

Case study: business benefits of employing the 50+

Domestic and General Call Centre, Nottingham

The call centre industry employing large numbers of mainly younger workers suffers from high staff turnover. At the Domestic and General call centre in Nottingham, the largest specialist provider of service contracts on domestic electrical equipment in the country, HR Manager Tracy Burrell describes how the business benefits of an older workforce in an industry typically seen as an employer of young people encourage the company to adopt proactive age management methods.

“The challenge was to increase staff diversity and attract and retain higher numbers of older workers who bring experience, loyalty and reliability. A range of strategies have been employed to ensure recruitment is age-positive including designing recruitment material for older as well as younger workers through the use of song titles as strap lines such as, ‘Baby it’s cold outside’, or ‘Talking about my generation.’

“We have also been using age ambassadors at recruitment fairs, briefing temp agencies to meet and beat a 10 per cent target of mature workers and we use telephone interviews at the first stage of selection to avoid age bias. We also have confidence boosting induction training and we try to build the confidence of all workers and give support prior to them being involved in call handling. Flexible working patterns include term time working and flexible hours while a range of contract types include arrangements that are suitable for people with changing career expectations and caring responsibilities.”

“The benefits to the company include an increase in empathy towards our customers (many of whom may be older people themselves, phoning in with problems about their domestic appliances). We find that older workers bring a positive work ethic and are loyal. This impacts on staff attendance and retention figures. Moreover, they have a positive influence on younger staff members.

Source: *Age Matters in a Downturn* published by the Employers Forum on Age and TAEN 2009