

# Helping employees through to retirement

Over the next decade, millions of Baby Boomers – that enormous post-WWII generation that has dominated Western society for the past 60 years – will be retiring or planning to retire. Consequently, organizations in every sector are facing skills shortages, coping with irreplaceable losses of corporate and industry knowledge, and struggling to replace senior leaders.



Many older employees are unsure of their financial or emotional readiness for retirement and their concern about the future can cause them to feel overwhelmed, anxious, distracted and less productive. They simply do not know where to begin. So how do organizations [help older employees prepare for, and transition into, retirement](#) so they can remain focused and productive while still on the job? The solution includes flexible working arrangements, information, resources and support.

## Transitional retirement

Studies have shown that for older workers, retirement does not mean an escape from work but an escape from long hours, relentless stress, heavy workloads and lack of work-life balance. Instead of persuading their people to stay put, [more companies are focusing on what many of their older employees really want](#) – a transition from highly structured work lives into the new “retirement” of working on their own terms. Transitional retirement really can be a win-win situation for individuals and organizations alike. Individuals can “test the waters” and take time to develop a fulfilling second act to their lives - and organizations retain and transfer vital knowledge. This can be done in a variety of ways that are cost effective and easy to implement. They include:

- **Flexible work arrangements.** Workers of all ages like flexible work options, but for people over 50, such arrangements are a great way to begin transitioning into the next phase of their lives. For example:
  - **Start and finish earlier.** Beginning work at five or six in the morning and leaving in the early afternoon is often appealing to early risers. Boomers with aged parents especially like this option as it allows them to juggle time-consuming eldercare responsibilities.
  - **Compressed work week.** Compressed work weeks have become very popular with all workers, especially during the summer months. They work longer hours Monday through Thursday in order to take time off on Friday. Extending compressed work weeks into year-round options for those approaching retirement can be an attractive retention strategy.
- **Telework.** Working from home is ideal for Boomers tired of long commutes or who want or need to be closer to home. Working remotely is especially appealing for employees who can manage their own deadlines. For example, they may take the afternoon to play golf and finish their work in the evenings.
- **Part-time or contract work.** Many older workers plan to continue working after “retirement” on a part-time or contract basis. Instead of having them seek work elsewhere after they retire, why not give them the option to remain with their own company part-time? That way you both get what you want.
- **Seasonal work.** Seasonal work gives employees the opportunity to go on leave for extended periods of time while maintaining benefit eligibility. For example, working through the winter months and taking the summers off, or vice versa, may be an ideal option for snowbirds, cottagers, travellers or golfers.
- **Education.** Employees of all ages, but especially older workers, can benefit from educational seminars and workshops on retirement and financial planning. This can help them understand the monetary and emotional implications of this major transition. It is never too early to start thinking about retirement.

With one-third of our workforce rapidly approaching retirement, organizations do not have to panic if they have programs in place that make working past the age of 65 an attractive and mutually beneficial proposition.