Valuing Australia's Older Workers

» Professional Development Kit for RTOs

RTO

Valuing Australia's Older Workers »

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Introduction »

Valuing Australia's Older Workers – RTO Professional Development Kit

This Professional Development Kit has been designed for VET Practitioners. It contains information, exercises and activities that are focused on ways in which the VET sector will respond to emerging needs of industry, employers and learners as the fabric of the Australian workforce changes over the next decade.

The Kit is divided into four sections:

Section One: The Facts
Provides an overview of statistical information relating to emerging trends in the Australian Workforce over the next 15 – 20 years. Key challenges are raised, and some solutions offered.

Section Two: 3 hour Workshop – Management and Staff
The information provided in this section can be used in a variety of ways. Exercises, scenarios and case studies have been sequenced in such manner that they are presented over a three hour 'workshop'. Activities address critical aspects relating to RTO staff, business and learner needs. Whilst the majority of exercises are 'group' focused, two require personal analysis and reflection.

Should RTO's prefer, activities can be presented one at a time, either at regular staff meetings or for more short, specific professional development events. RTO's are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the entire contents of this Kit and select the most appropriate method of delivery to suit their individual needs.

Section Three: 3 hour Workshop – Management
This section contains a range of activities and exercises that allow managers the ability to analyse current practices and develop strategies for the future. It includes tables for mapping staff qualifications and experience, worksheets that assist in the identification of key risk areas, analysis of organisational policies procedures and practices in line with AQTF requirements and identification of key resource implications. An implementation worksheet is also provided that takes into account key areas, resource requirements and time factors.

Section Four:
This section contains a list of resources and web site links.

Valuing Australia's Older Workers

» Overview

Section One

Older Workers – the Challenges »

Australia is ageing. No jump in migration or birthrates will avert that. Some organisations will rise to the challenge and opportunities presented by this slow change, others will not realise the changes among their workforce, suppliers and customers until it is too late. The impact of an ageing workforce on the vet sector cannot be underestimated and training providers and vet practitioners will be required perform a significant role in the guidance and development of both individuals and organisations affected by the challenges facing our society over the coming years.

Clearly there will be numerous challenges facing employers and learners over this critical period, and some key issues for consideration are already evident. They include:

» Attitudes

» Perceptions

Negative perceptions and attitudes towards a mature aged workforce persist, with both recruiters and indeed, other/fellow workers often viewing older employees as less productive and lacking in the capacity to learn or adapt to changes in the workplace. Many mature workers, for both financial reasons or because of a desire to continue employment beyond the 'prescribed' retirement age, are disadvantaged because of both attitudinal and systemic factors in current workforce arrangements.

Emerging Needs »

Work Arrangements

Retirement intentions play a key role in determining what older workers consider an 'ideal' job, with part time, casual or flexible options becoming favoured in preference to full time work. For mature aged workers to actively contribute within the confines of current job requirements and working arrangements, there needs to be a high level of flexibility and examination of current workplace systems and practices.

Age Diversity

There is a considerable lack of awareness of age discrimination legislation across the nation, further exacerbated by variations in legislation across states and territories. This may be reflected in recruitment practices and workplace behaviours, negatively impacting on mature workers in relation to employment opportunities and career options.

Skills, Knowledge and Qualifications

Recognition

Many mature aged workers have acquired a wide range of skills and knowledge through work experience and application over a number of years. Yet these highly skilled workers often lack formal qualifications and are unrecognised or overlooked when promotional opportunities arise. Older workers may have never been involved in structured career or learning pathways, or participated in formal training since their school years. Fear of failure, fear of learning and fear of assessment are key considerations, with self-esteem and confidence a major issue for this age group.

Mature aged workers themselves often see little value in the importance of qualifications or further training, particularly the relevance of training in their current employment, or in relation future job/career prospects and proportionate remuneration.

Funded Training

A large emphasis on training of youth and new employees through new apprenticeships and traineeships has meant that mature aged workers may have been overlooked because of lack of recognition for, or valuing of that particular sector of employees.

Coaching and Supervision/Cross-age Communication

Older workers may have been responsible for the supervision of younger workers without any formal acknowledgement for their role, or suitable professional development in coaching or assisting others to learn. As the balance in workforce participation changes, the role of the learner and coach or workplace mentor will become interchangeable.

The Learner will become the Coach – and the Coach will become the Learner, as new employees assist mature aged workers in understanding current trends and technological/workplace requirements, and mature-aged workers pass on valuable skills and knowledge to young employees.

Technological Changes

Already the rapid changes in technology, combined with increased globalisation and more flexible workplace arrangements, have placed pressure on mature-aged workers to keep pace and maintain skills. These difficulties can be seen as a barrier to employment or promotion and present problems for employers.

Life Transitions

In the course of an average working person's life there may be a range of transitions between paid and unpaid work, caring and family responsibilities, study and training commitments and differing levels of activity. Employment options may range from full time to part time, job sharing, casual or contract positions and consultancy services. Requirements and capacities of individuals will also alter over this time in response to changing life circumstances, and mature workers need to maintain and extend their skills and knowledge in order to continue in productive employment at each stage of their life, regardless of external influences that may impact on their ability to contribute.

Career Transition

In order to meet the changing needs of the workforce, our new generation of workers may be required to move from one career pathway to another in the course of their extended working life. This concept may be perceived as a challenge for those workers who have been employed for only one organisation over a long period of time. Assistance in career transition will be required, with particular emphasis on the identification of marketable 'skills', suitable and/or desirable pathways and qualification requirements.

Many older workers may have never been involved in a review of their current skills and knowledge, future career aspirations, preparation of a resume, application for new positions or participation in an interview process.

Re-Training

As the demand for mature-aged workers rises, there will be a need for timely and targeted re-training for those people returning to the workforce – possibly after several years absence from the workplace, or for those who have been 'overlooked' in the past.

