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To combat older-worker stereotypes – and make the most of the wealth of experience and knowledge on offer – the UK bank's programme to support its growing number of employees in their 50s has been a roaring success.

MAXIMISE – a network for the experienced colleague – the branch of Lloyds

- The programme aims to help all staff (but especially mature ones) across the bank
- It aims to create a fuller working life through social network initiatives, webinars and information sharing

Crammed like a sardine into a London Tube carriage, something happened to Marek Tribedi – a senior manager at Lloyds Banking Group ^[1] – that had never happened before at the age of 55. Somebody offered him a seat.

"I wasn't pregnant, I didn't have some obvious need to sit down and I wasn't carrying any luggage," he explains. "And yet I suddenly realised: 'Wow, I am now being perceived as someone who might need a seat in that situation'."

It left Tribedi thinking about what he wanted to do, where he wanted to go, what he thought he had left to do within Lloyds Banking Group ^[1], and beyond. In our 'age of no retirement,' assumptions about people leaving the bank at a certain age are changing.

Breaking the age stereotypes

Age stereotyping research informed him that for over 50s:

- 47 per cent believed that older worker stereotypes existed at the Group,
- 47 per cent felt that they were being pigeonholed as cynical
- 41 per cent were resistant to change
- 32 per cent are less likely for promotion
- As a result, those who believed that age stereotyping existed were on average 5 per cent less engaged.

With 60 per cent of the workforce within the Technology Division over 40 and 20 per cent over 50, this population was clearly of increasing importance and needed to be fully engaged.

And so **MAXIMISE** – the network for the experienced colleague – was born. Set up in 2014, the programme aims to help all staff (but especially mature ones) across the bank to create a fuller working life through social network initiatives, webinars and information sharing.

More than solving a problem which the stereotyping research did indicate there was, Tribedi says it is more about benefiting from the large amounts of experience the age group has to offer.

Tribedi refers to the old African proverb: *‘Watching an experienced colleague leave the organisation is like watching a library burn to the ground.’* “That was a powerful metaphor for me.”

With retirement no longer a cliff edge, [Lloyds](#) ^[1] is helping employees take responsibility for their retirement income and plan for the next stage of their career, whether that is at Lloyds or elsewhere. That might sound counterintuitive, but the bank’s success depends on employees feeling valued.

Membership of **MAXIMISE** is open to all, with topics of wide interest. For example, internal pension clubs have had intergenerational support as planning for the future is relevant to everyone.

Planning for the future

Lloyds also ran a well-received event on the Menopause last year, providing key information and raising awareness of the “last taboo in the workplace” throughout the organisation. With Lloyds representing some 22,500 women over the age of 40, that’s a third of the workforce who may need support on this subject in the future. “A significant amount of your workforce is going to be working past 50, and is going to be working through that particular lifestyle change event,” says Kathy Brooke, **MAXIMISE** Co Chair at [Lloyds](#) ^[1]. With **Maximise**, we want to inspire people to take control over this next stage of their lives, value their knowledge and inspire the next generation.

A pilot ‘Planning For The Future’ workshop, run last year with [Age Scotland](#) ^[2], covered topics from health and wellbeing in later life to volunteering, part-time work and even starting a new business. An impressive 100 per cent of attendees found it a positive boost to their future life planning.

And the proof is in the pudding as the network has received plenty of praise from the executive of the bank, external supporters and, most importantly, those using the programme itself.

“It has been a real support to me during the last few years, connecting me with colleagues at a similar stage of their lives, making me realise the possibilities and opportunities available to me and providing the support network I needed,” says Lloyds colleague Steve Butterworth, who had

been diagnosed with CIDP, a rare neurological condition similar to MS. “The result is that I now work a nine day fortnight which provides me with the right work/life balance.”

The simplicity of **MAXIMISE** can be adopted by any organisation, and Lloyds want to inspire others to take similar action.

As Steve says: “Advancing years and even disability need not be a barrier to fresh opportunities”.

- Responsible Business Awards ^[3]

Case study published: June 2017

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Links:

[1] <http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/>

[2] <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/>

[3] <https://www.bitc.org.uk/list/programmes/responsible-business-awards>