

## Are You Missing Out on Experienced Talent?

Created by Mary Lloyd, Mining Silver LLC for Workforce50.com

Employers and hiring managers, are you missing the boat on the value of experienced talent? Take this quick quiz to see if what you're telling yourself is subtracting from your bottom line.

**Instructions:**

Rate each statement from 1 (not at all) to 9 (totally true) in the box that appears after it.  
 Not at all true    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Totally true

After 50, people get sick more and have lots of medical problems.									
Once you are old enough to retire, that's what you want to do.									
If you hire younger workers, they will be around longer.									
Younger workers get more done in a work day.									
Becoming physically frail once you reach 60 is unavoidable.									
If you can afford it, retirement is the best option.									
Hiring younger workers saves money.									
Younger workers are easier to train.									
Older workers take longer to get the job done.									
People only work in retirement because they need the money.									
Hiring someone who's overqualified is a bad idea.									
Younger workers have better work habits than older workers.									
Older workers can't learn new things.									
Once you get older, leisure-centered living is what you want.									
Training older workers is a waste of money.									
Younger workers have fewer sick days than older workers.									
Older workers are not as reliable.									
Older workers don't want new challenges.									
Offering a promotion to someone who can retire is ineffective.									
Younger workers get along better with other employees.									
<b>COLUMN TOTALS</b>									

Total your answers in each column. Totals for each column should be between 5 and 45.

## About the Results

The quiz you just took looks at what you're assuming about four different aspects of employing older workers: (1) assumptions about the aging process itself, (2) about what older workers want, (3) about using older workers as part of an overall human resource strategy, and (4) about younger workers. Every statement in the quiz is purely that—an assumption. They are not based in fact. They are not accurate. And in many cases, they keep you from seeing solutions to staffing challenges that could propel you ahead of the competition.

Column 1 addresses assumptions about how aging works. If your total is high, you're probably buying in to the conventional stereotypes of aging--feeble, frail, and useless after 50 or at least by the time a worker is eligible to retire. This stereotype is refuted by current research. Most of what we call aging is lifestyle choices. Those are affected by what people *think*. *Assuming* someone is less able to do the job simply because they have gray hair means you're ignoring some of the most effective people available.

Column 2 touches on assumptions about what older workers want. If your totals are high here, you are probably convinced that retirement is the best thing for everyone and that once it's available, people will want to take it. Studies done in the last five years refute this as well. Many older workers would prefer to keep doing what they are good at and love. However, many people retire because they think they are expected to. Making the work situation more flexible can net you a huge experience boost. *Confirm* what older employees really want instead of assuming they will be gone in a few years. Some want to work their entire lives simply because they like what they are doing too much to give it up.

Column 3 looks at the effectiveness of human resource strategies built from the erroneous assumptions about aging and older workers. If your score is high, it means you're buying into a lot of unproven assumptions here as well. Hiring someone who is "overqualified" makes perfect sense if that person finds satisfaction in the work, especially if you can enhance job flexibility. If your selection process considers this, you might end up with a team of contented, effective superstars. Also, looking only at salaries to assess the cost/benefit ratio is short-sighted. That new hire is going to take a long time to train and will make a lot of mistakes along the way. Those are costs you avoid by hiring experience. And don't assume because they are younger they will be there longer. Younger workers are more likely to jump ship for a better offer.

Column 4 looks at assumptions about younger workers. If this total is high, what you're assuming about younger workers is probably unduly optimistic. Studies have shown that older workers have significantly better work habits than younger workers. Older hires learn new things differently, but equally well. They tend to have fewer discipline problems and the experience they bring with them is likely to make them more effective with customers and in solving problems.

Failing to see older workers as a relevant part of your workforce is costing you money. Older workers bring a lot of pluses with them, in part because they relate better to the over 50 population -- which holds 75% of the wealth in the United States. Creating products and providing service that values older customers will broaden your market. Older workers will be better at that. Plus older customers are more loyal once you build their trust. Include older workers to make a more effective team. It's not either/or. You need both youth and experience to get the job done best.