Implications for RTOs »

As the value of each and every worker increases in proportion to workforce demands, employers will need to address the imminent challenges facing the workplace in an appropriate and positive manner. In order to attract or retain employees, the needs of mature aged learners must be addressed with understanding, empathy and a common-sense approach. VET providers and practitioners will benefit from working closely with employers and industry in promoting a life-time perspective to employment and learning, at the same time accommodating individuals by taking into account external factors and influences, and attitudinal and cultural issues in the workforce and society.

This may be achieved by integrating business-specific training with life long learning and personal development in a more holistic manner.

The emphasis on design and development of 'user friendly' and accessible resources is paramount, with a focus on recognition of any prior skills or knowledge, achieved either in the workplace or through other life experiences, and a constant awareness of the distinct needs of mature aged learners.

Employers will expect the VET Professional to provide:

» In-depth organisational analysis of roles, responsibilities and staffing requirements. This analysis could also identify how differences in age, experience and the range of skills and knowledge available may affect current or future staffing arrangements.

» Assistance in the examination of job-design and task breakdowns; and subsequent development of assessment tools that will assist in the determination of skills gaps and resultant training needs.

» Identification of career pathways and qualification mapping processes.

» Linking of current training materials, Training Package qualifications and employee needs to form relevant and meaningful training for the workplace.

» Development of immediate and specific learning and enrichment resources for a diverse and changing workforce.

» Activities and materials that are cost and time effective, results-driven, tailored to the workplace, and designed with both the organisation and the learner in mind.

» Diversity training, with an essential focus on ageing and generational issues, empathy and tolerance.

» Practical approaches and resources to assist in the management of cultural and behavioural issues, recruitment practices and Occupational Health and Safety requirements/considerations – targeted in particular towards Management, Human Resource Practitioners, Employee Relations staff and Recruitment personnel.

» Support and advice on ways in which they can retain staff, attract new employees to fill places of need, and manage the knowledge and skills requirements of their workforce in a proactive and integrated manner.

Learners will expect:

For the benefit of both the learner and the employer, VET providers and practitioners may wish to consider using training activities and materials that are:

» more flexible, responsive and demand-driven

» succinct and detailed, tailored to the learner's work environment

» less formal than previous 'traditional' approaches

» preferably based in a workplace setting and tied to immediate work requirements

» modified to correspond with changing circumstances and opportunities within the workplace when required

» cost effective and easily accessible to the learner

» relevant to the learner's interest and perceived needs

» judicious and professional in appearance and all aspects of delivery

All learning and assessment experiences should:

» take into account all previous learning, whether formal or informal

» foster innovation and entrepreneurship

» involve the learner in decisions relating to the time, place, context and format of delivery and assessment

» focus on practical 'hands on' application in the workplace

» allow learners to achieve through small incremental steps

» provide ample opportunity for repetition

» place no time 'limits' on the achievement of goals

There will be a need for VET practitioners to be highly skilled as developers, facilitators and assessors. This sector has a unique opportunity to contribute to changing social attitudes towards ageing and older workers through carefully considered support and innovative practices, and by developing a range of creative strategies that may assist employers in maintaining a skilled, motivated and able-bodied workforce.

Some Solutions »

'CHANGE IS NOT ABOUT RE-ORGANISING, RE-ENGINEERING, RE-INVENTING, RE-CAPITALISING. IT'S ABOUT RE-CONCEIVING! WHEN YOU RE-CONCEIVE SOMETHING – A THOUGHT, A SITUATION, A CORPORATION, A PRODUCT –YOU CREATE A WHOLE NEW ORDER. DO THAT, AND CREATIVITY WILL FLOOD YOUR MIND'.

Dee Hock, founder of Visa Card – taken from Skills for the Future. Final Report of the Ministerial Inquiry, South Australia. April 2003.

Providers of training in the vocational education and training sector pride themselves as leaders in the area of adult learning principles and practices. Through provision of public, corporate and industry-based training, practitioners have worked extensively with learners, employers and industry in developing and delivering relevant, specific and targeted training to their specialised client group.

The challenges that face the workforce over the next 15 – 20 years, however, will place new pressures on the VET sector, as the needs of both organisations and individuals alter according to external influences and workforce trends. VET practitioners will need to address emerging issues with renewed enthusiasm, carefully considered strategies, and a fresh approach to the learning and development needs of mature aged workers and the supporting work environment.

Some critical factors for consideration include:

» Reinforcing a 'life course' perspective and culture amongst workers and employers.

» Developing and implementing effective strategies that may address attitudes and behaviours, taking into account industry occupations, organisational size and culture and attitudes towards training and personal development.

» Contributing to the provision of a safe and non-threatening environment in which everyone can achieve their full potential, regardless of age or previous work experience.

» Fostering a responsive and demand-driven approach to skills development, with particular focus on the recognition of prior experience and knowledge.

» Offering a wide range of customised/tailored activities and services, with an emphasis on providing relevant, meaningful and highly specialised training to a 'new generation' of learners.

» Removing any factors that contribute towards 'barriers' to learning, whether cultural, systemic or personal.

A collaborative approach to the management of issues will ensure that the most effective and appropriate strategies are utilised and that key stakeholders benefit. Consultation, development and delivery will become learner-driven, and take into account the time, place and readiness of the individual, regardless of their age or life circumstances.

The Benefits »

Proactive Training Providers and VET Professionals who are keeping pace and constantly adapting to the inevitable changes facing the workforce over the coming years will reap rewards in many ways. Those who address the challenges now, and prepare for the immediate future by conceptualising, developing and promoting innovative strategies and services, will ultimately win more clients and gain a competitive advantage over those who are slower to respond to market-forces. As client expectations are met (and possibly exceeded) and successful outcomes are achieved, the Provider or Practitioner is less likely to receive complaints and grow their trade through referrals and repeat business. Most importantly Training Providers will be compliant in their legal and Registration obligations, for example, anti discrimination legislation, AQTF Standards and any relevant National and State Policy requirements.

