

LEADING IN THE FACE OF SKEPTICISM

MANAGING OLDER EMPLOYEES

Ted Rogers Leadership Centre

You work for Ace Destination Travel, which specializes in cruise packages. You have just been made manager of the agency's mid-town Toronto office. This particular Ace office has many repeat customers, mostly retirees who like going on cruises to various parts of the world. These customers are served by the office's veteran service agents who, now in their 50s and 60s, tend to want to work part-time and are not interested in change or innovation.

As you introduce yourself to each of the ten agents, you receive a polite, but muted, reception. The unspoken message is, "We have seen you youngsters come and go. This office is used as a leg up for people wanting to advance in the company. From our point of view, you will do well if you just stay out of our way, ensure the paperwork is in order, and keep head office out of our way too. Heaven knows, you might even learn something from us before you move on!"

You get why these agents might feel that way, but you also know change is inevitable. For example, with the increasing move to part-time work, you are going to have to recruit and bring in new agents. Also, head office plans to change the compensation policy to offer higher incentives to agents who bring in new clients to cruising. As well, it is planning to introduce new, centralized booking technology to track revenues by demographics, agent and office. Based on what you have heard from existing agents in this office, you realize you need to start getting people on board now for the changes to come.

How significant is this change? Why? What issues and stakeholders need to be managed? What further information do you need? Based on your assumptions, what is your step-by-step action plan and your recommendations?

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