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Mature Workers For A More Mature Workplace

Adecco Singapore takes a look at the value of mature workers in the workplace and how organizations should approach this valuable sector of the workforce

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As the war for talent continues to intensify in Singapore, smart companies are turning to older/mature workers to bring value to their organizations and to bridge the 'experience gap', whilst others are still missing the opportunity to tap into this valuable labour source. Adecco takes a look at the value of mature workers in the workplace and how organizations should approach this sector of the workforce.



When any economy is expanding, the availability of talent tightens and more jobs and more hiring activity usually mean fewer available candidates. When this happens, many organizations turn to temporary and contract staff or consider outsourcing to meet their human resource needs. However, as Singapore's economy continues to grow, many companies are also beginning to recognize an additional talent pool – that of older or mature workers – and the value that they can bring from both from an experience perspective and in a mentoring capacity for younger, less experienced, workers.

Several contributing factors are helping drive the interest in older workers. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made it clear in his 2010 National Day Rally speech that Singapore cannot continue to open its doors to foreign talent due to restrictions on space and resources and that immigration will likely slow. However, it is widely acknowledged that the country's sophisticated and knowledge based workforce has in part been as a result of the talent that it has been able to attract over the years. Going forward, this reduction in overseas talent means that companies will need to increasingly look locally for the talent that they need. Adding to this is new legislation that will be passed in 2012 making it compulsory for companies in Singapore to re-employ workers who reach retirement age.

But it's not all about the changes taking place from an employer perspective. People are living longer and having to support themselves for more years into their retirement. Improved healthcare and living conditions mean that people are staying healthier and active for longer. Combine these trends with the fact that many older people are changing their mindset about what retirement means and when it should take place - and it's easy to see why mature workers are likely to make such a significant impact on Singapore's workforce over the coming years.

67-year-old Andy Choi is a Singaporean that has had several careers to date and who at the age of 66 joined Adecco Singapore as part of its Engineering Recruitment Division. Andy explains why he is far from retirement: "I'm an engineer by trade and early parts of my career were with the Singapore Navy and with SIA. I also spent twenty years with pharmaceutical company GSK and retired at 55.

However, my first retirement didn't last for long and I joined the Singapore subsidiary of Wyeth for my 'second career', where I worked for another nine years as a Director of Engineering before again retiring at 65. Then, at 66 I joined Adecco to support and guide its business in the engineering area. This is a completely new industry for me and although I'm using my experience of engineering, I'm operating in a new business area and that's something exciting at my age.

The staffing industry traditionally employs many young individuals, so I'm supporting some of the less experienced consultants and passing on my engineering knowledge and experience. Engineering can be a complex world and the job description for a 'Project Engineer' can be different from company to company. I'm using my experience to help other recruiters be better able to identify top talent and to understand the world of engineering.

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Andy Choi
Adecco Engineering Division

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Lim Beng Guat is another vastly experienced individual that now oversees Adecco Singapore's Outsourcing business and who is based out of the company's office in International Plaza. 'BG', as Beng Guat is known to her colleagues, has a colourful and well-traveled background, from which she brings many experiences and learnings to Adecco. BG was involved in voluntary work for over 25 years, as part of the Christian Mission Service, which took her to all corners of the world. At 43 years old, she settled back in Singapore with her British husband and found contract work with IBM – a role that Adecco helped her secure.

Now aged 55, BG is part of the Adecco team that supports clients with their human resource outsourcing needs. She manages a team of young consultants and enjoys this 'new career'. BG comments "I feel that my many experiences in life have set me in good stead for my current role with Adecco. I've spent most of my career working closely with people, which is exactly what I do now at Adecco in the 'people business'. In my opinion, the best business relationships are built on developing strong relationships with the people involved – which is something that I relish doing. From a personal perspective, I really enjoy working with and supporting the younger colleagues in my office, and I feel that after so many years in different roles that I have something of real value to add. My thoughts are that companies that do not hire older workers miss out on something and that every organization needs a mix of young talent and more experienced professionals to give it a competitive edge”.

Adecco recognizes that employers in Singapore are beginning to better understand that mature workers are increasingly valuable, as they can capitalize on their experience, problem solving and mentorship skills to their gain. Mature workers are less likely to job hop, take unscheduled leave and more likely to complete training. By 2020, 19% of Singapore's labour force will be 55 years or older – which is a significant shift in the composition of the island nation's labour force and something for HR professionals to take note of.

It's clear that older workers have differing needs to that of their younger counterparts and that companies will need to better cater to these needs - which often include flexible working hours, enhanced medical coverage and an office working environment that is comfortable to work in – to attract mature worker talent. But accommodations such as these far out way the massive contribution that mature workers can make in Singapore's workplace.



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Lim Beng Guat
Adecco HR Services Manager

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Established in Singapore in 1985, Adecco Singapore offers a comprehensive range of services that includes temporary & contract staffing, permanent recruitment, outsourcing, executive search, leadership development, career management and outplacement. Services are delivered through a network of 19 general staffing and specialist divisions.

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