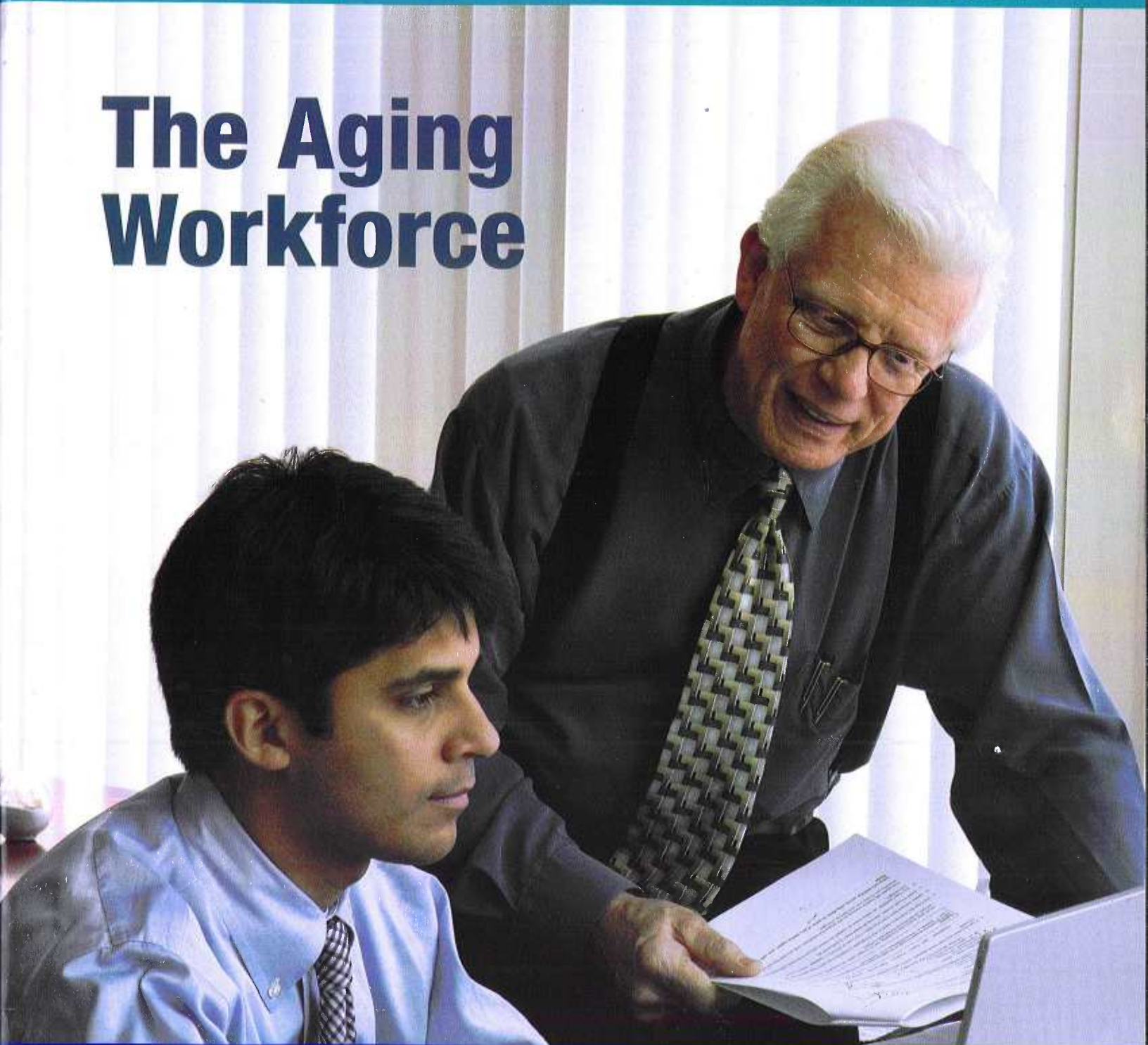


Journal of **Employee Assistance**

The magazine of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association

VOL. 35 NO. 1 • 1ST QUARTER 2005

The Aging Workforce



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Building Workplace Community
Preventing Internet Addiction
Enhancing Workplace Communication



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Focus

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Making the best use of an aging workforce will require EA professionals to help employers understand the changing needs and value of "mature" employees..

