



NEW EMPLOY

'Old' is New Again

Efforts to recruit and retain older workers heat up.

By Kermit Kaleba

The aging and retirement of the baby boom generation will pose significant economic challenges in the years ahead. To ease the coming strain, the federal government and the public sector are leading the effort to identify solutions that will keep older employees in the workplace longer.

The Taskforce on the Aging of the American Workforce, which comprises representatives from a number of federal agencies, is planning to issue a report on mature workers soon. Led by the United States Department of Labor, the task force identified three major areas of study: employer response to the aging workforce, individual opportunities for employment, and legal and regulatory issues regarding work and retirement. The members were mostly concerned with current tax provisions that discourage continued employment, employer attitudes about the costs of employing older employees, and access to training to ensure that older workers are able to update existing skills and acquire new ones.

Inside **Intelligence**:

How the housing market is affecting talent-management efforts	14
Tips for working like a politician	16
Satisfaction among healthcare workers / The most common ways to retain talent	18
Cool tool that harnesses body heat / Why workers leave	19

The draft report recommends these ways that the federal government can pave the way for more older employees in the workplace:

- developing comprehensive legislation to support phased retirement plans and reducing Social Security taxes for older workers
- coordinating research and demonstration programs on serving older workers, including studies on effective training techniques
- expanding opportunities for self-employment and encouraging flexible work arrangements
- educating employers and workers on the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

In Congress, Senator Herb Kohl (D-Wis.) has introduced two bills that he hopes will also help the cause.

The first, the Older Worker Opportunity Act of 2007, proposes a tax credit for organizations that establish flexible work programs for employees 62 and older. The credit would expire after 2010.

Kohl's Health Care and Training for Older Workers Act would amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 by defining a category of "hard-to-serve" people, such as displaced homemakers, lower-income individuals, older workers, and other disadvantaged populations. One-Stop Career Center staff would be required to consider an individual's hard-to-serve status when they determine an individual's eligibility for employment assistance or training services. The bill also would establish an incentive grant program that local workforce areas could use for innovative programs serving this segment of the population. In addition, the DOL would be required to create an online clearinghouse for best practices in hiring and retaining older workers.

AARP, the not-for-profit organization for the 50 and older crowd, released a report in September that examines demographic and economic trends relating to the mature workforce in the Group of Seven countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United

Foundations to Help Workers of All Ages

A unique alliance among the Jobs for the Future not-for-profit organization, the United States Department of Labor, and a number of charitable foundations recently announced its National Fund for Workforce Solutions. Created because of the looming shortage of skilled workers in the United States and a "fragmented and inefficient set of workforce development systems," the \$50-million fund will invest in more than 30 promising workforce partnerships in the coming years. Ford Motor Company, Hitachi, and the Annie E. Casey foundations have already committed nearly \$15 million collectively to the fledgling effort.

Workforce partnerships serve as intermediaries, bringing together local educational, economic-development, and charitable organizations to link employers and workers. Because they traditionally focus on lower-income employees, these partnerships provide or arrange support services, such as child-care assistance, in addition to traditional job training programs. The fund's officials hope to reinforce these efforts through financial and advisory assistance. The initiative has already started in six urban pilot sites in Massachusetts, California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Rhode Island, and New York and is expanding to four new sites by the end of the year. Each site will receive a three-year grant worth \$450,000.

Project leaders say the goal is to enable 50,000 individuals to get jobs or enhance their careers; assist 1,000 businesses to help them recruit and retain employees; and leverage more than \$200 million in local funding over the next five years. They also anticipate that future investments may be directed toward rural partnerships.

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Kingdom, and the United States) and offers suggestions on how governments, organizations, and individuals can prepare for the years ahead. The report suggests that governments should provide incentives for organizations to recruit and retain older workers as well as amend pension or social security laws to remove barriers to employment.

The report also suggests some best practices organizations can draw upon. They include ensuring equality of opportunity in training and development to promote lifelong learning and maxi-

mize organizational performance, offering work flexibility, and conducting ongoing employee research to determine what best motivates workers at different stages of their lives and careers.

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Plummeting U.S. Housing Market Could Flatten Recruitment



As the mortgage crisis continues to cut a path of destruction in the United States, it may create talent gridlock among once highly mobile professionals and executives.

