



HAPPY TO STAY IN A CRACKER OF A JOB - Cracker Print and Paper

Eighty-four year-old Jim Barron and 71-year-old Audrey Hollingworth are too busy getting on with the job to be thinking about retirement thanks to their employer's age-friendly work practices.

Toowoomba based Cracker Print and Paper employs 24 staff – nine are mature-age, six of these are over 60 while four are under 22 years old.

Manager Geoff McDonald said older employees bring stability to the workplace and reassure younger employees they will still have a job when they get older.

“Younger people appreciate having older people around – they bring a settling influence,” said Geoff. “You can't put a value on that.”

Cracker sales reps Audrey Hollingworth and Jim Barron

Geoff believes in holding onto existing employees rather than continuously struggle to find suitable job applicants from a labour supply depleted by the mining boom.

“We are keen to look after our staff,” said Geoff. “You're better off looking after the one's you've got.”

Cracker offers flexible work options to all employees to fit in with their various life and health issues.

Audrey and Jim are both sales representatives for Cracker and Geoff values the experience and knowledge they bring to his business.

Three years ago Geoff asked Audrey to come out of retirement and return to her old Mount Isa run in return for improved conditions, a better car and flexible hours.

“We talk with Audrey each day when she's on the road and make sure she's okay and the car is okay,” said Geoff.

“Sometimes she can be away for two weeks at a time, so we plan the trips to suit her needs.

”It's amazing the rapport she has with people because they know her – experience comes with age.”

Over the years Audrey and Jim have developed relationships with their clients that are irreplaceable.

Jim has been working in the printing business for 25 years, after 36 years in automotive and transport, and still takes pride in his job.

“Customer satisfaction' is my catch-cry,” said Jim.

“It’s quite amazing,” said Geoff. “Over time he has become a mentor for all of us and inspirational for his clients.”

Jim is a sounding board for other employees who often ask his advice on issues.

“You’ve got to keep the brain working, it has to be exercised, just like the body,” said Jim.

Jim and Audrey have become invaluable employees at Cracker Print and Paper as they not only have a wealth of knowledge and experience, they are respected and motivate colleagues and clients.

“When people ask me ‘when are you going to quit?’ I say ‘how do you know when to knock off?’” said Jim.