

## **EMPLOYERS IGNORE BABY BOOMERS' DESIRE FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

Baby boomers are leaving jobs because employers ignore their desire for career advancement and make assumptions about what older workers want, according to research from exit interview specialist, Exit Info.

According to Exit Info, lack of opportunity for career advancement falls into the top two reasons baby boomers leave organisations.\*

“Employers are making assumptions about what their staff want based on generational stereotypes, such as older workers are ‘slowing down’ on the way to retirement. The fact is baby boomers are still looking for a job which will develop their career,” says Ms Lenorë Lambert, Exit Info director.

Ms Lambert says whilst baby boomers are more likely to understand what they want from an employer because they’ve had more experience in the workforce, organisations mustn’t assume older workers don’t need or want conversations about their career.

“Employers need to give the same attention to their baby boomers’ careers as they do to Gen X and Gen Y. Career development is important to all generations, especially boomers and Gen X, and a lack of focus on this will ultimately drive them out the door,” she explains.

Exit Info’s data shows that when employees resign, organisations are trying to convince only one in four baby boomers to stay, compared to around 40% for Gen X and Gen Y.

“When a baby boomer staff member resigns, employers may be assuming they ‘know their mind’ and can’t be swayed to change it, so they don’t even try.

“When you consider that losing more experienced staff members is far more costly in terms of lost intellectual property, depth of expertise and replacement costs – employers should be doing everything they can to hold onto their baby boomers,” Ms Lambert says.

Ms Lambert says to avoid losing top talent to competitors, employers need to objectively identify what is driving staff out the door, rather than relying on hearsay, flimsy data or corporate myth.

“Gathering accurate and honest feedback from outgoing employees is essential to get the ‘real story’ on staff turnover and pinpoint what initiatives need to be put in place to improve retention,” she says.

Ms Lambert says in addition to a desire for career advancement opportunities, baby boomers are also less likely to tolerate organisations with poor leadership.

“Leadership is more important to baby boomers than any other generation. Exit Info recently conducted an interview with an outgoing employee who told his boss he was leaving due to his desire to retire. The exit interview revealed that in fact this only accounted for 35% of his decision to leave, and his core reason for leaving was poor leadership.

**MORE...**

"If baby boomers feel poor management is hindering their ability to grow and enjoy their work life, they will simply take their skills, experience and knowledge elsewhere," says Ms Lambert. "They find this easy to do as by this stage in their career they usually have good networks."

Lambert believes trends in generational behaviour are not related to the year an individual was born, but rather how long they've been in the workforce how far they've progressed in their career and the current state of the employment market.

"Usually, baby boomers have the confidence of a successful career behind them and so what matters at this stage is whether the leadership is creating a vision and environment that engages them.

"For Gen X, the typical situation is they've been working long enough to know that they can succeed in their current career. The question emerging for them is whether they want to stay on that career track and move up, or change to something of greater interest. Career advancement, whether up or out of their current career path, is a high priority," Ms Lambert explains.

"For Gen Y, who are relatively new in the workforce, the priority is the job itself. Most are still learning and finding their feet, and want to be challenged quickly so they can lose their 'L-plates'.

"Gen Y finds out very quickly whether they like a new job and think they can succeed in it. If they decide it isn't working, the current candidate-short market allows them to act on that discovery quickly and move to a new job," Ms Lambert adds.

Ms Lambert says while there is a lot of discussion about how to keep Gen Y, employers seem to have lost touch with what is important to baby boomers.

"Organisations need to gain objective and honest feedback from outgoing employees to identify what is driving staff – of all generations – out the door. With accurate data, organisations will be able to focus their HR initiatives and improve staff retention," concludes Lambert.

## **ENDS**

\* The data is collected from 400 exit interviews conducted by Exit Info between September 2007 and July 2008 across industries including the legal, accounting, property, IT & T and utilities sectors.

**For further information or to arrange an interview with Lenorë Lambert please contact:**

- **Frances Dwyer**  
**IMPACT Communications**  
**02 9519 5411/0402 382 447**

- **Amanda Long**  
**IMPACT Communications**  
**02 9519 5411/0410 647 596**