RTO Management and Staff

» Workshop

Section Two

Management and Staff »

This section comprises a series of exercises and case studies that can be used in a number of ways. It can either be delivered as a three hour workshop or, should RTOs prefer, activities can be presented one at a time, either at regular staff meetings or for more short, specific professional development events. RTOs are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the entire contents of this kit and select the most appropriate method of delivery to suit their own needs.

Exercise One: Factors Impacting on Business

This exercise addresses ways in which an RTO can assist business in meeting their changing needs, key issues facing their client group, and ways in which older workers are provided with an appropriate environment for learning.

Exercise Two: Challenges

This second exercise looks at the challenges facing RTOs in meeting the changing needs of their client group. It asks participants to identify critical challenges, consider solutions and identify key stakeholders in the process.

Exercise Three: Opportunities

Using the responses from the previous two exercises, this exercise assists in developing appropriate training and development strategies for clients.

Scenario One: Sarah

This scenario asks participants to consider critical factors in dealing with an organisation and their emerging learning and development needs.

Scenario Two: Bill

This scenario asks participants to consider critical factors in dealing with an individual learner.

Scenario Three: Sean

This scenario asks participants to consider critical factors in dealing with learners, including an analysis of current practices, and recommendations for improvement.

Factors Impacting on Business »

How can we assist business in meeting the changing needs of their workforce? What are the key issues that will face our client group, and what can we do to ensure that older workers are provided with an environment that encourages learning?

As a group, discuss the following questions, and write responses in the areas provided:

How will the changing workforce impact on our client group?
Which sector is most likely to be affected in the first instance?
How do we predict the affects will be felt?
What is the capacity of management to deal with the issues that face them?
What are the 'cultural' issues that will need to be addressed?

Challenges »

What are the key challenges facing this organisation in meeting the changing needs of our client group?

A number of areas have been identified that may assist in guiding your thoughts on challenges that may arise. Consider the challenges, and discuss ways in which these may be addressed. Finally, identify the key stakeholders, and determine the role they will play in meeting these challenges

Area	Challenge *What are the most critical challenges that we face?*	Solution	Key Stakeholders *Who will need to be involved?*
People			
Resources			
Facilities			
Finance			
Other			

Opportunities »

Using the responses to the previous questions, identify training or developmental opportunities for clients, either staff or management.

Area	Need *What training or development is needed?*	Strategy *How can we best approach this for our clients?*	Priority *What level of priority do we need to place on this?*	Resource implications *What do we need to successfully implement this strategy?*
Issues impacting on our client group and sector				

Opportunities (continued) »

Area	Need *What training or development is needed?*	Strategy *How can we best approach this for our clients?*	Priority *What level of priority do we need to place on this?*	Resource implications *What do we need to successfully implement this strategy?*
Management Issues/Needs				

Opportunities (continued) »

Area	Need *What training or development is needed?*	Strategy *How can we best approach this for our clients?*	Priority *What level of priority do we need to place on this?*	Resource implications *What do we need to successfully implement this strategy?*
Cultural Issues				

Scenario One – Sarah »

Sarah is the Human Resource Manager for a National chain of Pharmacies. She has approached you (the VET Professional) to design and develop some specific courses for pharmacy assistants, from new employee level to up to the role of a dispensary assistant. For the past two years, the company has placed a high level of importance on recruiting and selecting mature-aged employees to deal with their distinct customer base, and this focus has revealed deficiencies in current approaches to learning and development.

1. What critical information do you need in order to clearly identify required outcomes for each level of learning?

2. What questions do you need to ask about:

» The company

» The learners

» The industry

3. What materials and resources are available to assist you in the design of these courses?

4. Given that there are a large number of mature-aged employees, what are some key issues that will need to be considered in relation to:

» Delivery

» Assessment

Scenario Two – Bill »

Bill ran his own plumbing business for 25 years. At 55, he sold the business to his son, and has stayed on in the capacity of a casual employee, working approximately two days a week for the past five years.

This arrangement has worked very well, but the business has grown to such an extent that Bill's son has convinced him to return to work for 4 days a week. In addition to normal plumbing duties, Bill will also be required to supervise two apprentices.

You have been approached as a Training Professional to assist the manager in ensuring that Bill is equipped with current skills and knowledge to perform this role.

1. Who needs to be consulted?

2. What critical information is needed?

3. What questions do you need to ask about:

- The business
- The work environment
- Bill
- The apprentices
- Other employees

4. What are some of the 'tools' you could use to assist in analysing Bill's needs?

5. Do you perceive any issues that may arise in dealing with Bill? List at least 3, and describe what strategies you would use to deal with each.

Scenario Three – Sean »

Sean has been working as a trainer for Expert Training Company for the past 10 years. Expert Training offers a variety of courses to the general public and a number of corporate clients. They are a well-respected Provider, attracting participants from a number of industries and sectors, with a reputation for providing quality and professionalism in every course they offer.

Courses offered by Expert Training are focused on supervisory and management skills. The courses are presented as timetabled classroom-based lectures, with assessment exercises and assignments conducted throughout the course, a work-centred project (either simulated or real-life) and a theory exam on completion. The resources to support delivery and assessment were developed several years ago, and although they are updated regularly in relation to currency of content, no changes have been made to ways in which delivery or assessment occurs.

Sean has noticed that the needs of individual learners in each course is rapidly changing, with an increased number of enrolments from a diverse range of ages and differing levels of experience. This has posed difficulties for Sean. He feels that he is unable to meet the needs of both young and old learners in the same manner. In fact, Sean is finding it increasingly difficult to manage some groups, particularly in balancing the requirements for delivery with the different learning styles for each and every participant; and the depth and breadth of understanding and experience present in some classes.

He researches ways in which he can address the differing needs of his group and plans to write a report to his manager explaining what he is experiencing; and suggesting areas for improvement.

Using the following prompts, help Sean to gather his thoughts and write the report:

Issues

General:

1. What are the main issues facing Sean?

2. Which aspects are problematic, particularly in relation to the diverse range of learners?

3. What are some of the differences between young and older learners that may cause Sean to experience difficulties in managing the group?

