

USA TODAY: SITE TO LIST OVER-50 FRIENDLY FIRMS

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The AARP Foundation on Monday will launch a Web site to match job seekers who are 50 and older with the employers who will need them as baby boomers begin to retire.

The site, www.aarp.org/featuredemployers, will start with 13 companies that have been given the AARP's version of the Good Housekeeping seal. The list will grow to 20 companies by year's end and will likely expand into the hundreds, says Jim Seith, program director for the AARP Foundation.

It's not a job board, although it will let job hunters link back to corporate sites where jobs are listed. Rather, it will allow side-by-side comparisons. For example, job seekers may want health insurance, flexible hours or tuition assistance but might not know what a company offers until deep in the interview process. To be selected by the AARP, companies have to disclose the information on the AARP site. The AARP does not require its chosen companies to offer any specific benefits. Labor shortages will cause companies to compete and the AARP is facilitating that, Seith says.

It might seem counterintuitive to lure older workers with health insurance. They are more likely to have chronic diseases that drive costs up. But hiring only young workers is unlawful, says Pitney Bowes human resources chief Johnna Torsonne, and companies cannot ignore demographics if they want to find productive workers.

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The AARP will field complaints about employers but will not make them public. The companies will be shown the complaints. If a worrisome pattern develops, AARP will boot a company from the list.

Ray Roe, CEO of staffing company Adecco North America, says his company looks

everywhere for workers. It has hired 8,000 spouses of military personnel since 2001. Home Depot made the January cover of Workforce magazine for hiring 13,000 veterans in 2004. Roe predicts that employment age discrimination in the USA is about to become all but a thing of the past, although Pitney Bowes was the only company interviewed that would disclose the percentage of workers that are 50-plus (24%).

Companies pay the AARP 25 cents a year per employee to be listed, or \$5,500 for Pitney Bowes with its 22,000 U.S. workers. By 2010, 1 in 3 workers will be 50-plus. That's sure to catch the attention of the job board industry, which is hot enough for CareerBuilder.com (part owned by USA TODAY publisher Gannett) to spend about \$7 million on three Super Bowl ads featuring chimps.

There are 40,000 job boards that had \$1.2 billion in revenue last year. Many are run by trade groups and specialize in niches such as construction jobs or architecture jobs, says job-board tracker Weddle's. Only a few focus on jobs for older workers, and they offer mostly part-time work. Many older workers are interested in a career change or a place where they will still be considered for a promotion, says Weddle's publisher Pete Weddle.

Article may be found at: http://www.usatoday.com/money/economy/employment/2005-02-28-aarpusat_x.htm