

Older, wiser and still employable



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AGE is certainly no barrier when it comes to being an entrepreneur - which is also good news for mature-age workers looking for a sympathetic employer.

The subject of today's Business Network study, Kathryn MacMillan, is the latest example of someone we've found who created their own employment solution, which inevitably helps others back into the workforce.

Earlier this year we featured the inspiring story of Helen Whitney, who started her Dutiful Daughters business when she was in her 60s to help raise the level of care for elderly and disabled patients.

While there are plenty of retired nurses on her books, she is now desperate for carers who are able to speak other languages, as many of her foreign-born patients lose their command of English as they age.

(Incidentally, Helen reports that her home care business is still booming and three weeks ago they even had a record week.)

Before that we had Eddy De Gabriele of Wollongong's Edmen Employment Agency, doing his bit to help care for the disadvantaged.

Eddy also made the point that the problem for many mature-age workers is "they are less flexible about adapting to work that is different from what they did before".

"But once you educate them they are fine," he said.

Then there is Allan Rodd, 68, who was trying to attract an investor for his Uncle Harry's Natraburgers so he could retire. Far from retiring, he is now expanding the range to include party food and has just finished redesigning his packaging to make it more shelf-friendly for Woolworths.

He's now planning to appoint a "board of directors" to offer advice and investment.

But not all the stories of older entrepreneurs have a happy ending. Last year we featured Trevor Moir who started The Executive Coordination Group to help retrenched executives and other mature-age business people re-enter the workforce.

He was tireless in pressuring politicians to address the issue and it was Trevor who first spotted the advertisement placed in Asian newspapers by the Federal Government urging foreign workers, under 45, to come to Australia for jobs.

The recent column about that ad prompted many angry letters, including this one from Trevor himself.

"I gave up in Sydney last year," he wrote. "I am now teaching business English in Guangzhou University. Over here, they value maturity and knowledge, unlike Australia where young and beautiful is the go.

"I never thought that at 63 years of age I would be starting a new career in another country but it's great."

Ken Coulson, 63, of Brisbane, writes about his experience in advertising for an office worker and specifically wanting to attract someone over the age of 50.

"However, I was told that I was not permitted to mention anything which might be held to be discriminatory," he wrote. "Fair enough, I placed an ad and stated that 'mature age is no barrier'.

"Yes, I received some applications and yes, I started a 'mature-aged lady' who is still with me 11 months later and is an asset to me and my business."

No wonder Nine2Three Employment Solutions has found such a rich lode.

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