4. What are some of the key issues surrounding current delivery and assessment methodologies?

5. What external resources are available to Expert Training that could provide solutions to some of the issues raised?

Recommendations:

6. How can Expert Training address the issues raised whilst maintaining the integrity and standards currently provided and admired by their client group?

7. What are the key recommendations in relation to delivery and assessment methodologies for the courses offered?

Scenario One – Sarah »

Responses

In dealing with Sarah's request for the development of specific courses for pharmacy assistants, an RTO will have considered a range of factors prior to embarking on the development of any training or assessment materials.

Your answers may have included some of the following points:

1. What critical information do you need in order to clearly identify required outcomes for each level of learning?

Questions asked may solicit information relating to:

» Current and/or past courses conducted

» The perceived success of any previous training

» Identified needs or gaps

» Anticipated outcomes

» Current approaches to both delivery and assessment

» Resources currently available or already developed

» Responsible or involved training or assessment personnel

» Current induction processes and supporting resources

» The deficiencies as identified in current approaches to learning and development

2. What questions do you need to ask about:

» 2.1 The company

» 2.2 The learners

» 2.3 The Industry

Your answers may have included that you would seek information on the following:

2.1 Policies, procedures, practices:

» Philosophy, Mission and Goals

» Strategic issues/plans

» Cultural issues

» Organisational specific learning needs, time factors, financial matters

» Preferred approaches to learning and development (eg: workplace or classroom based or combination, on-line, distance etc)

» Anticipated numbers and range of learners (ie: age, gender, current or new employees etc)

2.2 Qualifications and experience of current staff

» How learning needs are identified (eg: at recruitment, through performance appraisal process)

» Current statistics on individual employee's status and needs

» Any specific needs that they may have of their employees (eg: high levels of interpersonal skills)

» Cultural influences that may need to be addressed, in particular relating to older employees in the work environment

2.3 Legislative and OH&S requirements

» Industry specific requirements

» Medical and health related requirements

3. What materials and resources are available to assist you in the design of these courses?

Your answers may have included:

» The industry endorsed Training Package

» Supplier and product knowledge training materials

» Enterprise specific training and assessment materials

» Position descriptions and job specifications

» Non-endorsed materials linked to the Training Package

» Tool-box sites (and other web-site/on-line resources)

» ANTA publications (eg: Kit to support Assessor Training) and other resources that deal with design and development of learning and assessment activities

4. Given that there are a large number of mature-aged employees, what are some key issues that will need to be considered in relation to:

» 4.1 Delivery

» 4.2 Assessment

Your answers may have included:

» Recognition of prior learning and experience

» Modes of delivery (eg: on or off job, combination, distance, on-line – with an emphasis on flexibility and accessibility)

» Assessment methodologies (flexible, innovative, non threatening)

» Practical, work-based activities and learning linked to on job performance

» Learning difficulties, fear of learning/assessment

» Learning and study skills, research and analysis

» Involving the learner in decisions relating to delivery and assessment

Scenario Two – Bill »

Responses

There are a range of issues that will need to be considered in dealing with Bill's situation. Although every RTO will approach this situation in their own way, there will be some key points that are common to all. These are detailed below:

1. Who needs to be consulted?

» The Manager

» Bill

2. What critical information is needed?

» Industry requirements – eg: legislative, licensing, qualifications

» Training Package requirements – ie: Minimum qualifications and experience for supervision or training and assessment of apprentices

» Business needs – What do they want Bill to know/what is the required level of performance

3. What questions do you need to ask about:

» *3.1 The business*

– Number of:

- employees
- supervisors/coaches
- trainers/assessors

– Trading hours

– OH&S compliance issues

» *3.2 The work environment*

– Specific technology &/or systems

– Critical time factors (particularly in relation to training/assessment)

– Facilities and equipment

– Resources

» *3.3 Bill*

– Experience in training and or coaching

– Qualifications as a trainer

– Other qualifications/experience relevant to the role

– Other learning 'wants'

– Other learning 'needs'

– Previous training/achievements

– Willingness/motivation to learn

– Preferred learning style/approach

– Barriers to or fears about learning

» *3.4 The apprentices*

– Number of apprentices (total)

– Length of time into apprenticeship

– Their needs

– Current trainer/assessor

– Their progress

– Their training records

– Details of other trainers/assessors who may be able to assist

» *3.5 Other information*

– Anticipated outcomes

– Cultural issues

– 'No go' zones

4. What are some of the tools you could use to assist in analysing Bill's needs?

» Position descriptions

» Job/task breakdowns

» Training Package standards

» Standard Operating Procedures

» Recognition process

» Questionnaire

» Interview

» Other 'Needs Analysis' tools

5. Do you perceive any issues in dealing with Bill? List at least three, and describe what strategies you would use to deal with each.

» Fear of failure

» Fear of assessment

» Attitudinal issues – 'knows it already', doesn't need help, has been doing the job for 30 years etc

» Does not want to appear foolish or dumb in front of others/peers

» Lack of motivation to undertake any 'formalized' learning

» Time constraints

» Lack of commitment to 'paperwork' or documentation

» Lack of understanding of current training and assessment methodologies

» Lack of understanding of competency standards and Training Packages

Bill will need to be treated with respect, empathy and discretion. He is a highly competent tradesman who has been working in the industry for many years. Bill's knowledge and experience are invaluable to the business, which is why his son has requested that he increase his hours and take on the responsibility of the apprentices.

A detailed analysis of Bill's skills, knowledge and experience, mapped against business needs (performance requirements) and defined competency standards will ensure that Bill is not made to 'repeat' any learning in areas where he is already highly competent. Involving Bill in the process will also assist him in recognizing his own areas of need, thereby encouraging commitment to any learning that will follow.

All learning activities will need to be customised to Bill's needs, linked to workplace performance and relevant to the job. Learning/assessment activities must be designed in such manner that Bill is involved and in agreement with approaches and methodologies used. Giving Bill information about all of the learning and assessment requirements prior to commencement of training, and reinforcing this through regular written and verbal communication is extremely valuable.

