

Ageism Awareness for Managers

A Self-Assessment

Activity Summary

This learning activity focuses on assessing and discussing the attitudes toward older workers that influence the behavior of managers.

Goals

- To increase awareness of ageist attitudes that can influence decisions about hiring, firing, training, promoting, and retaining workers.
- To introduce a discussion about valuing intergenerational diversity in the workplace.

Group Size

Fifteen to twenty managers.

Time Required

About 40 to 45 minutes.

Materials

- A copy of the Ageism Awareness Assessment for each participant.
- A pen or pencil for each participant.
- Flip-chart pad on easel.
- Markers.

Physical Setting

A standard training room with chairs and a writing surface.

Facilitating Risk Rating

Low to moderate.

Process

1. Introduce the topic to the training group, making the following key points:
 - People from as many as four generations are found in today's workplace.
 - Successful managers understand and appropriately deal with this type of workforce.
 - Awareness of personal beliefs and attitudes play a key role in manager's successful performance.
 - Awareness is increased through self-assessment and discussion.
2. Tell participants that they are about to participate in an activity that has two parts: self-assessment and discussion.
3. Distribute copies of the Ageism Awareness Assessment and pens or pencils to each participant.
4. Tell participants that they will have about 10 minutes to fill out and score the assessment.
5. Ask participants to share their total scores with the rest of the training group.
6. Lead a discussion using the following questions and record the responses on a flip chart:
 - Which attitudes/beliefs revealed in the self-assessment do you feel strongest about?
 - Which attitudes/beliefs does the organization feel strongest about?
 - What organization policies and practices support the appropriate attitudes/beliefs?
 - Which attitudes/beliefs do you need to be more personally committed to?
 - Which attitudes/beliefs does the organization need to be more committed to?

- What actions will you take to increase personal and organizational commitment to the values/beliefs?
- 7. Discuss how increased commitment will make people better managers.
- 8. Summarize information shared during the entire activity.
- 9. End the activity by encouraging the participants to conduct this self-assessment on an annual basis within their organizations.

Submitted by Shirley Copeland.

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Ageism Awareness Assessment

Instructions: For each statement below, circle the response that most closely aligns with your personal opinion.

1. Older workers are a valuable asset to my organization.
Disagree Neutral Agree
2. When considering two equally qualified candidates for a promotion, I would probably select a younger worker over an older worker.
Disagree Neutral Agree
3. Older workers experience a decline in their ability to learn new things.
Disagree Neutral Agree
4. Older workers are less productive than younger workers.
Disagree Neutral Agree
5. I would rather work in teams with people who are closer to my own age or younger.
Disagree Neutral Agree
6. Older workers are dependable and reliable.
Disagree Neutral Agree
7. Older senior-level executives hinder my ability to move up to a higher position.
Disagree Neutral Agree
8. Older workers are as open to change as others in the organization.
Disagree Neutral Agree
9. If I had to downsize my department, I would make my decisions based on previous productivity and performance rather than age.
Disagree Neutral Agree
10. I would rather give training opportunities to younger workers than to older workers.
Disagree Neutral Agree
11. I would consider flexible work arrangements to accommodate older workers who want to continue working with fewer hours.
Disagree Neutral Agree

12. I would prefer to offer older workers early retirement, rather than offer training opportunities for new skills.
Disagree Neutral Agree
13. Older workers have more problems when new technology is introduced in the company.
Disagree Neutral Agree
14. Older workers cannot cope with the physical demands of the job.
Disagree Neutral Agree
15. I treat all workers equally, regardless of age.
Disagree Neutral Agree

Determining Your Score

For each "agree" answer to questions 1, 6, 8, 9, 11, and 15, give yourself 1 point.

For each "disagree" answer to questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, and 14, give yourself 1 point.

If your total score is 12 or higher, your attitudes and beliefs are appropriate for encouraging a diverse workplace. If your total score is below 12, you may have adopted unfounded myths and stereotypes about aging and should examine your potential for age bias in interacting with older workers.