

## Fundraising Good Times: Grow your talent pool: Recruit people over 55

Written by Mel and Pearl Shaw  
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*Part one of a two-part series*

Are you overlooking a valuable pool of prospective employees and volunteers? Are you unknowingly operating from out-dated stereotypes of "senior citizens" and leaving talent sitting on the sidelines?

In today's lexicon "talent" means college educated individuals ages 25 – 35. Maybe 40. But in our experience that's a limited definition. Here's what we know. There are many talented individuals over 55 years old who are unengaged, their talent untapped all to the detriment of the communities they live in, and employers seeking a diverse and experienced workforce. Think about it for a moment: early retirement, buy-outs, downsizing, layoffs, corporate restructuring. These all result in skilled, experienced and well-connected individuals who are no longer part of the work-force. Many have proven themselves over-and-over again in the course of their careers. They are up-to-date on technology (despite rampant jokes to the contrary), understand corporate culture, know how to work-to-deadline, mentor, strategize, and innovate. They have been doing it for years!

Many of these individuals need to continue working either full-time or part-time. Others have secured their financial future but want to remain active in the workforce and in their community. Regardless of economics most want to give back, feel connected, and contribute. And many have the skills that nonprofits are looking for. "Soft skills" include the ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously, strong written and verbal communication skills, networking, ability to work as a member of a diverse team, stability, excellent attendance, maturity, discretion, time management, decision making and more. Experience that easily translates to fund development and fundraising include sales, marketing, training and development, and team building.

If you want top talent for your nonprofit make sure you recruit in ways that result in an applicant pool that includes individuals 55 and over. If you want to attract and retain "seniors" as part of your team, take time to assess your own responses to seniors and look for organizational biases that could your workplace "uninviting." Are younger managers experienced in managing people older than they are? What is the average age of your workforce? Will you be bringing in one older person or are there others already part of your team? Is your business culture inclusive, respectful and appreciative?

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In terms of fundraising and fund development it is important to remember that many of the larger gifts given to nonprofits are made by individuals who are over 50. Having older people as members of your team is crucial. People who are well connected within your community are even more valuable. Add a history of sales or marketing and you may have struck it rich!

When looking for employees and volunteers take proactive measures to ensure your pool of applicants includes qualified, experienced and talented people over 55. The benefits are yours to experience!

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*Mel and Pearl Shaw position nonprofits, colleges and universities for fundraising success. For help with your campaign visit [www.saadandshaw.com](http://www.saadandshaw.com) or call (901) 522-8727.*