

Retirement Readiness Report

Helping older employees get ready to retire successfully

A free report for employers, unions, and pension funds, produced by RetirementWORKS®, Inc.

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Welcome to the eighteenth issue of the *Retirement Readiness Report*, offered as a free resource, to help you think about how your organization supports the transition into retirement.

We encourage you to contact us at any time if you have ideas, criticisms, or other comments about this publication, or wish to update your email address (or be added to or removed from the list).

If you missed issues #1 thru #17:

They're available at:

<http://www.retirementworks2.com/support.asp?id=newsletter>

Next month:

What about employees who are already retired?

Constructing a pre-retirement education / advice program for older employees

Let's begin with a reality check: you probably don't have any new money to spend on this kind of program. You might not have any existing budget, either. But if you can do it essentially for free, you have the opportunity to be a hero, both to management and to employees getting close to retirement.

"Free" is possible. Not ideal, but possible. It is not ideal, because the ideal program would include face time – individually or in groups or both – where pre-retirees could meet with experts or discussion leaders. The ideal program also includes materials or services that have a cost, which it would be helpful for the employer to subsidize. But a program without face time or subsidies can still be highly beneficial.

Perhaps more valuable than you might suppose, because of what can be provided these days over the internet. If you have to limit yourself to only one medium, the internet is the best choice, because:

- There are many thousands of legitimate sources of education and advice, many of them free, and you can select the best of them. You have legions of experts at your beck and call.
- If there are employees at different locations, all can have equal access to the exact same education and advice.
- Employees can get what they need from home – working hours do not have to be sacrificed (though of course you can allow access on company time, if you prefer).
- Already-retired employees can be served, too, often cost-free.
- To the extent that some of the best materials or services do have costs, employees can have the option of paying themselves – while you may be able to negotiate group discounts.

What might an internet-based program look like?

1. The sponsor (usually the employer, but it could be a union or a retirement system) would make sure that appropriate employees/retirees are aware of the program. This could be done on a shoestring by using normal organization channels of communication, or if it is feasible, there are could be individual or group face-to-face orientation sessions.
2. A web-based orientation would also be provided. Preferably, this would be added to an existing website of the sponsoring organization, and it would take employees down different paths depending on their age or how far they currently are from retirement. For each audience, the key issues, decision points, and action steps would be identified, and links would be provided to further sources of education and advice on key topics.
3. Descriptions and links to these sources would be organized by subject category,

and ideally would cover not just the obvious financial issues that relate to benefit plans, but also the financial issues that do *not* relate to benefit plans but that often are even more important in retirement. They would also cover key *non*-financial issues, because these are just as important in determining whether employees go on to have a truly “successful” retirement – and because these other questions (where to live, what to do with one’s time, how to stay healthy, etc., etc., etc.) often have important financial implications.

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4. The outside sources would include both education and advice (though most would offer just one or the other). This is a critical distinction. Education is important, because it familiarizes participants with terminology and ideas that they need to know. But since

this information is generic, participants usually will not know exactly how it should apply to their specific situation. Filling that gap is advice – which takes into account the particulars of each participant’s case and adjusts its analysis and recommendations accordingly. Both education and advice are essential for preparing older employees for a successful retirement.

Here at RetirementWORKS, we have been sketching out how this can be done, and it looks entirely feasible to us.

We have identified about 250 key issues that people in or near retirement may need to consider. Not all of them affect everyone, of course, but most people nearing retirement should be considering dozens of them, covering both financial and non-financial topics. Virtually all of these are susceptible to education, and some of them require advice. Because some of the issues are highly personal and deal with attitudes and desires and personal history rather than facts and numbers,

personal counseling may also be needed to address certain issues – not all problems can be solved by internet-based tools. But the internet can help people identify when personal counseling is needed, and we can point participants to web-based referral services, so they can find whatever kind of help they might need.

