

# Increasing age diversity in the workplace

[Life](#)



In this paper we will discuss the factors that relate to the relationship between the employee and employer in regards to age diversity and how organizations can handle this form of diversity. Managers have a unique challenge with having such a diverse workforce as they need to be able to prevent it from occurring. They also need to be watchful as even with the best policies discrimination can still occur and they must be able to handle the quickly and efficiently.

No person should feel discriminated against in their place of employment and possibly with everyone adhering to the policies this may one day be the case. Increasing Age Diversity in the Workplace In a country that is diverse as the United States one would think that discrimination would not occur. Unfortunately differences in age, culture, and sex still represent some of those that are being discriminated against. Companies are taking steps to prevent further occurrences but even this is not enough as there are still documented cases of discrimination that have occurred.

We also have no way of quantifying the amount of cases that have gone unreported. Anti-discrimination laws have been passed, now it is up to the companies to implement policies that adhere to these laws and ensure equal opportunities to all of their employees. As the population begins to age there are several factors that may occur in regards to employment relations. With aging comes an increase in diseases and comorbidities. This represents higher costs in healthcare for the company and their insurance companies.

In order to make up for the increase in costs there may be a need to increase the premiums for those particular patients. The children of the aging patients may also require more flexible scheduling in order to take care of their aging  
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parents, as most families may not be able to afford the costs of assisted living. Managers have a unique challenge when dealing with the age diversity in their companies. Although there is legislation in place in regards to equality, there is a real gap in between the law and what actually occurs.

Each company has their own practices of preventing discrimination in their facilities but it needs to be followed thoroughly. The managers will need to monitor their practices, on a regular basis, to make sure that they are not discriminating against their employees. They themselves may not believe that they are indeed discriminating against anyone but this is where they need to be educated further so that they will be cognizant of their actions.

Geert Demuijnck writes in his article, "The mere fact that practices are designed and implemented does not imply that inequality automatically is reduced" (Demuijnck, 2009). Discrimination is not a straightforward problem. Companies will need to implement policies and possibly change practices several times until there is a satisfactory outcome. Another challenge for managers is the ability for the aging workforce to learn and implement new technology. By no means does this mean that they cannot learn, but there will need to be programs set in place that will train them to use the new electronics.

This will need to be offered to all employees, not just the older population, as you do not want to unintentionally discriminate against the younger employees. It could be voluntary and/or it could be an incentivized program that would give each person who passes the course a certificate and increase in pay. The aging workforce should not be disqualified from working just because there is new technology that is being implemented every day;

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they just need on the job training to acquaint themselves with the new software and equipment.

Managers also need to understand how to work with the vast differences in generations. There are four different generations in the workforce today and the way they interact and perceive their lives and careers are vastly different. Not only will managers need to be able to accommodate the aging employees, but they will also need to understand the differences between the generations and equip them to work together to promote their strengths and become productive group.

Organizations can cope with the differences with discrimination by setting a clear policy in place and making sure that the policy is distributed to all of their employees. This could be done through a handbook or a pamphlet. Once the policy is in place there should be clearly defined guidelines and penalties for not adhering to the policy. Before the policy is rolled out, managers should be trained on how the policy will work and how they are to identify other employees that are not adhering to the guidelines.

The policy should be clear cut as to how an employee may file a complaint. If an employee or another manager is found to be breaking the policy then a progressive penalty system should be issued starting with a verbal warning and progressing to the possibility of being let go from the institution. It may not be easy to follow but the policy will need to be adhered to fully. Secondly, if an employee feels discriminated against the organization may have to cope with the legal matters and legal expenses if the person decides to press suit.

The expenses may not always be monetary; the expenses could include the time spent by personnel gathering documents for the defense, also loss in morale and reputation. As previously described, companies need to have the policies set in place to prevent discrimination from occurring thereby also preventing litigation and the financial costs associated with it. As companies set policies in place to eliminate discrimination, they must also examine their existing policies to ensure that they do not discriminate in any way.

Policies that have mandatory retirement dates may need to be modified or be completely removed. Most positions can be filled with an employee of any age provided, of course, that they have the skills for the position. Earlier it was discussed that programs could be provided to keep the aging workers up to date with the technical changes, these programs must be offered to each employee. If the companies only offer the programs to specified age groups this could be argued as a form of discrimination. Healthcare premiums are offered at a lower cost if a person is healthy.

Naturally when you age your health begins to deteriorate so decreased premiums for those who are younger or healthier may be taken as discrimination. Unfortunately these incentives are put in place to help promote healthier lifestyles but they do, in a way, discriminate against those that are aging. To change this would be difficult. One way would be to stop offering the discounted premiums to those that are healthy all together. Another option would be to offer the discounts not based on what diseases you have but on what kind of lifestyle you live (notsmoking, increasing exercise).

Certain things such as genetics predispose people towards medical conditions that they have no way of preventing and they should not be penalized financially for this. In conclusion, there is no question that there has been a decrease in documented cases of age discrimination over the last several years, but even with the changes made in the workplace we know that it continues. Companies must educate their managers on their anti-discrimination policies and also educate their employees in regards to how to discuss their concerns if they feel that they are being discriminated against.

There is no easy answer to the discrimination argument as everyone perceives situations differently. As the saying goes, the best defense is a good offense. Preventing the discrimination from occurring is the offense. Also employees need to feel that discussing their concerns with their managers will not have repercussions on themselves and managers need to be educated in order to handle their concerns properly. This will improve over time but the companies must constantly monitor and make changes as necessary.