



How Mature Admins Shine

Learn how to stay relevant and show value — By Beth Braccio Hering

Don't feel threatened by the energy and up-to-date skills of younger colleagues. Show your employer (and yourself) that you still have plenty to contribute. These adjustments can make a mature worker more valuable than ever:

Be a lifelong learner

A reputation for being stuck in one's ways can lead to an older worker being seen as inflexible and irrelevant. Shatter the stereotype by committing to continual self-improvement.

"No matter what your position, continuously look for additional classes, courses, seminars and even books you can read that will increase your knowledge of key subjects in business and your area of expertise," says author and executive coach Lisa Quast, founder of Career Woman. "Every time I interview someone for a position or consider someone for a promotion, a key question I ask is, 'What have you done lately to upgrade yourself?' If a candidate or employee cannot answer this question, he or she won't make it any further in the interview process or won't get the promotion."

Perhaps nothing dates a worker as quickly as a lack of tech savvy, so it is especially important to regularly evaluate your skills in this area. Quast suggests joining industry associations to stay on top of trends. Then, seek instruction or spend some time practicing until you become comfortable with programs, search engines, social media or whatever else adds to your value.

A great source of such knowledge may be a cubicle away—younger colleagues. Generational workplace expert Courtney Templin, chief operating officer at JB Training Solutions and author of the forthcoming book *Manager 3.0: A Millennial's Guide to Rewriting the Rules of Management*, suggests trying a reverse mentorship.



"Millennials are incredibly collaborative and happy to share their knowledge about the latest technologies and social media trends," Templin says. "Millennials are 'digital natives'—they have used these technologies since they were children. Technology is part of their DNA, so even new and emerging technologies are more intuitive to them compared to older generations."

Pay attention to image

Just as your skill set requires periodic updates, so does the way you look. If you've had the same hairstyle, makeup and clothing for 20 years, others may perceive you as outdated. As unfair as this may seem, people do make assumptions based on appearance.



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“Constantly look around and upward in the company and industry in which you work to evaluate how successful workers look in regard to their overall appearance and the perception it creates. Then, work on keeping your own image current,” Quast says. Review magazines, take makeup lessons at a department store counter or seek assistance from a personal shopper.

Utilize strengths

While age is sometimes portrayed as a liability, keep in mind that it is also an asset. Keep your level of confidence up by remembering what you bring to the workplace. Dependability, a thorough knowledge of the organization and level-headedness are some of the many qualities displayed by older workers and valued by employers. Lead by example, and let younger workers know that you are happy to offer assistance.

“Traditionalists and boomers are more mature. They have a strong work ethic, and they are incredibly loyal. These are all timeless values that need to be instilled in the new generation of employees,” Templin says. *Training and Development Magazine* projected that Millennials will make up nearly half of the workforce by 2014. “The future of organizations is dependent on older workers training, coaching and mentoring this new generation of employees on the ‘soft’ business skills,” says Templin.

Respect all generations

Lastly, avoid making age an issue by focusing on individual strengths and performance. As others witness how you treat people as equals and are committed to teamwork, they may become increasingly “age blind.” Everyone from the veteran to the new hire reaps benefits from a workplace that doesn’t dwell on how old you are but rather how much you contribute.

