



KEY FINDINGS

A Perfect Match?

How Nonprofits Are Tapping into the Boomer Talent Pool



A Perfect Match?

How Nonprofits Are Tapping into the Boomer Talent Pool

Nonprofits and Boomers

Are They a Match Made in Heaven?

The signs are good. Nonprofits need the experience, expertise, and energy that baby boomers—the generation born between 1946 and 1964—can bring. Boomers are mature workers searching for second careers or post-retirement jobs that give them the flexibility and sense of mission that nonprofits provide.

The time is ripe for this relationship. The 2007 report from The Conference Board *Boomers Are Ready for Nonprofits, But Are Nonprofits Ready for Boomers?* noted unprecedented opportunities for nonprofits in the boomer talent pool, and urged nonprofits to take advantage of them.

Now, a growing number of nonprofits are doing just that. Two major MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures 2008 surveys found that many adults age 44–70 are interested in or already involved in encore or social purpose careers,¹ while more than half of 427 nonprofit employers surveyed cited the benefits of hiring encore workers.²

It Takes More Than Love

While the boomer-nonprofit match may be the real thing, it's not always love at first sight. As in any marriage, both sides need to adapt, exercise flexibility, learn to work together, and make inevitable tradeoffs. Boomers coming from the for-profit world may have the greatest of skills, and nonprofits may have the highest of expectations for them, but unless both parties make an effort to fit in with each other's needs, both will surely be disappointed.

How Nonprofits Are Tapping into the Boomer Talent Pool is based on The Conference Board 2008 Employer Survey on

¹ MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures Encore Careers Survey, MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures, June 2008, pp. 8-10.

² Tapping Encore Talent: A MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures Survey of Employers, MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures, October 2008, pp. 8-9.

Transitions into the Nonprofit Sector, which was conducted as part of the research of The Conference Board Research Working Group on Managing an Aging Workforce at Nonprofits. The research working group is composed of a variety of nonprofit employers, intermediary firms, and others. Survey results include the views of 151 nonprofit employers and 65 sector switchers – mature workers who made the switch to nonprofits – as well as 100 job seekers age 50 and over.

The report also features nine case studies of nonprofits employing boomers. Among the examples profiled: JEVS Human Services; ReServe Elder Service, Inc.; Enhanced Companion; IBM Transitions to Teaching; Community Council of Greater Dallas; Generations Incorporated; Alpert Jewish Family and Children's Service; American Heart Association; and March of Dimes Volunteer Leadership Institute.



Insights from the Case Studies

1 Volunteerism aids both nonprofits seeking boomer employees and boomers hoping to transition to nonprofits from for-profit companies.

Companies who want to hire boomers should look at volunteers and board members, past and present.

Boomers who want to work for nonprofits should network, volunteer, or get on nonprofit boards – or do all three.

A professionalized volunteer engagement strategy will attract boomers and make the best use of their skills.

2 Flexibility is critical to attracting and retaining boomers.

Flexible hours compensate for lower nonprofit pay.

Flexibility models focus on results, not hours worked.

Flexibility works in an environment of open communication, trust, and accountability.

Flexibility applies not just to hours, but to benefits, pay, and job roles.

3 Tradeoffs are inevitable for boomers transitioning to nonprofits.

Boomers can expect less pay and fewer program resources, but in return find more flexibility and personal rewards.

Nonprofits that brand their organizations as places where people can learn and grow will reap recruitment rewards.

For-profit veterans should know that the benefits of nonprofit work outweigh the challenges, but that stress is experienced in both sectors.

4 Adaptability is essential, both for boomers transitioning to nonprofits and for the nonprofits who hire them.

Nonprofit employers should query their sector switchers; what attracted them will attract others like them.

Both white-collar and blue-collar boomers can find new meaning in nonprofit work.

Nonprofit employers should ask applicants to articulate how they can use their for-profit skills, then think out of the box to help them do so.

Boomer applicants should be ready to answer the above question and be equally creative about applying their skills in a new setting.

Boomers should expect a different culture and pace in nonprofits and be prepared to adjust to it.

Nonprofit leaders can play an active role in supporting that adjustment.

5 Collaboration is a hallmark of the nonprofit culture, within both individual organizations and the larger nonprofit community.

Hiring boomers works best when there's multigenerational teamwork, supported by management.

Nonprofits that link human resource strategy to business strategy and employee learning to personal and organizational goals have happier, more productive workers.

There is help out there. Nonprofits should explore collaboration with other nonprofits and try to tap into federal and local resources, national and local human resource associations, and their national nonprofit membership organization.

6 Passion and pragmatism strike a balance in successful nonprofits.

Nonprofit employers should seek individuals with passion as well as pragmatism, but they can't expect passion for the nonprofit mission to develop overnight.

Nonprofit employers should link the issues of mature workers to strategic goals and metrics to mission.

Jobs designed to ensure a clear connection between people's work and outcomes are often missing in for-profit work, and will be a welcome stimulant for sector switchers.

Sometimes You Need a Matchmaker

Sector switchers can't always do it on their own, and neither can nonprofits. Connectors, third-party organizations that screen, assess, and place mature workers can simplify the search for both individuals and organizations. ReServe Elder Service, Inc., a New York-based connector, is profiled in the full report.

“In the profit world, you do what you have to do to reach . . . goals. You're paid to be extremely aggressive and push your agenda. I have to understand how to be different in a nonprofit setting to be truly effective. It's not about getting something for 'me' anymore. It's about getting something for my client, and that's a big difference.”

Hotel sales executive who transitioned to a nonprofit



The Conference Board
845 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022-6600

THE CONFERENCE BOARD

To Order the Full Research Report

A Perfect Match? How Nonprofits Are Tapping into the Boomer Talent Pool (R-1447-09-RR)

online www.conference-board.org/boomermatch

email orders@conference-board.org

call 212 339 0345

Members of The Conference Board can download copies of all Research Reports and Key Findings for free at:

www.conference-board.org

The Conference Board creates and disseminates knowledge about management and the marketplace to help businesses strengthen their performance and better serve society. Working as a global, independent membership organization in the public interest, we conduct research, convene conferences, make forecasts, assess trends, publish information and analysis, and bring executives together to learn from one another. The Conference Board is a not-for-profit organization and holds 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status in the United States.

The Conference Board, Inc.

845 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022-6600
United States
Tel +1 212 759 0900
Fax +1 212 980 7014
www.conference-board.org

The Conference Board Europe

Chaussée de La Hulpe
130, box 11
B-1000 Brussels Belgium
Tel +32 2 675 5405
Fax +32 2 675 0395
www.conference-board.org/europe.htm

The Conference Board China

Beijing Representative Office
7-2-72 Qijiayuan,
9 Jianwai Street
Beijing 100600 P.R. China
Tel +86 10 8532 4688
Fax +86 10 8532 5332
www.conference-board.cn (Chinese)
www.conference-board.org (English)

The Conference Board Asia-Pacific

22/F, Shun Ho Tower
24-30 Ice House Street, Central
Hong Kong, SAR
Tel +852 2804 1000
Fax +852 2869 1403
www.conference-board.org/ap.htm

The Conference Board of Canada

255 Smyth Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1H 8M7
Canada
Tel +1 613 526 3280
Fax +1 613 526 4857
www.conferenceboard.ca