Ensuring that the learning process is conducted in a confidential and discreet manner will allow Bill to achieve competence without fear of appearing stupid or demeaned in any way, particularly around his peers, or even his own son.

Scenario Three – Sean »

Responses

The range of responses to the previous questions will be varied, as each RTO will develop their own strategies based on the distinct needs of their client group. The suggestions listed below are only offered as possible solutions to Expert Training's situation.

1. What are the main issues facing Sean?

» Predominantly classroom based delivery and assessment methodologies

» Mixed ages and levels of experience amongst the group

» Resources in need of updating

» Depth and breadth of understanding in the group

» Differing learning styles

» Management of the learners

2. Which aspects are problematic, particularly in relation to the diverse range of learners?

» 'Timetabled' approach makes it difficult to cater for those learners who may achieve learning outcomes sooner than others, or for those who take longer to achieve competence

» Participants who have greater experience and understanding may feel frustrated that they have to 'repeat' learning, whilst others may struggle to keep up with the rest of the group

» Standardised trainer notes, OHP's and student handout material may not reflect current trends and approaches to management. Those participants who are working in the management field may find approaches to delivery and supporting notes outdated and irrelevant

» Classroom-based teaching may not be the most effective way to encourage learning or allow for real-life application in workplace situations

» A lecture style approach to delivery may suit some individuals but not all

» Participants who are feeling frustrated with the content, delivery methodology or range of assessment tools; in addition to coping with varying needs of individuals within the group, may reflect their feelings through disruptive or challenging behaviours

» Those experiencing learning difficulties will also pose problems for Sean, often becoming withdrawn, or in a worst-case scenario, fail to attend classes or withdraw from the course

3. What could some of the differences be between young and older learners that are causing Sean to experience difficulties in managing the group?

Younger Learners:

» More familiar with formalized study and learning

» Less 'resistance' to learning and assessment

» High expectations in relation to standards of delivery

» Greater acceptance of the fact that ongoing study is a natural part of working life

» Possibly less commitment to their jobs and training

» May work and learn at a faster pace than older learners

Older Learners:

» Greater commitment to learning

» Higher levels of 'application'

» Fear of failure

» Lack of formalized training/prior qualifications

» Undeveloped study skills

» Fear of appearing 'dumb' in front of peers

» Low self esteem

» 'Know it all' attitude

» Little value in training or achievement of qualifications, particularly in relation to future career prospects

» A need for recognition of previous skills and experience

» May require more individual attention

» May require more time to complete activities/projects

4. What are some of the key issues surrounding current delivery and assessment methodologies?

Delivery:

» Classroom focused

» RTO driven

» No 'links' or relevance to workplace application

» Timetabled approach

» Not designed to take into account individual workplace environments

» Does not take into account the skills, knowledge and experience achieved prior to the course

Assessment:

» Predominantly theory based

» Little or no 'links' or relevance to workplace application

» Not designed to take into account individual workplace environments

» Does not take into account the readiness of the learner to be assessed

» Does not allow for repeated practice in a workplace setting

» Does not allow for re-assessment or appeal

» No formalised recognition process

5. What external resources are available to Expert Training that could provide solutions to some of the issues raised?

» Management Competencies as detailed in relevant Training Packages

» Non-endorsed supporting resources

» Toolboxes and web based support/resources

» Training/Assessor Networks

» State Accrediting Bodies

» Publications, newsletters, text books

» ANTA support materials

» ANTA, NTIS and other relevant Web sites

Recommendations

6. How can Expert Training address the issues raised whilst maintaining the integrity and standards currently provided and admired by their client group?

» Consider introducing a range of delivery options:

– Continue classroom-based delivery for those clients who still wish to attend timetabled courses

– Offer alternative pathways via work-based learning

– Offer a combination of workplace learning and off job components

– Introduce distance or workbook supported delivery options

» Source current supporting resource materials that can be adapted to meet Expert Training's requirements

» Consider on-line or web based support materials

» Provide Professional Development for all Delivery and Assessment staff

» Address Policies, Procedures and practices, particularly in relation to recognition processes, delivery and assessment

» Develop strategies for implementation of new approaches, and ensure that all staff are informed and aware of proposed changes

7. What are the key recommendations in relation to delivery and assessment methodologies for the courses offered?

Delivery:

» Develop individual training plan templates that allow for greater involvement from both the learner and the employer in decisions made about subject choices and learning options

» Determine time and cost effective methods for identification of individual learning needs

» Review enrolment procedures

» Ensure that Recognition processes are conducted prior to or on enrolment

» Develop tools or checklists for mapping organizational requirements and individual learning needs

» Customise or tailor learning to suit the individual needs of learners

» Select appropriate methodologies (ie: on or off job, workplace based, distance etc) according to identified needs

» Develop workplace based 'projects' that contextualise and link application to learning

» Introduce support mechanisms such as mentors, coaches or buddy systems

» Review classroom-based delivery approaches, utilise (non-endorsed) resources available to develop new programs in line with target market and client needs

» Review the 'timetabled' approach in favour of possible continuous intake or 'subject' based lectures/tutorials or similar

Assessment:

» Introduce flexible and innovative approaches to recognition of prior learning and experience

» Develop a range of assessment activities that are relevant to the workplace, allowing the learner to demonstrate competence in a variety of ways

» Ensure that the learner is involved in, and aware of assessment requirements at the beginning of the learning experience

» Ensure that the learner is able to request assessment when they feel that they are ready

» Consider ways in which assessments can occur in the workplace, possibly involving senior managers/supervisors, peer review, or assessor-led activities

» Provide opportunities for re-assessment or appeal

» Involve all assessment staff in the development of assessment tools, taking into account feedback from students, employers and industry

» Introduce mechanisms for review and validation of all assessment activities

Case Study One »

Training Statewide's Approaches to RPL

Training Statewide is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) covering the regional areas of South Australia, delivering various training services including Certificate III in Civil Construction. Recognition of Prior Learning presented Training Statewide with certain challenges because of three factors:

» 1. Country / Regional location

» 2. Construction workers

» 3. Mature aged workers

Construction workers are highly skilled individuals with immensely practical minds. Private enterprise, country based, construction workers apply hands-on-practical solutions to most problems. For example, Training Statewide has seen examples of many different ways of solving problems; from mufflers on cars fixed with fencing wire, to administration offices picked up and placed on the back of trucks and moved to new locations.