During the housing boom, companies and job candidates alike enjoyed the benefits of rising home values and quick sales, which made it easier for companies to attract candidates beyond their local talent pools. However, the slowing housing market is forcing candidates to reconsider career changes and companies to reevaluate talent-planning efforts.

According to Tim Noble, managing principal of The Avery Point Group, candidates who once readily accepted relocation as part of the career-advancement process may instead opt to postpone a career change or look locally for opportunities. For companies looking to attract the best and the brightest, this situation could mean some key roles go unfilled if local talent is not readily available.

To make matters worse, says Noble, “fallout from a potential talent gridlock may further depress some housing markets as many communities count on a

steady influx of transplanted professionals and executives to drive sales.”

With the end of the slump nowhere in sight, the national executive-search firm says that companies will need to move quickly to reassess their recruiting efforts and relocation policies, because the situation also will affect their internal relocations and promotions.

“Companies will need to get creative if they want to hire the best talent under these conditions. . . .”

“Companies will need to get creative if they want to hire the best talent under these conditions,” says Noble. “I don’t see companies offering more home buyouts in this current environment, but to attract the best talent, they will need to get creative with other tools such as bridge loans, loss-on-sale assistance, extended temporary housing, and travel to ease the pain of relocation.”

// FAST FACT //

Booing Your Boss

Do you believe your boss is a competent leader? If you were among the nearly two-thirds of participants in a recent SkillSoft survey, you’d agree. Only about 35 percent of employees do not consider their boss a leader, and 30 percent of employees do not think their boss is qualified for the job.

SkillSoft interviewed more than 200 employees, ranging from entry-level to executive positions, in information technology, sales and marketing, customer service, finance, human resources, administration, and other roles. Sixty-five percent of employees in IT-related positions would attest to their bosses’ leadership skills, as opposed to the 51 percent of employees in sales and marketing who questioned their bosses’ ability to lead their departments.

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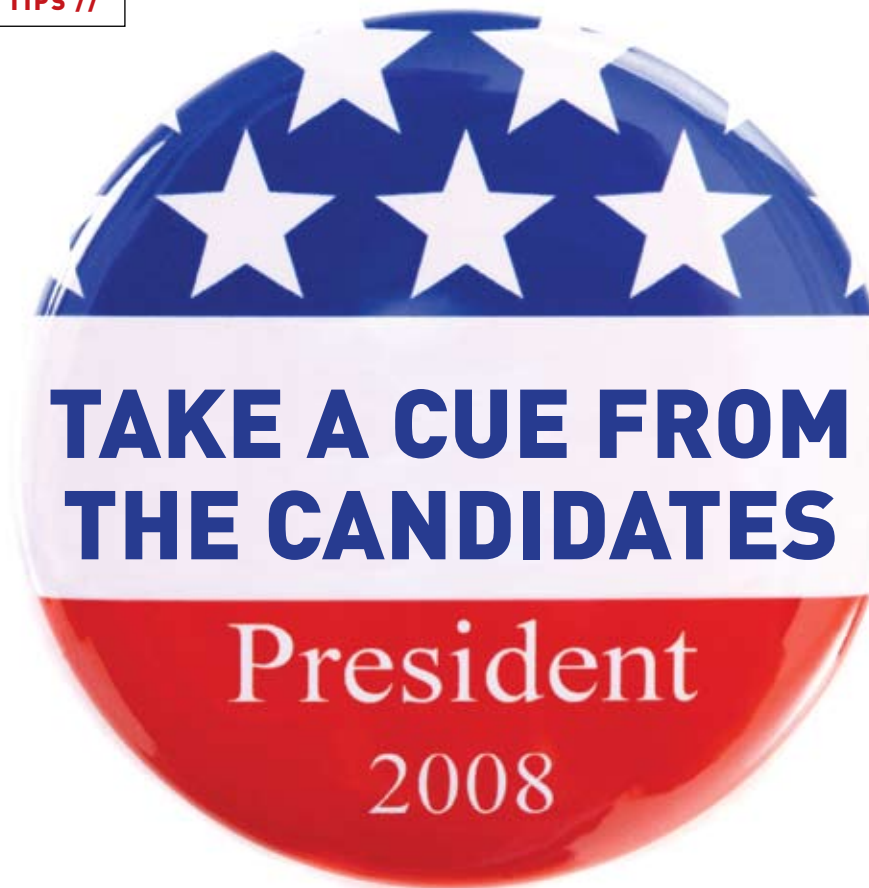
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AS THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES KICK OFF NEXT MONTH in the United States, leadership and management expert Kevin Eikenberry encourages businesspeople to think about more than just politics. He says that the candidates' political maneuvering can teach valuable lessons about what strategies to emulate or avoid in the workplace.