What we propose, then, is a web-based set of orientation pages that will direct older employees to questions and issues that they should be thinking about, and then point them to sources of education and advice so they can further explore and resolve the issues that do apply to them. These sources would be of the highest quality available – “the best of the web” – and the vast majority of them would be free. Advice services that are not free would be referenced as well, but the employee or retiree, not the employer or other sponsor, would usually be on the hook for any such services.

So all you need to do is to get this set up on your organization’s website. If you know what you want, this should not be difficult

or expensive. It is quite plausible that you yourself, with some support from your webmaster, can do it on your own. Or for a modest price, we could help you, as this is our area of particular expertise, or you might find some local retirement specialist to pitch in.

But it should cost you little or nothing, other than some time, to implement such an offering, and it can do your older employees and retirees a world of good – arguably more good than they would derive from even an intensive and expensive on-site offering.

Recommended Reading for Employees Getting Ready to Retire

***Mapping Your Retirement* by**

Mark Skeie, Janet Skeie, and Julie Roles

\$24.95 (MYR Publications, 2007)

Notice: We do not sell books, or have any financial stake in recommending them.

Although this is not one of our very favorite books on retirement, it is still one of the better ones.

Subtitled, “A Personal Guide to Maintaining Your Health, Manag-

ing Your Money, and Living Well,” it lives up to that description.

Its main strengths are that it is very thorough and very accessible. Starting with chapters on central topics such as “embracing what matters,” “building strong relationships,” and “making a difference,” this book then provides seven or eight chapters each on topics related to maintaining health (including mental health) and managing one’s finances in retirement.

Unfortunately, the authors offer some wrong-headed advice on financial issues, which is why we don’t recommend this book more strongly. But most of their advice, even including most of their financial advice, is helpful and, as we noted, accessible. Everything is explained in sufficient detail and simple enough language to be readily understood by non-specialists.

Mapping Your Retirement is a large book that gives readers their money’s worth. It is loaded with helpful worksheets and exercises.

If employees nearing retirement

are going to buy only one book, this isn't the one we would recommend. But as long as the investment advice is disregarded, this volume can otherwise be very helpful.

Featured Website

GeroNurse Online

<http://www.geronurseonline.org/>

Older employees who are taking care of elderly parents, and retired employees caring for a seriously ill spouse, can use this website to help keep up to date with developments and options in nursing care for older adults.

GeronurseOnline.org is the official geriatric nursing website of the American Nurses Association (ANA), and actually has geriatric care nurses as their main audience. As such, it is a truly authoritative source of health care information, which many websites are not. On this site, you get to see the profession from the inside out.

This site also offers links to numerous other resources, including associations dealing with ag-

ing and long-term caregiving, educational resources, gerontology centers and institutes, journals, statistics, government sites, and more.

GeronurseOnline also provides news and information on a variety of topics that change over time. As of this writing, for example, these topics include:

- Vaccines Aren't Just for Kids!
- Disaster Preparedness and the Older Adult
- Medications and Medication Safety
- Playing Video Games Can Keep Seniors Mentally Sharp
- Discharges to Nursing Homes, Home Health on the Rise
- FDA Analysis Says Bisphosphonates (i.e. Fosamax, Boniva) Don't Cause AFib

For those who have parents, spouses, or other loved ones needing hospice and palliative care, the ANA also offers an inside look at what this kind of caregiving entails, through their 90-page booklet *Hospice and*

Palliative Nursing, co-published with the Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association, available at \$13.45 through this website.

Knowing how professionals are being trained to take care of older adults who have medical or mental issues, or who are at the end of life, enables the rest of us to be effective advocates for our loved ones who are in need of care. This site offers a unique inside perspective on exactly these issues.

About RetirementWORKS[®], Inc.

We are the consumer subsidiary of Still River Retirement Planning Software, Inc., of Harvard, Mass., which has specialized in retirement plans and retirement planning since 1994.

Our philosophy is that retirement needs to be viewed from the retiree's point of view, in all of its complexity. So we offer the most powerful and useful financial software available anywhere for retirees and near-retirees, and advice concerning non-financial aspects of retirement. But we do not sell any financial products or services other than software, and have no financial stake in any advice that is offered.

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