

Education and training in the multi-generational workforce

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Chestnut Hill, Mass.: Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College, 2009

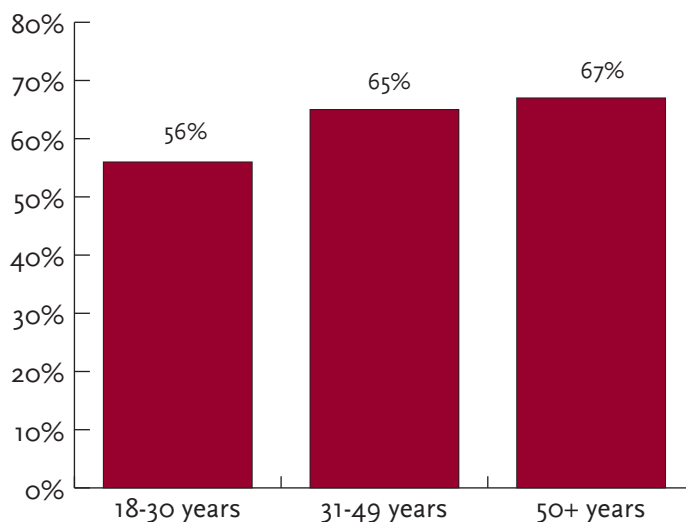
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EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKPLACE

To what extent do employees of all ages have access to work-related education and training?

According to data from the 2007 National Study of the Changing Workforce, 65% of employees at mid-life (31-49 years) and 67% of employees aged 50 and older reported that they have access to employer-sponsored training, compared to 56% of younger employees (aged 18-30).¹

Figure 1. Percent of Workforce with Access to Training Opportunities by Age



Source: Shen, Pitt-Catsouphes, & Smyer, 2007

In a 2009 study on access to flexible work options, one of the most frequently reported flexible work options is the ability to take paid/unpaid time for education or training, with 67.5% of respondents reporting access to this option.²

According to the 2008 WorkTrends Survey, “just 40% of workers are very satisfied with opportunities for job training and education in their current jobs... 61% said that they would like more education and training to do their jobs better or to advance at work, and 50% say they truly need more education and training in order to advance in their jobs.”³

Are older workers interested in learning new skills or preparing for different work roles?

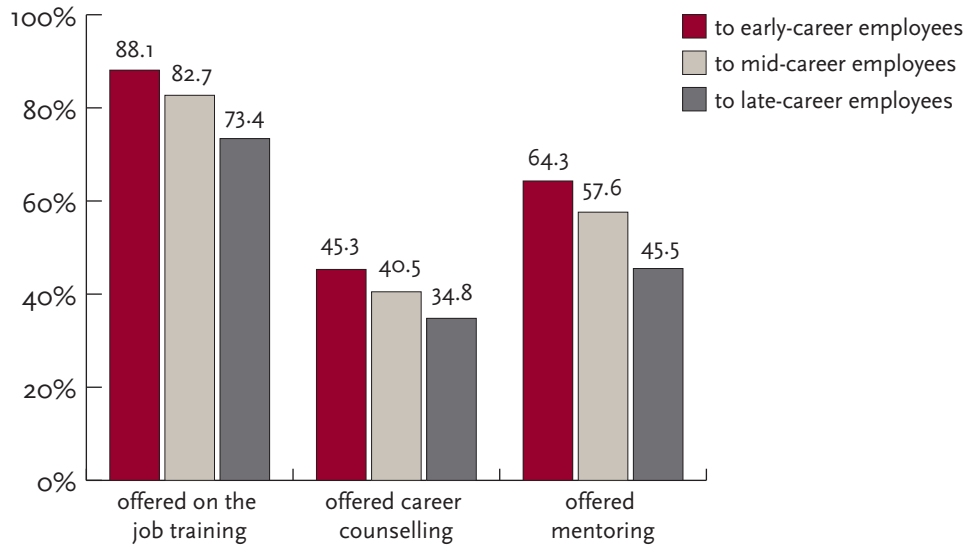
In a 2008 AARP report on a survey of over 1000 workers ages 50+, 93% of survey respondents reported that they enjoy learning new things, and 77% expressed interest specifically in work-related education. Similarly, 83% of the respondents were interested in programs designed to build new skills and advance their careers, while 90% were interested in training that updates current skills and knowledge. A majority (57%) also expressed interest in training that would help them get an entirely different type of job.⁴

However, according to another 2008 AARP survey of older workers, “approximately one-quarter (26%) of older workers report that they have difficulty keeping up with the new technology required to do their job, and a similar proportion (29%) express resistance to learning new skills at this stage of their careers.”⁵

How do employers and colleagues perceive older/late-career workers in regard to their interest in training, compared to workers at other career stages?

According to analysis of the 2007 National Study of Business Strategy and Workforce Development, employers were more likely to report that they have offered on the job training to their early-career (88.1%) and mid-career (82.7%) employees than to their late-career employees (73.4%) in response to the changing age demographics of the workforce.⁶

Figure 2. Supporting Career Development by Career Stage (% of respondent organizations indicating)



Source: Pitt-Catsouphes, M., Smyer, M. A., Matz-Costa, C., & Kane, K. (2007).

When workers of different generations were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree) with the perceptions that older workers are eager for training and adaptable to new technology, the responses are significantly more negative with each successive generation, from Traditionalists to Generation Y, according to a 2007 study. For example, 53% of baby boomers agree or strongly agree that older workers are eager for training, compared to only 30% of generation X and 24% of generation Y respondents.⁷

Approximately 25% of employers responding to a 2007 national survey stated that it is “true/very true” that early-career (26.5%) and late-career (25.3%) employees are difficult to train. For mid-career employees, 19.7% reported that this concern.⁶

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