

Ronseal

Large employer

Ronseal is a Sheffield based, wholly owned subsidiary of the multi-national coatings manufacturer 'The Sherwin Williams Company'. Its successful brands are well known in both the wood-care and waterproofing markets. It is one of the fastest growing manufacturing companies in the DIY market and a key supplier to all major retailers, trade outlets, building merchants, shops and wholesalers.

Ronseal employs 260 staff in the UK, 33% of staff are over 50 (of whom 10% are over 60).

Key workplace characteristics include high levels of staff retention and long service (which is recognised and celebrated). Ronseal prides itself on being a good employer.

Ronseal has a positive attitude towards older workers and has introduced a range of policies to support older worker retention, including flexible working arrangements, a supportive approach to 'return to work' and a 'can do' attitude towards making workplace adjustments for employees' changing needs.

As a result Ronseal has benefited from retaining employees with valuable skills, has a workforce able to respond to seasonal fluctuations in demand and has established a position as an employer of choice.

What Ronseal does

Flexible Working

Demand for Ronseal's products is seasonal with peak periods of production between January and May then tailing off towards the autumn. Contracts are either based on annualised hours or a four day, Mon-Thurs, 38 hour week (long days).

Flexible working patterns have been agreed to meet seasonal demand with an option for employees to take ten days additional leave outside periods of peak demand, in exchange for working on a Friday when demand is high.

This policy enables Ronseal to reduce its requirement for temporary staff in peak periods and supports older worker retention as it means employees are given extended leave periods after working their shifts. For those workers who do not wish to work the additional ten Fridays an alternative of an additional 10 days leave during non peak periods is still offered, but without pay. This is particularly popular with the older members of the workforce.

"Flexible working allows employees choice. They have the option to work less hours if they wish to. Everyone has this choice regardless of their age. Dependant on their circumstances, preference or health they choose the option best for them. This also gives flexibility to the company". Ronseal

Performance Management

With the abolition of the default retirement age, RONSEAL is reviewing pre-retirement advice provision and performance management processes in order to support succession planning and maintenance of a performance culture:

- all employees have been advised of legislative changes regarding retirement;
- pre-retirement support is offered only once an employee indicates that they wish to retire;
- questions will be inserted into appraisals about future plans with respect to work, i.e. where does the employee see themselves in twelve months to five years – all employees will be asked irrespective of age;

- bi-annual retirement seminars will be held and offered to all employees to allow Ronseal to identify any employees that are considering retirement; and
- where employees' performance is failing or where an employee indicates they are unable to work in the same way but wish to continue working, adjustments are made in consultation with occupational health consultants.

In a recent case, an employee was shifted onto a three day week and buddied up with a colleague on tasks they were no longer able to perform alone. In another case, small adjustments (a bigger screen/magnifier, painting steps) has enabled a valued employee to extend their working life by three years.

Managing Health: Return to Work

Ronseal supports older workers who wish to remain working for as long as possible. Where a worker of any age has a health problem, Ronseal works closely with Occupational Health, the employee and the employee's doctor to agree and implement an extended, phased return to work. Progress is regularly reviewed. Ronseal does this in order to retain older workers' skills and in recognition of their long service and commitment to the company.

"Phased returns are essential; they ensure that the individuals are well enough to be back at work rehabilitating them at the correct pace. We work closely with the occupational health department. Paying full pay for the duration of the phased return recommended ensures that the employees do not rush back before they are ready and in turn end up taking unnecessary time off". Ronseal

"I was worried to return to work as I never thought I could do everything that I used to. However the HR department sent me to occupational health and were happy to let me return on light duties and less hours for a few months until I built my strength up – I was really shocked as I still got full pay". Ronseal employee

"My doctor advised that I should have a staged return to work, but I was worried that the company would not let me. I was really pleased to find out that they let me do a staged return with light duties. I am still not on shifts yet and they are not rushing me". Ronseal employee

Phased Retirement and Skills Transfer

When an older and experienced member of staff with key skills indicates they wish to retire a successor is identified and mentored. In one case, an experienced member of the R&D team mentored their replacement for two years to ensure effective transfer of skills and experience.

Recruitment

Ronseal has ensured recruitment processes are age neutral. Recruitment is carried out through the local Jobcentre and candidates of all ages are encouraged to apply. All candidates undertake a standard test at an assessment centre. As a result RONSEAL recently recruited a 62 year old factory operative, based on his ability and performance during assessment.

Business Benefits

- In monitoring absence, they found no relationship between absence and age of employee.
- Key skills have been retained.

- Recruitment and training costs have been reduced.
- Older workers' policies have supported Ronseal's positioning as an employer of choice.
- Older workers have provided mentoring to younger workers.
- Ronseal is better able to respond to fluctuations in demand for its products.