

Age is no barrier in the workplace

May 23 2012



(Phys.org) -- Older managers bring as much value to an organisation as their younger counterparts, according to new research.

Research conducted by the Department of Management at Monash University with the Australian Institute of Management found older managers are vital to organisational [productivity](#).

Professor James Sarros and Associate Professor Andrew Pirola-Merlo found while [economic growth](#) was often directly associated with innovative, dynamic, and creative qualities, which are more likely associated with younger and more energetic workers, [older workers](#) are just as valuable to economic and social growth, bringing different [assets](#) such as their experience and psychological stability to the work place.

“The ageing workforce and its implications for future economic and social prosperity have infrequently been highlighted in the media, but we cannot deny older workers are important to ensure economic growth is sustained,” Professor Sarros said.

The researchers assessed managers and their direct reports using a variety of surveys and interactive intelligence tests. Managers also completed tests on managerial effectiveness including leadership style and emotional intelligence while the direct reports were asked to respond on manager leadership style and effectiveness.

Older, more experienced managers recorded higher levels of crystallised intelligence – a type of intelligence that relates strongly to verbal reasoning, as a result of education and practice. In contrast, fluid intelligence – the ability to solve novel problems using inherited basic reasoning ability – was lower among older managers, consistent with the researchers’ expectations.

“If you want to get the best out of your organisation’s decision-making processes, younger workers may have a slight edge when it comes to developing new and innovative solutions,” Professor Sarros said.

“The age-based differences were so small that a manager-recruitment strategy based on age isn’t justified by this data.”

Surprisingly, the researchers couldn’t find any age-related differences in leadership style which is in contrast to other studies that have been conducted in the past, particularly in the US, where older managers tended to rate higher on these leadership styles.

Associate Professor Pirola-Merlo said one explanation was the study, being fairly recent, may reflect the impact of greater emphasis on leadership training at all levels and ages, throughout organisations, as

well as universities and schools.

“Our study found while there may be some slight differences, overall managers, no matter their age, were surprisingly similar in their leadership and problem-solving profiles,” Associate Professor Pirola-Merlo said.

“Although there may be other reasons to target recruitment of certain age groups, there is not a strong justification on the basis of [intelligence](#), problem solving or leadership capability.”

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Age is no barrier in the workplace (2012, May 23) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-age-barrier-workplace.html>

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