Recognition of Prior Learning can be a paper-work exercise from start to finish, and this is often perceived as irrelevant for many construction workers. Not because they are incapable of paper-work, (which is in fact a large part of some construction work processes), but because a great deal of RPL paper-work does not relate to direct practical outcomes, or needs, as they see it. That is, the language and tasks set often seem impractical or illogical. Sending the average construction worker on a paper 'chase' that leads to a process of evidence collection is the equivalent of a 'wild goose chase' in their minds. We have found that they see it as a waste of valuable time which could be put to other practical and useful outcomes. "Why spend hours chasing this information when I can plainly perform the task competently now?" is the typical response.

Training Statewide designed an RPL system in response to the poor follow-up experienced with their client group. The system is simple and effective:

1. The enrolment form and process identifies if a Trainee wishes to apply for RPL (Forms can be completed verbally).
2. All trainees who indicate they want RPL are interviewed as to the types of skills that they feel they are competent in, and explained what level of competency is required according to the Training Package requirement.
3. Checklists are designed for each course which are simple and relate directly to the competencies in the Training Package.

4. The trainee decides on a specific job which they are confident in performing.
5. The assessor needs to establish how that job relates to the competency checklist so that they elements and performance criteria can be check off.
6. The trainee performs the task under observation.

Variations

7. Depending on the requirements of the competency the assessor may use other works competed by the trainee.
8. Verification of competency may be signed by supervisors within the checklist itself.
9. Trainees are provided immediately with a log-book to record activities they undertake from day one. This includes plant operation tasks, which at a later date may be used to verify RPL.

Validation

10. A skilled construction worker under supervision from a Certificate IV AWPT person is required to perform the assessment where one person cannot undertake both roles.
11. Photographs are taken and included the RPL file.
12. Information such as Daily Job Cards, Daily Productivity Reports and time cards showing evidence of completed work is sourced from administration staff of the employer. This is normally easily accessed and willingly provided. Permission for access to these records is sought from both the trainee and management.

Discussion

Although at first it may appear a financial drain to set assessors out on practical tasks, the gains are quickly identified when consideration is given to the amount of time given to chasing up paper-work and processing partially produced evidence – most importantly, providing protracted support to trainees on the RPL paper-work requirements.

Personal Reflection »

Take a moment to reflect on the questions posed in this exercise, and place your answers in the areas provided:

Question	Yes	No	Unsure	What do I need to learn or develop further understanding in?	What skills and abilities can I contribute?
Do my qualifications and work experience equip me with an understanding and awareness of the issues facing older learners?					
Am I skilled in the facilitation and /or assessment for individuals or groups of older learners?					
Can I deal with issues that may arise in the learner's workplace?					
Do I have the knowledge of access and equity principles and practices that may apply?					
Am I equipped with sufficient knowledge of the needs of older learners, and of ways in which those distinct needs can be addressed?					

Personal Reflection (continued) »

Take a moment to reflect on the questions posed in this exercise, and place your answers in the areas provided:

How can I contribute to the learning and development needs of older workers?
What skills and knowledge do I bring to this RTO, and how can these abilities be used?
What do I want to learn?

Individual Skills Audit »

Tell us how your life, work and structured learning experiences have contributed towards your understanding and ability to deal with older learners:

Name: ……

Qualifications	Relevance to Older Learners:		
	Low	Medium	High

Relevant Life/Work Experience »

Area	Limited	Regular	Extensive
Worked as a facilitator or coach, dealing specifically with older learners			
Provided assessment of skills or knowledge, dealing specifically with older learners			
Facilitated workplace training to older workers			
Conducted institutionally based training to older workers			
Conducted assessment activities as part of an Institutional based training program (assessing older workers)			
Other – please specify any other experience you may have			

Individual Skills Audit (continued) »

Expertise and Professional Development Needs:

Area	*I have a reasonable working knowledge/ understanding of:*	*I have a specialist expertise knowledge/ understanding of:*	*I have a limited knowledge/ understanding of:*	*I am very interested in this area:*
Diversity in the workforce				
Access and Equity				
Mature Aged Learners				
Literacy and Numeracy				
Long Life Learning				
Communities of Practice				
Flexible Learning				
Work-based Learning				
Recognition				
Need Analysis				
Development of Resources				
Development of on-line resources or E-Resources				
Toolboxes				
Training Packages				
Organisational Cultures				
Work and Job Design				
Other – please specify any other areas of expertise or interest				

RTO Management

» Workshop

Section Three

Section Three – 3 hour Workshop »

This section comprises a series of exercises that are designed to assist senior management in planning for the future needs of older workers.

The results of each exercise will assist in ensuring that RTO's are equipped with the appropriate staff, resources and facilities to meet those needs.

As with section two, these exercises can be used individually, at regular management meetings, for specific and short professional development events or as part of your organisation's strategic planning process.

Management

Results of Exercise One, Two and Three plus the completed Individual Skills Analysis and Personal Reflection sheets will assist Managers in this Workshop. You will also need copies of your organisational policies and procedures, and a copy of the AQTF 'Standards for Registered Training Organisations'.

Exercise Four: Qualifications and Experience/Professional Development Needs

Using the results of the Individual Skills Analysis and Personal Reflection Sheets, complete this exercise to map all staff, their current qualifications and experience and identified areas of developmental need.

Exercise Five: Strengths and Abilities

Using the same documentation as before, list each staff member and their specialist expertise. Determine if they will be able to contribute to delivery, assessment or development of training/assessment resources.

