Succession planning as baby boomers retire

As of 2018, nearly half of the baby boomer generation - those born between 1946 and 1960 - have reached the full retirement age of 66. Lyndy van den Barselaar, Managing Director at ManpowerGroup South Africa, explains that most workforces are already creating contingency plans for this rapidly retiring generation, and those that aren't should start now.

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“This change in the workforce presents both challenges and opportunities for businesses. It is important that organisations are prepared, to ensure they can face the challenges head on, and seize the opportunities,” says van den Barselaar.

Below are some tips for organisations on how to prepare for the changing workforce.

Attract millennial talent

Millennials — the generation born between the early 1980s and late 1990s — are defining the next generation of work. A study about Millennial Careers from Right Management found that millennials are motivated by encouragement, recognition, flexible working arrangements, career development opportunities and defined culture.

The more meaningfully your employment brand addresses these needs and objectives of high-potential millennial talent, the more successful you will be in attracting, engaging, and retaining tomorrow’s workforce.

Develop managers

A survey of leadership development trends from Right Management and The Conference Board collecting insights from 650+ executives worldwide found that despite the collective concern over the coming leadership vacuum as baby boomers retire, organisations may not be paying sufficient attention to building the skills of their future business leaders – the mid-level managers.

“Now is the time to prioritise the creation of a development programme in order and make sure that organisations have leaders for tomorrow,” says van den Barselaar.

Adapt to a multigenerational workforce

While boomers are retiring, they’re not gone completely. In fact, many are coming back after retirement as “boomerang workers” — employees who leave and return to the organisation. This time of transition brings opportunities and challenges: This workforce is broad-ranging and knowledge transfer flows in all directions, while at the same time organisations need to tailor motivational techniques on an individual level and establish a culture that accommodates a variety of work style preferences.

“This is important for supporting the future of work. Diversity is becoming the norm, and the time to adapt to it for organisations is now,” says van den Barselaar.

While the future can be hard to predict, the shift in workplace demographics is an inevitable reality for all businesses and industries, globally. "This requires planning today,” she concludes.