

# BE YOUR BEST AT WORK TO BEAT AGEISM

NST- 8/2/2019 Pg. 15

**S**PEAKING at the "Ageing, Learning and Technology: Enriching Lives, Connecting Communities Conference" to mark International Day of Older Persons, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged the older generation to remain active and continue working after retirement.

As the average life expectancy of Malaysians is 75 years, a person needs his savings to last between 15 and 20 years.

The retirement age for Malaysians is 60 but many are not ready to retire, plus there is the need to survive with the high cost of living.

But then, ageism (prejudice or discrimination based on a person's age) exists in Malaysia.

A "too young" educator may be told he cannot be a professor, while a job candidate in his 50s may hear that the institute needs a graduate "with a lot of energy and no bad habits"; an employee in the 60s may be counselled out of attending conferences, just to allow him to "take it easy this month".

Malaysia is without an Ageism Act, which may include no discrimination against employees based on their age, and in hiring or firing, work assignments and promotions.

It's possible for ageism to go unnoticed in the workplace.

Age discrimination may look like this:

**LEARNING** opportunities are automatically offered to younger

employees, not older ones. This can include educational courses, access to reimbursement for continuing education, professional or industry conference attendance;

**BEING** overlooked or passed over for challenging assignments. An unfair share of unpleasant or tedious assignments is given to older employees;

**BEING** left out of important meetings or institutional activities;

**A SPOKEN** or unspoken assumption that you are not entitled to take time off for family commitments because you don't have young children at home;

**DISTURBING** comments and remarks about age; and,

**BEING** passed over for a raise and promotion. Differing salary increases and decisions on promotions may indicate age-based discrimination or they may be a reflection of individual performance.

You may think that you or your workplace is free of age discrimination. If you see signs of ageism that aren't directed at you, don't distance yourself by thinking that this can never happen to you.

Should you think that you are good for the organisation, then it's best to invest in your growth and development.

Stay informed and read up on trends and best practices, and keep competitive by doing better every year.

The older workforce is a wealth of industry and institutional knowledge. Make yourself the wise man of the institution.

Don't fall into a belief that your workplace "owes you" something for your contributions.

Your thinking can affect how you act.

There is no reason to falter in doing your best to represent your organisation.

Like your younger colleagues, keep your network active and your options open.

The best way to prevent yourself from falling victim to age discrimination is to stay on top of your career game.

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