Age and performance

Age-friendly workplaces
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Agenda

• Do older workers get a fair shake?
  – If not, why not?

• Age and performance
  – Individual-level
  – Unit-level

• Recognizing older workers’ contributions… or failing to

• Implications for employers
Age discrimination charges are a poor indicator of ageism in the workplace

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Enforcement and Litigation Statistics
Are older workers poorer performers? A look at the research data on individual performance at work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Type</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core task performance</td>
<td>No difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>No difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training performance</td>
<td>Older workers perform slightly lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship behaviors</td>
<td>Older workers engage in more citizenship behaviors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Ng & Feldman (2008) meta-analysis of 308 research studies
Also see Hedge & Borman, 2019*
The story line so far

• No evidence that worker age hurts performance
  – Individual or unit
  – Financial, operational, or customer measures

• But… older workers are far less likely to receive favorable performance ratings or get promoted

• Why is this happening?
  – Ageism?
  – Something else?
So what’s going on and what can employers do about it?

AGEISM
• It is real and pervasive
• It shows up in hiring, performance ratings, promotion, perceptions

A FAILURE TO SEE
• Employers “see” a performance difference when there is none
• Employers fail to recognize the many ways that older workers contribute to business success

OVERCOME AGEISM WITH FACTS
• Use data to break stereotypes and to overcome false assumptions about performance

NEW WAYS OF RECOGNIZING “SPILLOVER” AND “INDIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS”
• Older workers are excellent citizens
• Older workers make other workers better