may need to master a new skill.

Setting Goals and Objectives

By asking questions, the trainer can help older employees determine their training goals and objectives while not telling them what to do. Good questions can help trainees think through a problem. Examples of some useful questioning approaches are:
1. What is your goal for learning the new computer system?
2. What problem will you work on first? When do you plan to complete it?
3. How will you know when you are ready to take on the new accounts?
4. Are there some benchmarks you can use to check your progress?
5. How will you reward yourself when you finish the course?

Adapting Training Techniques for Older Employees

Here are some especially effective training techniques to use when working with older workers:
1. Have the trainees help plan the curriculum.
2. Work with each trainee to develop an evaluation process that will measure the extent to which his or her personal learning objectives have been accomplished.
3. Allow for participation and interaction among learners by using problem solving, case studies, role playing, and practice sessions.
4. Relate new learning to trainees' past experiences.
5. Help each trainee to transfer and translate current skills to the new skills being learned.
6. Provide audio and visual learning materials designed to compensate for any hearing or sight loss older persons might have. This is especially important when using slide or taped presentations, videotapes, films, or flipcharts.
7. Use large, bold, dark print on flipcharts.
8. Reduce glare.
9. Keep a consistently high level of light on the screen when showing films, videos, or slides.

By asking questions, the trainer can help older employees determine their training goals and objectives while not telling them what to do.

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10. Post training materials at eye level (for those wearing bifocals).
11. Be sure that there is no distracting background noise.
12. Use good diction.
13. Speak clearly at a lower range and a natural rate of speech.
14. If there are hearing-impaired persons, seat them up front where they can see the speaker's face.
15. Use handouts, memory aids.
16. Eliminate time-pressured situations. Encourage self-pacing. Allow trainees extra time to practice alone.
17. Use older trainers. They are especially sensitive to the needs of older trainees and are excellent role models.
18. Provide encouragement, assurances, and reinforcement often.
19. Reiterate new, complex concepts frequently.
20. Stress the relevance and application of training issues.

Remember: If the learner hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught.

Transfer of Skills

Mastery of new skills is only the beginning. The real payoff from training and development comes when employees apply their newly acquired skills on the job. Having the *trust* and *support* of one's supervisor is critical to the transfer process.

☐ Supervisors have to provide opportunities for employees to apply and practice their newly acquired skills in challenging assignments or new tasks. Without continuous practice, new skills could quickly fade.

☐ Supervisors must be supportive of employees who attempt to apply their new skills on the job. When supervisors and coworkers show confidence in an employee's ability to achieve mastery on a new task, the positive expectations of success are often contagious.

☐ Supervisors should treat mistakes as learning experiences. When supervisors view problems merely as temporary relapses, they hasten recovery and encourage continuous improvement.

Creating a positive work environment, where employees of all ages are encouraged to use and refine their newly acquired skills, should greatly increase the return on training investments.

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Challenges

Checklist for Policy Makers And Managers

1. *Design, implement, and support an effective performance appraisal system.*
   - ☐ Systematic, objective performance appraisals help identify such career problems as burnout, plateauing, and obsolescence.

2. *Integrate career management with organizational planning.*
   - ☐ Examine how organizational changes may affect the need for skills;
   - ☐ Compare these needs with your skills inventory, performance appraisal information, and the employees' career plans to make any changes that are needed; and
   - ☐ Survey managers and employees on their training and development needs.

3. *Provide comprehensive programs for training and development based on a needs assessment.*
   - ☐ Encourage skill development, retraining, and career renewal training opportunities.
   - ☐ Provide in-service training.
   - ☐ Encourage and provide support to attend professional meetings.
   - ☐ Update training programs for technical people.
   - ☐ Adjust training and development programs to any special needs of older employees.
   - ☐ Reward employees who reach training and development goals.

4. *Establish a tuition assistance plan for all employees.*

5. *Provide information about available seminars, workshops, training programs, professional journals, and other resources.*

6. *Create alternatives to full retirement.*
   - ☐ Part-time or temporary employment options;
   - ☐ Consulting or post-retirement employment;
   - ☐ Job sharing; and
   - ☐ Job redesign or transfer.

7. *Develop an organizational climate sensitive to and supportive of needs of older workers.*
   - ☐ Sensitize managers to the pitfalls of age stereotyping. Train managers in coaching, counseling, listening, goal-setting, problem solving, and career planning.

8. *Keep employees posted on company plans and workplace expectations.*
   - ☐ Older employees are a valuable asset. They bring to their job the experience of a lifetime. They are also reliable and tend to stay with their company rather than job hopping, which makes investing in their training good business.

Sensitize managers to the pitfalls of age stereotyping.

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Many employers have found that older workers are a valuable resource. These employers have learned that it is ability, not age, that counts on the job. They are successfully using the experience of a lifetime.

AARP is the nation's leading organization for people age 50 and over. It serves their needs and interest through legislative advocacy, research, informative programs, and community services provided by a network of local chapters and experienced volunteers throughout the country. The organization also offers members a wide range of special membership benefits, including *Modern Maturity* and the monthly *Bulletin*.

AARP's Work Force Programs Department is educating employers, employees, and the general public about retirement and employment issues affecting older workers. Through its program, publications, and volunteer activities, the Department strives to achieve the following goals:

☐ To assist employers to recruit, manage, train, and retain an aging and increasingly more diverse work force;

☐ To help empower persons to make informed employment and retirement decisions;

☐ To advocate the enforcement of nondiscriminatory rules, policies, and practices related to age in the workplace; and

☐ To develop innovative programs and models that will increase work options available to older persons.

The Work Force Programs Department offers resources to employers interested in using the skills and experience of older workers. Among the resources available are:

☐ *Working Age*, a free bimonthly newsletter highlighting employment trends;

☐ NOWIS, a data base of information about how more than 150 employers utilize older workers;

☐ Management guides and training manuals; and

☐ Worker education materials.

For more information on training older workers and other topics listed above, please contact:
Business Partnerships
AARP Work Force Programs Department
601 E Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20049
(202) 434-2092

AARP

American Association of Retired Persons
Work Force Programs Department
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049

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