

EDUCATION AND TRAINING – EMPLOYABILITY

The benefits of learning are widely acknowledged and older people can benefit substantially from continuing to learn and gain new skills. Access to training and skill development is important if you wish to keep open the option of extending your working life. Training can be considered in three contexts. Firstly, work related training for those who are working; secondly, training for those out of work and seeking a job; and thirdly, training for those moving between employers.

Older workers receive less work-related training than their younger colleagues and part-time workers tend to be particularly disadvantaged. It could be that older workers are in some situations unwilling to take up offers of training because they do not see the benefits. Certainly job performance does not generally decrease with age but we are living in a world where the pace of change – in products, technology, markets and customers – is increasing. Employing organisations typically go through major structural changes every three years that leads to employees moving to new positions or taking on new roles.

Being employable and keeping your job means keeping up to date. There are several ways to get training:

- enquire from your human resources department what courses are open to you
- ask colleagues and those in positions above you, they may help you in both choosing and locating the right sort of training for you
- enquire if you can have time away from work to complete a qualification
- NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications) are very useful to have as most employers recognise them

Good news

- Our memory connects new learning with previous knowledge
- As we age we achieve deeper and more meaningful learning
- We already have some technical know how, often combined with practicality
- We have strategic thinking, and use consideration and intuition
- We have the wisdom which comes as we age.

All of these qualities are useful to the workplace. However as change in the working environment is rapid, keeping up to date is necessary.

The importance of mental input and work management is growing as IT increases in the workplace. As a consequence the ability to learn new skills is paramount as is engagement with new systems.

- Learning is a survival skill and keeps you in a safe position and may even help you get ahead.

What you can do to keep yourself in employment by 'continued learning'

The list below offers some pointers to achieving success:

- Be clear about your aim or goal
- Plan for success; which includes learning environment and time
- The course should match your capacity to absorb new knowledge and skills
- Extra time for practice (in the workplace) should be built into your schedule
- Attend any seminars or courses offered by your organisation or other organisations in the topic area
- Complete any reading recommended
- Note down any learning points which seem relevant to you
- Ensure the learning is beneficial to you, in that you can apply it should you need to
- Remember: learning involves more than knowledge and information, it also involves how you feel about what you have learned and how you will use it.
- Make sure that you keep any certificates of training days or courses attended in a special folder to remind yourself what you have achieved; use this at your annual appraisal and to help you apply for new work / self-employment

The benefits of learning

- Learning can be fun in many ways – including socially
- Keeps you up to date with technology, in a purposeful way
- It allows you the freedom to do things yourself
- It improves the quality of life

Education and learning for self-employment

Self-employment is an option for continued work and many people return to learning either to develop a new area of interest, which they will use in their future business or as a way of developing an already held skill or hobby into a viable income

