

Jobseekers see age as major hurdle

BY CARLY SHEDDEN

Mature jobseekers say their age is holding them back from gaining employment. Research figures from a range of sources certainly confirm this.

According to a survey undertaken by recruitment agency Drake, Beam and Morin, on average, mature people's search for employment was longer than any other age group.

And the longer they looked for work, the less likely they were to find it.

The survey also showed that mature workers often entered into employment that offered less working hours or a lower position within an organisation, resulting in diminished earnings.

Despite this, the Federal Government is determined to keep older people in the workforce longer. It has introduced initiatives like extending the age of compulsory superannuation payments to include people aged up to 75 and, as of July this year, the Government put more pressure on older jobseekers receiving the Newstart Allowance. Jobseekers aged between 50 and 64 now have an additional obligation to look for work. They must register with an employment service provider and have the same job search requirements as younger jobseekers – for example, making 10 job search efforts per fortnight.

Views on this issue are divided... after all, why should older jobseekers be treated differently? The most obvious reason is discrimination.

Research conducted by **Adage.com.au – an online job board for mature people** – found 51 per cent of respondents indicated they had been victims of discriminatory practices from recruiters.

"The main problem we see is the stereotypes and misconceptions that many people have as to what mature employees are like," Adage Director Margaret Seaberg said. "They might be perceived as stuck in the past, IT illiterate or that they will not want to work for very long."

The facts, however, tell a different story.

"Mature employees have the highest take up of IT, stay 2.4 times longer than younger employees in an organisation and are enthusiastic about training and skill development."

On the up-side, companies that don't recognise the value of older employees and balanced workforces may soon discover they are left out in the cold.

The Australian workforce is ageing and shrinking – available workers are growing older and there are fewer younger workers entering the market.

Some employers have started to address changes in the labour market by attracting and retaining mature employees. However it appears that these companies are in the minority. According to Ms Seaberg, the only way organisations will maintain a competitive advantage is to start to create a culture in their companies that values and thrives on maturity, wisdom and experience.

HUDSON'S research says that there are 14 work attributes that encourage mature workers to stay in the workforce longer.

- Being able to work from home
- Flexible working hours
- Able to extend holidays throughout year n Plan to gradually reduce the number of days worked
- Access to lifestyle oriented retirement planning
- Access to financial advice
- Greater opportunity to mentor others
- Work still has new challenges
- Able to work in different areas
- Pay
- Recognition
- Reduce undesirable work
- Friendly work environment
- Commuting time to work per day