



focus: age discrimination

Avoid troublesome phrases that could lead to a lawsuit from an older worker

Heads up: Older staffers could face more bias in the workplace than you might think. Consider a recent investigation by ProPublica and the Urban Institute, which found that 56% of workers over the age of 50 reported being pushed out of their jobs before they were ready to retire.

And if an older staffer experiences any perceived age intolerance in your workplace, an age discrimination lawsuit could be on its way.

That's why you want to reduce the chances of a lawsuit by proactively addressing the potential concerns of older employees.

One way to do so is to have periodic conversations with

your older staffers to make sure their needs are being met. If an older staffer asks to work part time or to have a more flexible schedule, try to accommodate him or her.

And be quick to respond to the concerns of older workers if they're having trouble or feeling ostracized.

Outdated beliefs

In addition, avoid outdated assumptions about older employees such as "older workers can't be retrained," "older staffers are past their prime," or "older employees can't handle the day-to-day demands of the job." And don't ask older employees about their retirement plans, either.

Another way to avoid age-

based legal trouble is to pay attention to the words you choose. Try not to use these red-flag phrases:

- "Digital native" – this may discourage older applicants and workers who aren't as adept at using technology.
- "High-energy" – a word often associated with younger individuals.
- "Ninja" or "Guru" – older staffers and job candidates may find these buzzwords unappealing.
- "Overqualified" – often used as a term to mask age bias, especially because experience is often associated with age.
- "3.5 grade point average required" – implies that job applicants are at a life stage where this is still relevant.