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Aging Workers, Changing Value

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Making Employee Communication Work

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Recognizing employees as a core constituency within work organizations is central to creating and maintaining open communication and helping regain the trust and credibility of line employees and supervisors.

To Party or Not to Party

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by George Manning, Ph.D.

Holiday parties and other social activities can contribute to building community in the workplace, but only if they reflect the values the company espouses during the week and its leaders model through their behavior.

Promoting Healthy Weight

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by Kathy Greco, CSW, Rich Paul, ACSW, CEAP,
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Developing messages that encourage maintaining a healthy weight and using motivational interviewing to help workers commit to changing their behavior are essential to successful interventions with overweight and obese workers.

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"Compared with adults under age 45, people between 45 and 64 are more than twice as likely to be visually impaired to some extent and nearly five times more likely to experience some hearing loss."

Madelyn Bryant McIntire
"Helping Older Workers Remain Productive"

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New Strategies for Older Workers



Maria Hartley

by Maria Hartley, LEAP

Raise your hand if you are what is now called a “mature worker,” which, according to some articles I’ve read, means an employee over 45. If you raised your hand, you’re in good company.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates there were 61 million Americans aged 45 to 64 in 2000. By 2010 there will be 79 million, an increase of 30 percent, though the number of Americans over 16 is projected to grow just 11 percent. Roughly one in three working-age Americans will soon be “mature.”

Many of these aging employees will want to remain in the workforce, for a variety of reasons—to keep earning money, to interact socially with co-workers, or to maintain their self-esteem, which may be tied to having a job and career. Whatever the reason, the challenge they face is to maintain their level of performance and remain competitive in a work environment that often favors younger employees with new and different skill sets.

Exacerbating this challenge are misconceptions that many supervisors harbor about older workers. Managers often view aging employees as inflexible, averse to using technology and unable or unwilling to work alongside younger colleagues. They may also believe training is wasted on older workers and squanders resources that would be better spent nurturing younger employees.

True, older workers do have some disadvantages relative to younger workers. They typically cost more in salaries and benefits, are not as strong physically, tire more easily, and are more likely to suffer from vision or hearing loss or other conditions related to aging. They also may lack the easy familiarity with technology that younger workers take

for granted.

On the other hand, older workers also offer employers some distinct advantages over their younger colleagues. They provide businesses with an institutional memory, something many companies (especially those that shed middle managers during the recessions of the past two decades) lack. They are repositories of experience and knowledge, assets that are acquired only with age. And they are loyal—much more so, studies show, than their younger counterparts.

Employers would do well to ponder how to capitalize on the potential these older workers represent, since demographic trends suggest younger workers will be in short supply in coming years, especially if the economy heats up. To date, however, few companies have developed strategies for attracting and retaining older workers. These strategies must take into account the special needs and wants of older workers and the resources necessary to help them continue performing at high levels.

If it is our mission as employee assistance professionals to promote workplace effectiveness and productivity, then partnering with our customers to develop strategies for maximizing the contributions of older workers is a value proposition we can and must deliver. We cannot afford to let more and more able workers leave the workforce and not expect to see a negative impact on overall workplace effectiveness.

This issue of the *Journal* contains four articles that will help employee assistance professionals understand how their employer clients can best harness the many talents that older workers offer. I hope you find these articles helpful in your day-to-day practice.

Finally, I want to share with you the themes for the remaining editions of the *Journal* in 2005. These themes were selected by the Communications Advisory Subcommittee at the EAPA Annual Conference in San Francisco.

- In the second quarter we will cover disaster preparedness for EAPs, including a look at EAPA’s Preparedness Committee and HIPAA.
- In the third quarter we will look at EAP roles and boundaries with respect to substance abuse, both in the United States and abroad.
- In the last quarter we will delve into health and productivity to look at the interface between traditional EAP services, medical offerings, and wellness.

I encourage you to contact me or another member of the subcommittee if you want to contribute an article that relates to one of the themes. ■

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