AUGUST 2001 WOMEN'S BUREAU CONFERENCE CALL

PLANNING FOR THE MATURE WORKER

Host: **Karen Furia,** Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 10

Speakers: **Ellen Blizinsky,** Working Solutions, Inc

SUMMARY OF TOPIC

This call focuses on work/life planning for the mature worker. Every seven seconds someone in the U.S. turns 50 years old. By the year 2006, people 50 will comprise over 50% of our workforce and workers between the ages of 33-43 will be declining. The Department of Labor estimates that there will be 151 million jobs in the year 2006 and only 141 million workers. Benefit planning for this emerging workforce is really more than just retirement planning. There are three areas of focus that need to be considered to address this sector of the workforce.

First you need to look at the aging workforce and workplaces in which people are aging. The workplace and workforce has changed dramatically over the past 15 - 20 years. The career ladder that formerly existed has changed to a flat structure without the usual hierarchy and progression that comes with age. Then there is technology "it rules the workplace" creating less physical labor and enable us to work longer. Employers have to look at the very diverse workforce in terms of age experience and expectations to address the issues of equity when considering programs and benefits. The aging worker is healthier than ever before making the employees between the ages of 50 and 65 really a mid life period. The one thing to be aware of is the stereotypes that are shared by employees and their employers. **Second** what life events and challenges will impact the person 50 years and over. The period between the ages of 50 and 60 years of age have been rated by psychologists as being perhaps the most stressful of an adults life. Midlife is a time when individuals are dealing with many internal and external changes in their worklife and in their personal life. Employer support and sensitivity to these issues will rekindle employee loyalty and commitment to the company. **Third** what are the strategic areas for the employers or HR managers to focus on to retain and re-engage these employees who will become more and more valuable. This last area can be achieved by focusing on four areas: corporate programs, benefit plans, training, and lastly the community and how the corporation engages the community in this effort to retain and re-engage their mature workers.

KEY POINTS

- By the year 2006 50% of the workforce will be 50 years or older.
- HR professionals and companies interested in worklife issues will need to look beyond basic retirement planning to retain and motivate the mature worker.

- It is necessary to address stereotypes and myths about the mature workforce and move beyond what they can't do, to what they can do in the new and changing workplace.

ADVANTAGES/SUCCESSES

- An AARP survey revealed that older workers are absent less for short-term illness.
- The Small Business Survival Center finds that workers 55 and older have better attendance records and account for only 9.7% of workplace injuries and are much less likely to file workers compensation claims.
- Older employees are a great resource for employers; an AARP study found that 55% of people between the ages of 55 to 65 were planning on working for pleasure and extra income and 32% will work full time.

DISADVANTAGES/ROAD BLOCKS

- Corporate culture needs to catch up with the aging workforce and view them as valuable employees before the year 2006.
- The mature worker will need to examine their attitudes about younger people and younger generations. The ability to deal with and communicate with a multi generation workforce is critical to the mature workers success.
- Training needs to be changed to adapt to the learning styles of the aging worker before true changes can take place.

RESOURCES

Ellen Blizinsky
Account Director
UBH-Working Solutions Division
(phone) 800-860-6933 x3011
(fax) 206-362-8081
ellen_e_blizinsky@uhc.com

- Working Solutions http://www.working-solutions.com
- National Council on Aging http://www.ncoa.org
- AARP http://www.aarp.org
- Karen Furia, Women's Bureau Regional Director, Region 10 furia-karen@dol.gov
- The Women's Bureau http://www.dol.gov/wb/
- Kelly Tyler, Child Care Resources, Business Liaison tyler@childcare.org
- Alliance of Work Life Professionals http://www.awlp.org
- Life Work Strategies http://www.nationalpartnership.org
- Boston College Center for Work & Family http://www.bc.edu/cwf
- Human Resources Executive/Cornell http://www.workindex.com
- Families and Work Institute http://www.familiesandwork.org

- The Life Station http://www.thelifestation.com
- Work Life Benefits http://www.wlb.com

The Women's Bureau Region X office and Child Care Resource and Referral of King County has compiled this "Work and Family Virtual Conference Call Summary Sheets" for information sharing and does not endorse any programs or organizations included in it. These summaries include information on programs and policies that employers have tried or ideas and thoughts that work and work/life professionals have shared.