Here are some tips he gleaned from the race so far:

BUILDING ENTHUSIASM EARLY. In politics, the next campaign cycle begins the day after someone is elected (sometimes sooner). It can make for an incredibly long campaign, but it certainly builds momentum and enthusiasm—especially among those on the candidates' teams.

The key to organizational change is communication, regardless if you are changing CEOs or the person who covers the phones during lunch. You have to help people understand why making that change will matter to them. Make it personal for your employees, and they will make the change work.

EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION. Via YouTube debates, podcasts, and blogs, this election's candidates are embracing technology and tapping into new forms of communication like never before. They are taking creative risks and are connecting with a new generation of voters who do not remember life without the Internet. Similarly, you can use the technology and the resources you have to try something new. Take calculated risks and encourage and reward creative achievements in your organization. Remember: Status quo requires no leadership.

CULTIVATING A FARM TEAM. In politics, someone always is waiting in the wings. But from the general public's perspective, political parties often do not appear to cultivate their future leaders well. There is a strategy behind who ultimately ends up in the final race, but that's not always clear.

To be successful in business, you need to actively cultivate your future

leaders. Organizational leadership development often means going to a seminar or two and waiting your turn. But taking that approach doesn't prepare organizations for long-term success. Have a succession plan and intentionally prepare for your company's future.

COMMUNICATING THE SUCCESSION PLAN. Even if the political farm system is in place, it looks as though the candidates are battling individually for the bid. To succeed in business, once you have your farm team built, you must regularly communicate with key players about their goals and the organization's goals. Each person in your organization—or at least every senior and middle manager—should be able to tell you what her next position will be. Communicating the organizational plan and connecting it to individual goals allows employees to see how they fit into the big picture, and helps you make sure your next senior executives have everything they need to thrive from the beginning.

FOCUSING ON THE COMPETITION. The political in-fighting among same-party candidates is in full swing right now. Of course it's important for voters to hear about the candidates' differences, but the time spent bashing the people within the party detracts from the overall goal of bringing that party into the Oval Office. It's similar to when salespeople can't get along with the marketing department, or when customer service representatives think the shipping department people can't find their way home.

Competition is healthy when it's focused on achieving organizational or departmental goals rather than the good of a group or department. Imagine the bottom-line implications of everyone working together to achieve organizational goals instead of trying to one-up other departments or individuals to achieve strictly personal or team success.

