



Tailoring training to age-diverse work force

(July 13, 2009) Although the U.S. workforce has been growing slowly, its overall age has been increasing. Older Americans have come out of retirement to boost savings accounts decimated in the recent market meltdown. And currently working boomers who had considered retirement will remain working for several more years to recoup their losses. To boot, college students are extending stays in school to wait out the economic storm. What does all this mean for retailers?

"Retailers can expect to see traditional supplies of entry-level labor, such as high school and college students, decline," said Lonnie Harmon, co-founder of Intulogy LLC, an outsource training provider based in Henderson, Nev. "Correspondingly, the proportion of older workers in the labor force will increase."

These factors will create an increasingly age-diverse work force. Retailers will be required to develop strategies to attract, train and develop workers with very different expectations, goals and learning styles, added Harmon.

"Not only will retailers have to align their value propositions to appeal to a diverse work force, they will have to tailor their training and development programs to the very different learning habits of Boomers, GenXers, and Millennials."

Where you might have to spend little time with a boomer on customer-service skills, you might have to invest more time with a millennial. "These digital natives, while savvy with Xbox, Twitter and Facebook, may lack real face-time with customers," explained Harmon. A training scenario for a boomer might be one-on-one role play. For a millennial it might include a virtual retail establishment featuring a simulated customer exchange -- complete with accompanying game effects such as the sound of a cash register ringing up a sale when correct responses are given, or virtual dollars flying out the front door when incorrect responses are given."

Likewise, while a millennial may quickly grasp a retailer's online inventory system, a boomer may require more one-on-one mentoring or simulation time. "The unique and diverse learning styles of the learners must be considered from instructional design all the way through training delivery," Harmon advised.

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Wednesday, July 08
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Staples to launch new workforce management solution

Tuesday, June 30
Bon-Ton closes Northwood, Ohio store
Wal-Mart supports employer-mandated health coverage
Survey: Half of HR pros preparing to hire again
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Monday, June 29
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