2017 Thought Leaders Solutions Forum

Harnessing the Power of a Multigenerational Workforce

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Key Themes from the 2017 Thought Leaders Forum

Overview

As companies and workplaces undergo tremendous transformations due to new technologies, workforces are also being transformed due to the presence of five generations at work. Today's workforce is truly multigenerational. This creates challenges due to different communication styles, work practices, and expectations from employers, but it also creates significant opportunities, as different generations bring different experiences and skills.

Often overlooked is the tremendous value that older workers can add. Myths and misconceptions abound that older workers are not productive or innovative, are resistant to change, are hard to work with, and expect higher pay. The truth is that older workers tend to be reliable, loyal, productive, and open minded. Most older workers are open to change, are interested in learning new things, and can play significant roles in contributing to or leading teams. Employers need to focus on recruiting older workers, providing flexible work arrangements, and helping older workers—and all workers—continue to learn to stay current. By understanding the tremendous value of older workers, organizations can take important steps in harnessing the power of a diverse, multigenerational workforce.

Context

SHRM Foundation's Solutions Forum was held on October 2 and 3, 2017, in Scottsdale, Arizona. This was SHRM Foundation's 19th annual gathering of industry thought leaders. Formerly known as the Thought Leaders Retreat, this event has been rebranded as the Solutions Forum to highlight the goal of providing new strategies and solutions.

As part of SHRM Foundation's overall focus on inclusion issues, this Solutions Forum, "Harnessing the Power of a Multigenerational Workforce," examined issues associated with multiple generations in the workforce, and particularly the aging workforce.

Key Takeaways

The workforce is undergoing radical transformation.

Two major factors driving changes in workforces and workplaces are demographic inevitabilities and technological transformation.

- **Demographics.** There are now five generations represented in the workforce: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Gen Z. Each generation has different ways of communicating, different ways of working, and different expectations from their employers for compensation, benefits, and advancement. These differences between generations often result in tensions and miscommunications, but differences can provide opportunities for diversity and growth.

- **Technology.** Digital technologies are changing how people communicate and work, and technologies such as Big Data, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics are changing the skills that are required in the workforce. These technologies are creating anxiety that some work and workers will become obsolete.

Millennials will soon comprise the majority of the workforce. This generation is very different from other generations along multiple dimensions.

By 2020, Millennials will account for 50% of the U.S. workforce, and Millennials are rapidly moving into managerial positions. Due to this generation's large number and significant clout, Millennials are changing how organizations hire, manage, and retain employees.

Research has found that Millennials want significantly different things from their careers than other demographic groups. Millennials are focused on:

- Purpose, not paychecks.

- Personal development over satisfaction.

- Coaching, rather than being a boss.

- Engaging in ongoing conversations about performance and development, not annual reviews.

- Strengths, not weaknesses.

- Life, not the job.

However, as important as Millennials are to the current and future workforce, only 29% of Millennials are engaged at work. Some 55% are not engaged or are checked out and 16% are actively disengaged. To connect with Millennials at work, employers are encouraged to focus on:

- **Setting clear performance goals and priorities.** Millennials whose managers help set clear goals are far more engaged.

- **Accountability.** When Millennials' managers hold them accountable, they are more likely to be engaged.

- **Ongoing feedback and communication.** Millennials want frequent, two-way communication.

- **Opportunities to learn and grow.** Lack of growth is a primary reason that Millennials change roles.

- **Providing challenge.** Millennials are motivated by challenges and the sense of accomplishment at achieving things that require perseverance and overcoming obstacles.

Hiring and retaining older workers is an enormous untapped opportunity.

Older workers are making up a larger segment of the workforce than ever, a trend that is expected to continue in coming decades as the proportion of people over age 65 continues to grow.

There is a strong business case to be made for older workers.

- Older workers are more engaged and motivated than their coworkers.

- Older workers tend to be more productive.

- Older workers often have a wealth of knowledge to draw on.

- Older workers bring key baseline skills, such as professionalism, problem solving, and self-direction.

- Older workers will often accept lower pay in exchange for flexible hours or greater fulfillment.

However, there are myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes that create obstacles to hiring older workers. Common obstacles include:

- **Ageism and discrimination** against older workers, seen through a rise in age-related discrimination charges. There are examples of discrimination against older workers in the algorithms used by job-search websites, in the way training dollars are allocated, and in the human biases in interviewing, hiring, and assessment processes.