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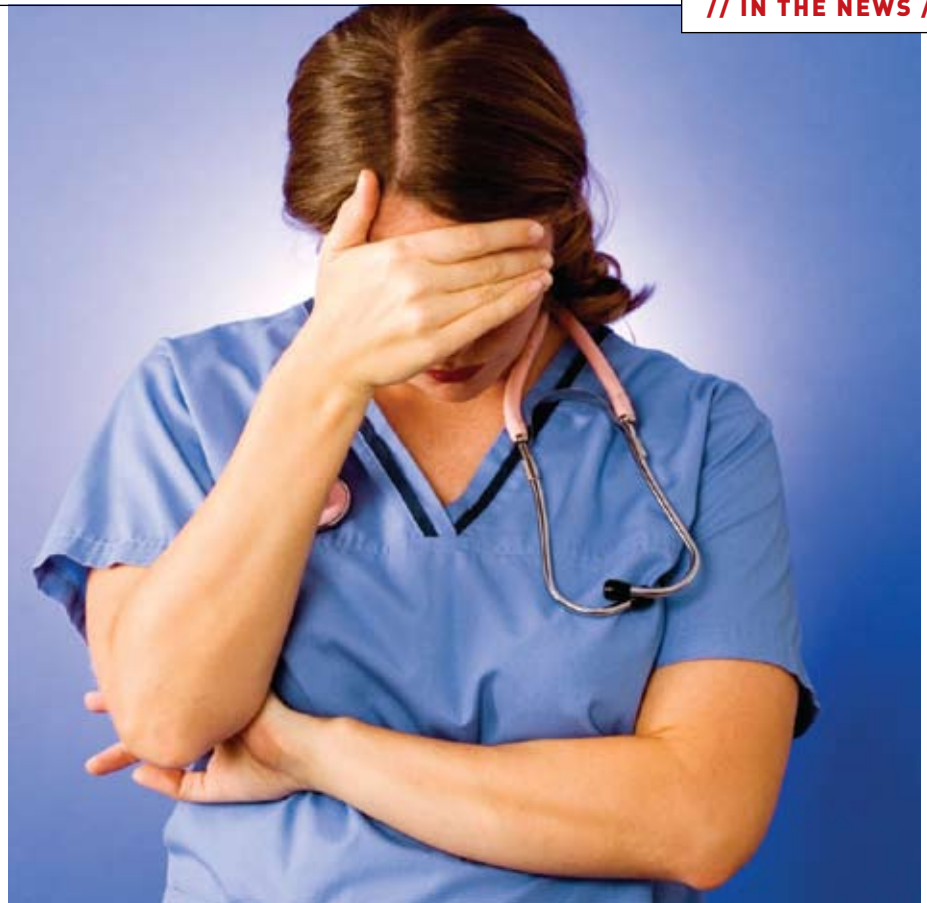
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TOP RETENTION EFFORTS

Employers are using coaching, training, and mentoring more often as ways to retain high-potential and frontline employees, according to a survey on the most popular ways to retain these types of employees conducted by ClearRock, an outplacement and executive coaching firm headquartered in Boston.

According to the research, the most often used tactic by employers to retain high-potential employees is an improved selection process. That's followed by better training, coaching, improved compensation and benefits, and improved orientation and assimilation programs. Similarly, the study says employers are trying to keep frontline employees through more careful selection processes, better orientation and assimilation programs, exit interviews, improved training, and better compensation and benefits.



NURSES RANK AS Least Satisfied

Hospital administrators, pay close attention. You're not doing enough to keep your nursing staff from walking out the door. According to a report by Press Ganey Associates, which provides measurement and improvement services to the healthcare industry, registered nurses are the least satisfied of all hospital employees.

The company's "2007 Hospital Check-Up Report" documented the opinions of more than 193,000 healthcare workers—including nurses, technicians, administrative personnel, and other nonclinical employees—at more than 370 hospitals across the United States. Additional findings from the report include

- Opportunities for promotion and senior leadership's attention to concerns are essential to maintaining employee satisfaction.
- Office, clerical, and administrative personnel report the highest levels of satisfaction among hospital employees.
- Hospitals' cultures of engagement, a critical indicator of employee contributions toward an organization's goals, have room for improvement when compared with other facets of employee satisfaction.

In short, hospital employees emphasized the need for leaders to pay more attention to their concerns. In fact, they cite it as the best chance for improving the working environment.

MORE/www.pressganey.com/employee-report.pdf

Nonfinancial Reasons Why Workers Leave Their Jobs



Source: International Association of Business Communicators

// COOL TOOL //

Body Heat Generates Electricity

The rising costs of electricity and gasoline are forcing scientists to explore new ways of producing usable energy. German scientists have developed a way to use body heat to generate electricity that will keep your learning tools powered up even in the most remote locations.

Although it's only in the early stages, scientists from several Fraunhofer institutes in Germany have created an entire electrical system that runs on body heat. It works on the principle of thermoelectric generators, which extract energy from the temperature difference between hot and cold.

Normally, a difference of several tens of degrees would be required to generate enough power, but the differences between the body's surface temperature and that of its environment are only a few degrees. That produces about 200 millivolts, while electronic devices require at least one or two volts.

Peter Spies, manager of the project, and his team incorporated a charge pump, which temporarily stores the incoming millivolts until they reach 1.8 volts. At that threshold, an internal transistor delivers the higher voltage to a component that can transfer the electricity to a device. Scientists have already created circuits that exert 50 millivolts.

—Paula Ketter

