

THREE THINGS EMPLOYERS  
NEED TO KNOW ABOUT:

**TRAINING AND  
DEVELOPMENT FOR  
WORKERS 50+**

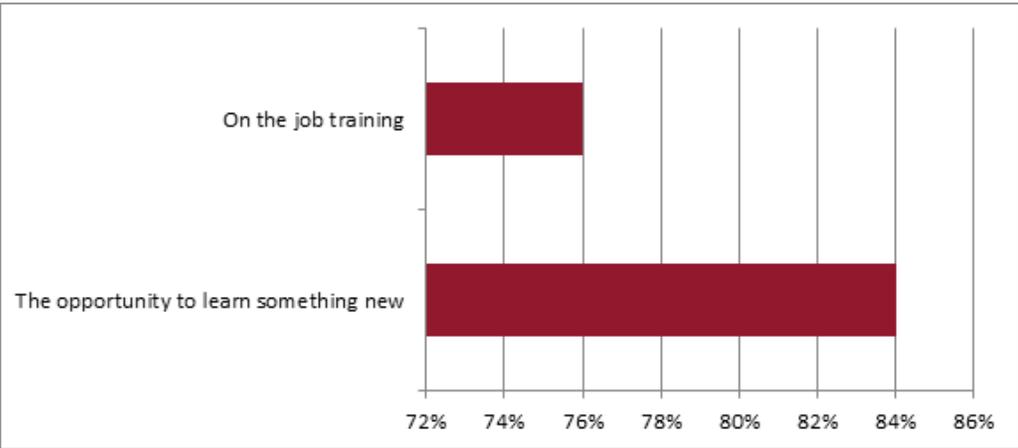
Employers can provide employees with training and development opportunities via a wide range of policies and practices, including on-the-job training, job transfers and rotations, coaching and mentoring, and planning.

# 1. WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS CARE ABOUT TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER WORKERS (OR IN FACT FOR ANY WORKERS)?

**Short answer: Because workers of all ages do.**

Despite misconceptions that older workers don't care about training, more than 8 in 10 workers ages 45 to 64 say that the opportunity to learn something new is an essential element of their ideal job. And more than 7 in 10 say that on the job training is an essential element of their ideal job.

Figure 1. Essential elements of an ideal job: Training and development.



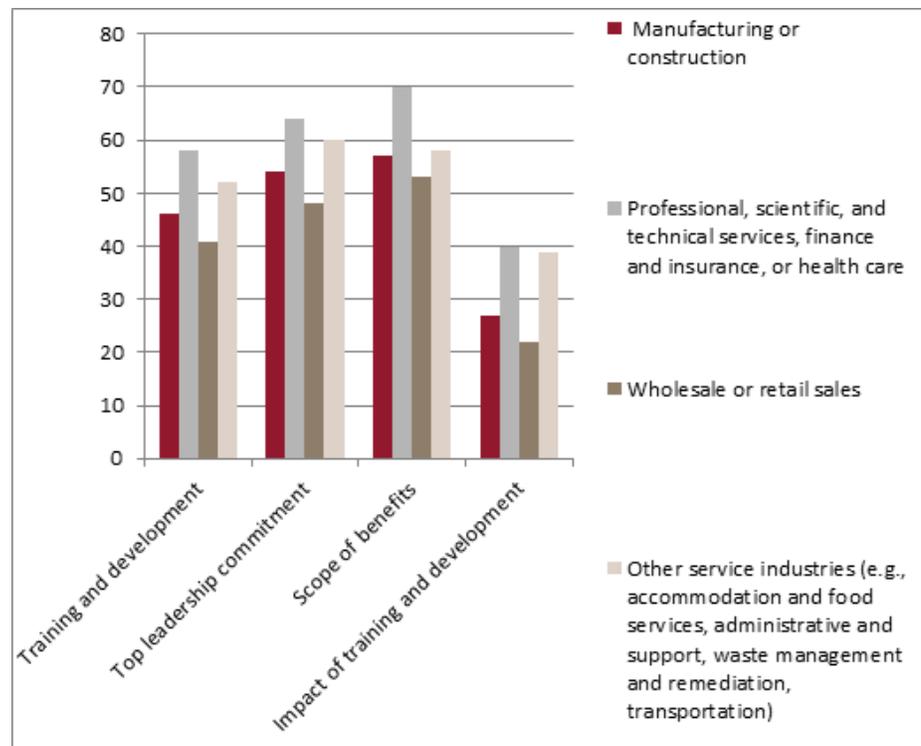
Source: Staying Ahead of the Curve 2013: The AARP Work and Career Study

## 2. DO SOME INDUSTRY GROUPS PROVIDE MORE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER WORKERS?

**Short answer: Yes, certain types of service industries (professional, scientific, and technical services, finance and insurance, or health care) are clearly ahead.**

In terms of top leadership commitment, scope of benefits, and impact of training and development, professional, scientific, and technical services, finance and insurance, and health care organizations are ahead of other industries. As shown in Figure 2, manufacturing/construction organizations tend to have greater top leadership commitment and scope of benefits than wholesale/retail sales, yet less impact, indicating that fewer of their 50+ workers actually use those benefits. Pinpointing the precise areas of weakness can help organizations to better support training and development among older workers.

