

# Older Workers Training in Digital Technologies

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## ABSTRACT

Demographic changes associated with the aging of the population around the world require a revision of the usual approaches to HRM, rethinking work with older employees, retaining their competencies in organizations. Workers should be included in the lifelong learning process to bridge the Intergenerational Digital Divide. The article deals with the problems of organizing training of older workers, their involvement in digital technologies.

## Keywords

Aging, older workers, training, digital technologies.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century the aging problem leading to reduction of working-age population and the shortage of skilled staff is considered as a global challenge and demands a revision of traditional approaches to work with older workers.

HRM services are faced with the need to develop the older workers retention programs to preserve their competences in organizations. There comes an understanding that older workers are distinguished by loyalty, reliability, strong work ethic, and willingness to support colleagues and companies.

In the conditions of age structure changing in labor market and narrowing of the offer of young cohorts the companies begin to gradually reconsider the relation to training of workers of advanced ages, however it has not yet turned into a steady trend.

## 2. RESEARCH

The attitude of employers to the age of employees is contradictory. The companies are often not inclined to dismiss them, in view of the accumulated experience, but they do not seek to hire the workforce of this age group even in the presence of vacancies, wishing to fill the released jobs with younger personnel. The main reason given by employers, arguing their position regarding the hiring of older workers, is their doubt about the capability of these workers to study and adapt quickly to technological and organizational changes. Besides, employers often consider that employees with extensive work experience can claim high wages that will not be justified by their productivity [4]. Older workers are losing out to younger ones in those workplaces where speed in decision making, switching to new functions, and constant development are required. In 2018, age discrimination at IBM became known (despite the fact that in the United States since 1967 there is a law on non-discrimination in employment in connection with age). In five years, the corporation has dismissed about 20 thousand American workers aged 40 years and older. Among personnel who have got under age discrimination there were many "veterans" of IBM who had worked in the corporation for several decades. Less experienced and low-paid successors were taken to the places of elderly specialists, the duties of the dismissed ones were also transferred to employees of foreign divisions. The reduction in the number of personnel older than 40 years coincided with the transformation of the company's business when it focused on

cloud services and data analysis technologies. As part of the transformation, the corporation, according to the vice-president for human resources, wanted to achieve a more "suitable composition of age workers" and "to increase the percentage of young professionals" [5].

Older employees have long been excluded from programs of advanced training and retraining as the steady opinion was created that they are not capable to effectively acquire new skills, are intelligently inflexible, dogmatic, prepare for retirement, and investments into their training will not be profitable. In addition, representatives of the older age group, under the influence of stereotypes, themselves ignore training sessions and training seminars, even if they are available.

The inexpediency of training older workers was also explained by changes in cognitive abilities. First of all, decrease in the rate of physical and mental operations with age: an increase in reaction time, a slowdown in the processing of perceptual information, a reduction in the rate of cognitive processes.

It is revealed that the development of new technologies is also possible at an older age. New methods and technologies are perceived positively if they: are related to familiar material; they can be trained independently; there is the possibility of implementing the knowledge gained in practice and technical support [9]. A meta-analysis of more than 100 studies confirms the absence of significant differences in work efficiency among young and old workers. Even if we are talking about solving modern problems with the use of computer technology, the age employees approach them more responsibly and scrupulously than the young ones who perform these tasks simply faster [11].

A special feature of this category is stability, which is expressed in maintaining the results achieved, focusing on long-term prospects. Training costs of age personnel are comparable to training costs of young employees, if we take into account the longer duration of employment and the possibility of implementing the competencies obtained within one company [3].

According to research by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), employees aged 55+ experience the greatest lack of knowledge in foreign language skills (33%) and computer and information technologies (33%). 23% of respondents complained about the lack of awareness in the field of specific technical and professional skills [6]. Indeed, the older generation of workers came into contact with digital technology at mature age. Many members of this generation have difficulty in using information technology. Immersion of such an employee in the digital environment is often associated with a long period of training, painful adaptation and resistance.

The practice of various digital literacy education projects for older people reveals many of the difficulties and problems associated with ambiguous motivation of the older generation, their different levels of ability to master these programs, their feelings due to self-doubt and their dependence on the social environment, i.e., various aspects of the psychological readiness of older people to engage in digital space. The negative attitude of older workers to

digital technology is often associated with a fear of disrupting everyday order, lack of interest or a desire to learn new things in general.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the impact of digital technologies on older people to a greater extent highlights the positive impact on their personal and social development, a sustainable sense of achievement, an increase in the level of knowledge of their rights and increased ability to maintain and develop social relations [10]. Studies have shown that the interaction of older worker with information technology has a positive effect on their mental activity. They feel much more confident and less isolated, experience increased social support, feel more comfortable with computers, show good cognitive abilities and autonomy in their daily activities, demonstrate a lower level of depression [7].

The training of any adult should take into account: a) his conscious attitude to the process of his training; b) practical orientation, the desire to apply the acquired knowledge and skills; c) availability of life experience; d) influence on the learning process of professional, social, domestic and temporary factors [8]. In this case, older workers tend to actively participate in the training process, bring their own experiences and life values into it, try to relate the learning situation to their goals and objectives, need to individualize training, improve self-evaluation.

To organize training for older employees, it should be taken into account:

- New methods and technologies are perceived positively if they relate to familiar material
- Training should not occur in the conditions of lack of time and fast submission of information
- It must be possible to implement the knowledge gained in practice
- It is necessary to appeal to the accumulated experience and its recognition
- Handouts should be well structured, not contain small fonts
- Training, whenever possible, should occur in small groups.

Older workers may have a number of internal barriers in corporate training programs that reduce their effectiveness:

- Fear of making a mistake, something to spoil, fear of using new tools
- Fear to seem ridiculous, when a man seems ridiculous and absurd that he was not the first time to understand something, to make a «pattern»
- Difficulties in operating with new, especially foreign-language terms (for example, in the development of computer skills);
- Desire to quickly use the gained knowledge in practice, expressed in desire to "quicker" pass "simpler" subjects and at once to pass to "necessary" [1].

Various types of external barriers were found to involve the elderly in the digital space: complexity and high cost of equipment, lack of support during the learning process, inappropriate didactic approaches in skill formation, too high speed of instructions, complexity of the user interface that makes older people aware of their own helplessness [2]. Among the characteristics making contribution to forming of readiness of the elderly person for actions in digital space, an important role is played by: the needs and desire to master the digital world; perception of their opportunities, intellectual and creative abilities and self-organization.

The basic requirements for the selection of instructors for the training of older people in digital technology: the desire to work with people of the senior generation; professionalism, ability to explain complex technical concepts in accessible language; goodwill, tolerance, the

desire to find an approach to each learner.

In order to effectively train older workers, digital technologies need to take into account their needs, conduct training in the form of dialogue and in small groups; provide consistency of presentation, demonstrate the practical usefulness of digital skills.

The inclusion of older workers in digital training helps them in self-realization, adaptation to modern living conditions and inclusion in the information society, broadens horizons, areas of communication, opportunities to extend working and active life activities has a positive impact on improving their quality of life.

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