Exercise Six: Risk Factors

This exercise addresses key risk areas in the implementation and management of strategies for meeting the learning and development needs of an older workforce. Several areas have been identified for analysis, and additional space has been provided for you to add other areas that may be of importance to your organisation.

Worksheet One: Meeting AQTF Standards

At this point you will need to refer to the AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisations.

Copies of current policies, procedures and relevant documentation will be useful, as you may wish to refer to these as you work through the Standards.

You will also need the results of Exercise One, Two and Three as determined in the Workshop for Management and Staff.

Analyse the information from Workshop One, review current policies and procedures and determine where and how your organisation meets AQTF requirements. Identify areas that may need to be adjusted or, where applicable any new requirements arise. Prioritise each area and identify responsible personnel.

Worksheet Two: Facilities and Resources

As in the previous activity, results of Exercise One, Two and Three will be extremely useful in completing this Worksheet. Will the changing needs of learners require alternative approaches to delivery or assessment? Are your current facilities and resources adequate? Consider how these needs can be met, prioritise and allocate responsibility for implementation of any changes or initiatives. Additional space has been provided for you to add other areas that may be of importance to your organisation.

Worksheet Three: Staffing

The results of Exercise Four and Five can be used to complete this Worksheet. Consider your current 'skills bank' of staff and identify areas of need. As in Worksheets One and Two, prioritise and allocate responsibility for implementation of any changes or initiatives. Additional space has been provided for you to add other areas that may be of importance to your organisation.

Worksheet Four: Implementation Plan

Using Worksheets One, Two and Three, with particular reference to your 'Risk Factors' (Exercise Six), identify your organisation's goals in relation to:

» 1. AQTF compliance,

» 2. Facilities and Resources

» 3. Staffing

Include any other goals that you feel are important for your organisation

List key areas, identify requirements (or actions) and determine time frames and accountabilities. Finally, describe the outcome or result of your work.

Complete the draft implementation timetable.

Qualifications and Experience/Professional Development Needs »

Enter details of all staff, including those involved in support and administrative duties:

Name	Qualifications	Experience	Professional Development Needs/Areas of interest *(Refer to Personal Analysis exercises)*

Strengths and Abilities »

Refer to the Individual Skills Audit and Personal Reflection exercises to assist in completing this chart:

Name	Specialist expertise	Delivery	Assessment	Development

Risk Factors »

What are the key risk areas for this organisation in relation to the implementation and management of strategies for meeting the learning and development needs of an older work force?

Consider the areas detailed below, discuss the possible risks involved, determine the level of risk to this organisation, the impact that it would have and finally, identify the level of priority given to addressing this risk area.

Area	Risk	Level of Risk			Impact	Priority		
		Low	*Med*	*High*		*Low*	*Med*	*High*
Qualifications/Course Offerings								
Delivery Methods								
Assessment Methods								
Facilities								

Risk Factors (continued) »

Resources (Materials, text, equipment)	*Training and Assessment Personnel (current employees)*	*Clients (Employers, Learners)*	*Other – What are other obvious 'risks' for this organisation*

RTO Considerations »

Worksheet One: Meeting AQTF Standards

Standard	Current Policy/ Practice	Requirement – Adjustment	Priority	Responsibility

Reviewed:

Date:…….. By:…….....

RTO Considerations »

Worksheet Two: Facilities and Resources

Area	Current resources/ facilities	Requirement – Adjustment	Priority	Responsibility
Training Rooms and related equipment				
On-Line or Computer Based Learning Options				
Multi- Site Delivery				
On Job Delivery				
Work-based Learning				
Supporting resources/Learner handouts, workbooks etc				

Reviewed:

Date:…….. By:…….....

RTO Considerations »

Worksheet Three: Staffing

Standard	Current Status	Requirements/Needs	Priority	Responsibility
Administration/Support Staff				
Delivery and Assessment Staff – Qualifications				
Delivery and Assessment Staff – Experience in dealing with older workers				
Awareness of issues relating to older learners				
Professional development needs				

Reviewed:

Date:…….. By:…….....

Goal »

Standard	Requirement	Time Frames	Responsibility	Outcome

Year »

Area	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Resources and Links

Section Four

Resources and Links »

Web Sites/Links:

» www.dest.gov.au

This is the website of the Department of Education, Science and Training. It is a good starting point for any information about the national training system, and includes an excellent links page.

» www.ntis.gov.au

This website is the National Training Information Service. It is an on-line database that contains information about vocational education and training in Australia, with details about courses, qualifications, training packages and competency standards. This website also provides information on Training Providers across the Nation.

» www.nohsc.gov.au

This is the website of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission. It contains a range of useful information on occupational health and safety issues. The Australian Occupational Health and Safety Index at "http://natindex.nohsc.gov.au/" http://natindex.nohsc.gov.au/ is a source of information on Practical Guidance material and Safety Alerts available on Australian OHS Authorities websites, including information relevant to older workers.

» www.aqf.edu.au

The Australian Qualifications Framework are a key element of the national training system, and form the basis for all qualifications issued under the AQTF.

» www.aesharenet.com.au

AESharenet is a national collaborative system to allow vocational education and training professionals to share and adapt training materials.

» www.atpl.net.au

Australian Training Products Limited is the distributor of endorsed and non- endorsed training package materials. It also offers a wide range of publicly funded materials that have been specifically developed for the vocational education and training sector.

» www.flexiblelearning.net.au

This website is extremely useful, providing access to a diverse range of products and services. The section on toolboxes may also be of particular interest, as well as links to free products and services:

» www.flexiblelearning.net.au/toolbox/preview/index.htm

» www.flexiblelearning.net.au/productsandservices/index.htm

» www.resourcegenerator.gov.au

This on-line library of resources is available to assist trainers and assessors with the implementation of training packages.

» www.edna.edu.au/vet.html

This Australia wide service provides lists of resources linked to industry areas.

The DEST, NTIS and Flexible Learning sites are highly recommended, as they also provide a large number of links to other vocational education and training websites.

