

More Than Four-in-Ten Workers Over the Age of 35 Currently Work for a Younger Boss, Finds New CareerBuilder Survey

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As generations continue to mix in the workplace, many older workers are reporting to younger bosses. A new CareerBuilder survey finds that 43 percent of workers ages 35 and older said they currently work for someone younger than them. Breaking down age groups, more than half (53 percent) of workers ages 45 and up said they have a boss younger than them, followed by 69 percent of workers ages 55 and up. This survey was conducted from November 5 and November 23, 2009, among more than 5,200 workers.

Occasionally, the younger boss, older worker situation can create challenges. Sixteen percent of workers ages 25-34 said they find it difficult to take direction from a boss younger than them, while 13 percent of workers ages 35-44 said the same. Only 7 percent of workers ages 45-54 and 5 percent of workers ages 55 and up indicated they had difficulty taking direction from a younger boss.

Workers reported that there are a variety of reasons why working for someone younger than them can be a challenge, including:

- They act like they know more than me when they don't
- They act like they're entitled and didn't earn their position
- They micromanage
- They play favorites with younger workers
- They don't give me enough direction

"As companies emerge from this recession, it is important for employees to work together and move the business forward, regardless of their age," said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of human resources at CareerBuilder. "With so many different age groups present, challenges can arise. Younger and older workers both need to recognize the value that each group brings to the table. By looking past their differences and focusing on their strengths, workers of any age can mutually benefit from those around them, creating a more cohesive workplace."

PrimeCB.com, CareerBuilder's job site for mature workers, offers the following tips for bridging generational differences at work:

- Understand others' point of view: Different generations tend to have differing opinions on a variety of topics, from management style to pop culture. Put yourself in others' shoes to better understand where they're coming from.
- Adapt your communication: Younger workers tend to favor communicating frequently using technology, such as e-mail and instant messenger. Older workers may prefer more face-to-face contact. Both parties should take this and other communication differences into consideration when interacting.
- Keep an open mind: Try not to make assumptions about those who are of a different age group than you. All workers have different skill sets and strengths, so see what you can learn from others rather than making judgments based on their age.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by Harris Interactive© on behalf of CareerBuilder.com among 5,231 employees (employed full-time; not self-employed; non-government) ages 18 and over between November 5 and November 23, 2009 (percentages for some questions are based on a subset of U.S. employees, based on their responses to certain questions). With a pure probability sample of 5,231 one could say with a 95 percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.35 percentage points, respectively. Sampling error for data from sub-samples is higher and varies.

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