Figure 2. Training and development, by industry group



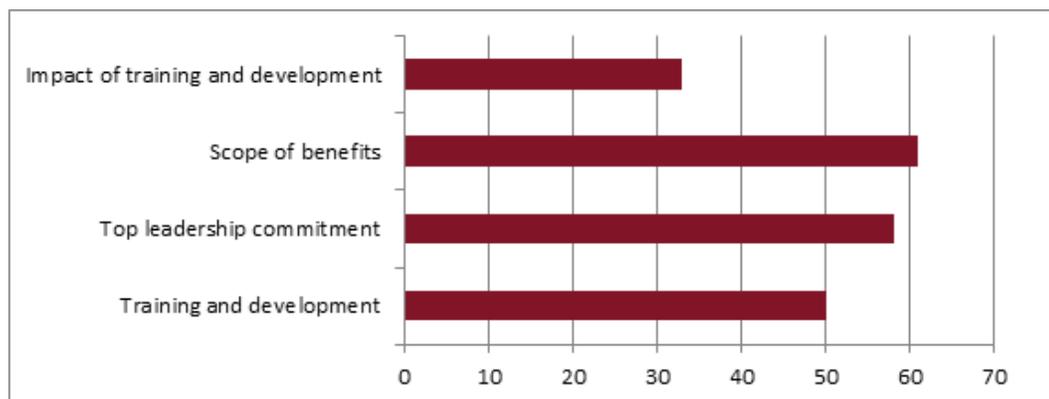
Source: 2015 Talent Management Study.

### 3. WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER WORKERS?

**Short answer: Among the biggest challenges is creating training and development opportunities that make sense for workers at all career stages.**

Many younger, or early career, workers benefit from training in skills relevant to their occupation, such as classes on the organization’s procedures. Conversely older, or late career, workers may already have those skills, but could benefit from training and development in skills not typically offered. One symptom of a mismatch between the needs of older workers and the training programs offered is a gap between the scope of benefits and the impact of training and development (as measured by the number of workers using those benefits), because older workers may not participate in training that does not help them to gain or develop useful skills.

Figure 3. Training and development: Comparing impact, scope, and top leadership commitment



Impact is almost inevitably lower than scope of benefits, because at least some workers will not participate in even the best-designed training programs. However, if the gap is particularly large:

1. Consider intergenerational methods to bring 50+ workers training and development opportunities that they can use. Reverse mentoring, networking, and intergenerational cross-training may be of more interest to workers of all ages than traditional training classes.
2. Consider ways of encouraging older workers to think of training and development as relevant to them. Some older workers may automatically discount training and development opportunities because of ingrained expectations about when their careers will end – despite the fact that most workers will continue to work beyond that point. Individual development plans that include career planning may help older workers rethink what skills they need to gain or sharpen in order to remain at top productivity as long as they want or need to work.

**Want to find out where you stand on training and development relative to similar employers? Visit our Workforce Benchmarking Tool. Developed in collaboration with AARP ([www.aarp.org/employerbenchmarking](http://www.aarp.org/employerbenchmarking)), the tool rates your workforce practices in training and development and 7 other areas against the national average and provides practical next steps via a customized report.**

## **ABOUT THE CENTER ON AGING & WORK**

Established in 2005, the Center on Aging & Work at Boston College promotes quality of employment as an imperative for the 21st century multi-generational workforce. We integrate evidence from research with insights from workplace experiences to inform innovative organizational decision-making. Collaborating with business leaders and scholars in a multi-disciplinary dialogue, the center develops the next generation of knowledge and talent management. Since our founding, we have conducted more than 20 studies in collaboration with employers, including the Age & Generations, Talent Management, and Generations of Talent studies.

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**For more information about the Center, please visit:**

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## APPENDIX. Types of training and development programs

### Type of Training and Development programs

### Some examples of training and development programs

#### **On-the- job training**

Training and development that occurs during normal workplace situations

- On-the- job training in specific technical skills used in day-to-day work
- Involvement in cross-functional tasks, in which people from different departments work toward a common goal
- Participation in project team work
- Special tasks/projects to stimulate learning

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#### **Job transfers and rotations**

Training and development that occurs in conjunction with movements between jobs, departments, and businesses.

- Internal movement to a different department
- External movement to a partner business for a temporary period
- Planned job rotation

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#### **Coaching and mentoring**

Training and development programs that rely on employees training each other

- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Networking
- Cross-training among workers of different career stages or ages, to improve employees' proficiency in tasks outside their current work roles

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#### **Planning**

Formal plans, involving employees, that include a focus on career and succession

- Formal career plans
- Succession plans

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#### **Other**

In addition to training outside the workplace, these programs could include web-based resources for employees

- E-Learning