Associations:

Training and Development:

» www.acpet.edu.au

» www.aitd.com.au

The Australian Council for Private Educators and Trainers and The Australian Institute of Training and Development are two national membership bodies that provide advice and support to the training sector.

» ultibase.rmit.edu.au

This website contains a comprehensive list of Australian Academic and professional groups and associations (through the 'Resource' link).

Human Resource Management:

» www.hrmguide.net/

This website will provide access to a large number of HRM support groups.

Other publications/newsletters that may be of interest include:

Fast Facts: This publication is distributed free of charge on a fortnightly basis. To subscribe, visit:

» www.dest.gov.au

and follow the links to the Training and Skills FAST FACTS subscribe section.

Each State and Territory Training Authority will have a regular newsletter that provides up to date information relating to State and Territory regulatory requirements, current initiatives, professional development activities and resources.

Recognition of Prior Learning

A professional development resource for RTO staff is Your First Step/ Value Older Workers, and can be accessed at:

» /www.resourcegenerator.gov.au/loadpage.asp?=RPL.htm

The following products have been produced to assist registered training organisations and auditors to provide quality services to all learners and to meet access and equity obligations under the AQTF. It outlines some of the key issues to consider when working with different client groups and explains such concepts as diversity, cultural appropriateness and reasonable adjustment.

Working with Diversity: A guide to Equity and the AQTF

Working with Diversity: Quality Training for People with a Disability

Working with Diversity: Quality Training for Indigenous Australians

Language, literacy and numeracy

Go to the www.dest.gov.au website and follow the links to these publications.

Resources

Research Papers:

Access Economics, 2001, *'Population Ageing and the Economy'*, (Public Affairs, Parliamentary and Access Branch – Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care).

OVAL, 2002, Major Research Program for Older Workers; *'Stage 1 Publications Production Unit – The Conceptual Framework'* (2002).

BVET (NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training); *'Older Workers and Education and Training'*;

» www.bvet.nsw.gov.au

Banks, Gary, *'An Ageing Australia: small beer or big bucks?'* – a presentation to the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies, Economic Briefing, Adelaide, 29th April, 2004

Smith, Larry, NCVER 2003, '*Valuing RPL – Selected Case Studies of Australian private providers of training*'.

'Increasing the Vocational Education and Training Participation and Achievement of Mature Aged Workers – Ideas for Action', 2004.

Conference Board, Inc (USA), *'Research Report, Voices of Experience – Mature Workers in the Future Workforce'*;

» www.conference-board.org

Eurolink Age, *'Ageing in Employment – A Proposal for A European Code of Good Practice'* (UK).

Email: eurolink@ace.org.uk

'Being positive about age diversity at work – A practical guide for business', AGE POSI+TIVE (UK);

» www.agepositive.gov.uk

The Workplace Education Research Consortium University of New England, Armidale, NSW, 2002, *'Securing Success: Good Practice in training people aged 45 and over who are disadvantaged in the labour market'*.

Cotton/Associates Pty Ltd and Mc Dade and Associates Pty Ltd, 2002, *'Unlocking Opportunities' Final report: Proposal for a trial of an approach for engaging small and medium enterprises in vocational education and training'.*

Kearns, Peter, NCVER 2002, *'Are two worlds colliding? The provision of training and learning services for small business'*, (available in both web and printed format).

Text/Supporting Resources:

ANTA, 1998, *'Framing the Future: Workbased Learning - A Ready Reference'.*

Dept of Education, Science and Training,*'Securing Success – Good Practice in Training People Aged 45 and over who are Disadvantaged in the Labour Market'.*

Dept of Education and Training (WA), *'Building Diversity and the AQTF – A guide to access and equity.'*

ANTA, 2001, *'Reframing the Future - A New Model of Workbased Learning in the VET Sector'.*

ANTA, 1999, *'Reframing the Future; Evaluating Workbased Learning, A Model'.*

ANTA, 2001, *'Training Package Assessment Materials Project'* – this set of 10 booklets provides detailed information and resources that will assist in developing assessment materials.

ANTA, 2002, *'Learning and Assessment Strategies – engaging enterprises/industry in developing and validating learning and assessment strategies'* – this booklet is particularly useful in developing strategies that meet AQTF requirements.

ANTA, 2005, *'Standards for Registered Training Organisations'* (effective from 1st July, 2005).

Dept of Employment and Training (QLD) and ANTA 2003, *'Training Packages @ Work – Back to Basics'*. This booklet provides a wealth of information, both about systems requirements under current administrative and regulatory requirements, and valuable information relating to the delivery of training under the national training system. Back to Basics also has an e-newsletter, which can be accessed at:

» www.tpatwork.com

The booklet also provides an excellent list of web links and resources and web addresses for each State and Territory Training Authority.

Code of Practice for RTOs »

Checklist of Good Practice for RTOs Working with Older Learners:

Question	Yes	No
Do we work in partnership with employers to ensure that all employees, regardless of age are encouraged to participate in training, learning and development opportunities for the full course of their working lives?		
Do we take every opportunity to encourage workers and intending workers to recognise that learning and skilling is of critical importance for the whole of their working lives?		
Do we work together with managers and learners to have a strong focus on: • *Flexible pathways to extend skills and learning, including on-job, coaching and structured training opportunities*		
• *Short courses or learning events*		
• *Full recognition of prior learning*		
Do we design all learning experiences for older workers in such a way that recognises the richness of their life and work experiences?		
Do we recognise that some learners may lack confidence or feel apprehensive in returning to learning and provide learning opportunities that are sensitive to those circumstances?		
Do we work to dispel negative stereotypes about older learners through the promotion of positive case studies and encouraging older learners to share their experiences?		
Do we market learning opportunities for older learners?		
Do we measure the participation rate of older learners to ensure that they are not being overlooked when training opportunities are present?		

NOTE: If, as training professionals, you consistently demonstrate your adherence to good practice for older workers, you should advertise this fact to your clients.