
Don't miss the boat with mature-age candidates

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Recruitment consultants generally don't understand there is an immediate need for businesses to be attracting mature-age workers, says [Adage](#) director Alison Monroe.

Addressing the RCSA conference last week, Monroe said part of the lack of understanding comes from the focus on the effect the ageing population will have on the workforce of 2020, 2030 or 2050.

She says the issue is "not about 20 years' time - it's about *now*."

Monroe points out that between 2002 and 2012, 85 per cent of potential labour force growth will come from people aged 45 years and over. So, with the candidate market already so tight, if you're targeting "prime-age" workers, you're going to have trouble, she says.

Monroe acknowledges the reluctance of some hiring managers to employ mature-age workers but says there are ways recruiters can convince them it's the smart thing to do.

One of these is to compare the client's employee demographic with that of their customers. Many businesses will be convinced to increase their older headcount in order to align it more closely with their target market.

Attracting older workers

To encourage more mature-age candidates to apply for jobs, recruiters writing job ads should avoid using words such as 'dynamic', 'fast-paced' and 'energetic', which read as 'youthful'.

Monroe says mature-age candidates will consider a job opportunity seven times longer than a younger candidate and will screen themselves out if they think they won't fit in at the workplace.

As well, if clients are looking to increase their mature-age headcount, they should avoid using too many youthful images on the careers sections of their websites, so as not to discourage older people from applying.

Monroe says research dispels as myths all the stereotypes about mature-age workers (for example, that they are inflexible, want too much money and are a greater OHS risk).

She says many are happy to earn less than they have been previously if it means a reduction in stress and responsibility, and points out that in a white-collar environment, mature-age workers have fewer injuries and compensation claims than younger employees.

Keep in mind that unlike Generation Y candidates, baby boomers aren't experienced in job interviews and assessments, but this doesn't necessarily mean they won't perform well in a role, Monroe says.

Recruiters should ensure they educate mature-age candidates about what to expect during the recruitment process and how assessments work, and recommend that they undergo training on how to present well if appropriate.

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