



Management consultants Robert Morison, Tamara Erickson, and Ken Dychtwald coined the word “middlecence” to describe employees in the 34–54-year-old bracket, comprising more than half the workforce in most countries, who are increasingly “burned-out, bottlenecked, and bored.” In their March 2006 *Harvard Business Review* article “Managing Middlecence,” they point out that: “Midcareer employees and managers, who should be at their peak of productivity, are the most disaffected segment of the workforce.” Longer life spans, flatter organizations, and the desire for meaningful work all contribute to the feeling of the blahs which can overcome middlecent workers and in turn undermine enterprise efficiency. The authors offer six ways to revitalize midcareer employees without offering higher salaries or promotions.

- 1) Fresh assignments. A new role in a different branch or department which takes advantage of an existing skill set but also requires new skills and responsibilities can energize employees. One Hewlett-Packard manager interviewed said that, “When you’ve stopped learning, it’s time to move on or step aside.”
- 2) Career changes. Retain proven talent but offer something new. Those bored with a human resources role may relish an assignment in manufacturing, or vice versa.

- 3) Mentoring colleagues. Knowledge-sharing roles may be just the ticket to keep long-term employees engaged and feeling necessary. Think out of the box on this; the mentor can be lower on the corporate ladder than the “student” as long as specialized knowledge is staying in the company.
- 4) Fresh training. Training is not only for the young or new hires. Midcareer employees should retain a love of learning, whether in refresher courses to bring IT skills up to date or in new areas that expand perspectives. Training also supports options 1) and 2).
- 5) Sabbaticals. Although common in academia, sabbaticals in business are neglected. Getting away from the job to undertake community service or receive additional qualifications for a few months can recharge employee energy and benefit the company in terms of good publicity and higher productivity.
- 6) Expanding leadership development. Involvement in leadership programs recognizes an employee’s contributions and allows retention of solid middlecents. Company paybacks include innovations and renewed employee commitment to organizational goals.