- **Myths and misconceptions**, including notions like "older workers expect higher pay," or "older workers are resistant to change," or "older workers are less innovative and less productive," or "older workers are uncomfortable with technology." These misconceptions are based on stereotypes which are often untrue and are refuted by data and real-world experience.

There are multiple practices and approaches that are effective in creating a more powerful multigenerational workforce.

Throughout this Solutions Forum multiple ideas were shared about ways to create an effective, high-performance multigenerational workforce. Among these ideas were:

- **Understand what workers truly want.** Too often employers guess at what workers want without speaking with them to understand what they want most.

- **Provide flexibility.** There is not a one-size-fits-all solution for each generation or all employees. Employers need to understand what employees want and be flexible in providing it. This includes flexible hours and work arrangements, locations, benefits, projects, and more.

- **Offer opportunities for continuous learning.** The greatest fear for employees is becoming obsolete. The solution is continuous learning.

- **Focus on recruiting older workers.** Older workers often have rare, valuable skills that can provide significant business value. Include age as part of the D&I strategy and create mixed-age teams.

- **Consider new HR tools and policies.** New tools and policies can play a role in hiring, engagement, and retention. For example, tools for hiring can include gamification tools to test skills, and video interviewing. To promote engagement, incubators and hackathons can generate interest in solving key problems. To boost retention, companies can adopt policies around working remotely or phased retirement.

- **Adopt reverse mentoring.** Companies are pairing younger workers with older workers to provide mentoring on new technologies, like social media, and to share insights on the purchasing habits of younger workers. This builds relationships across generations and often results in "mutual mentoring" where younger workers mentor older workers, while older workers also mentor younger workers in areas of expertise.

- **Rethink growth and development.** Long formal training sessions are a thing of the past. Today's reality is that workers spend 1% of their time on training and development, which equates to 24 minutes per week. In this context, learning and development needs to change. It needs to be delivered in small chunks, of differing lengths, accessible on mobile devices. It needs to come from experts who are motivating, and needs to provide a sense of community.

Engaging the Multigenerational Workforce: Research Insights and Best Practices

Michael S. North, Assistant Professor, Management & Organizations, Stern School of Business, New York University

Overview

Older workers are making up a larger part of the workforce than ever, a trend expected to continue in coming decades as the proportion of people over the age of 65 continues to grow. Even with these demographic trends, workplaces are experiencing issues with successfully integrating, using, and valuing older workers. Organizations are also challenged by the negative perceptions that generations have of one another, which is creating tension in the workplace.

To maximize the value of older workers—and of all workers in this multigenerational workforce—it is important to understand what older workers want and how older workers can contribute, and develop strategies to adapt to an aging workforce.

Context

Michael North discussed issues workers are facing in the multigenerational workplace—especially the stereotypes against older workers—and some ways that organizations can successfully overcome these challenges.

> "To overlook these longevity trends is doing society and business a tremendous disservice, especially from a workplace and workforce standpoint."
>
> —*Michael S. North*

Key Takeaways

Older segments of the labor workforce continue to grow as the population ages.

The population is aging. Not only is there a larger proportion of people over the age of 65 than ever before, but this proportion is expected to double in the next 20 to 30 years. As a result, the older segments of the labor force are the only ones projected to grow in the coming decades.
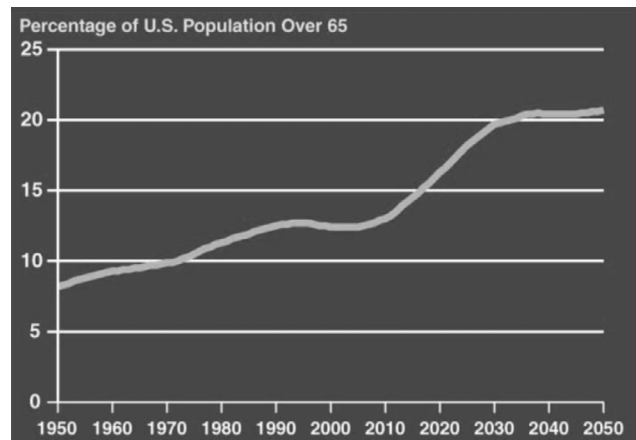
Historically, older workers have been expected to transition out of the workforce and into retirement. Now, they are working longer than ever, which is creating tensions with younger workers who believe these aging employees should be stepping aside as they have in the past.
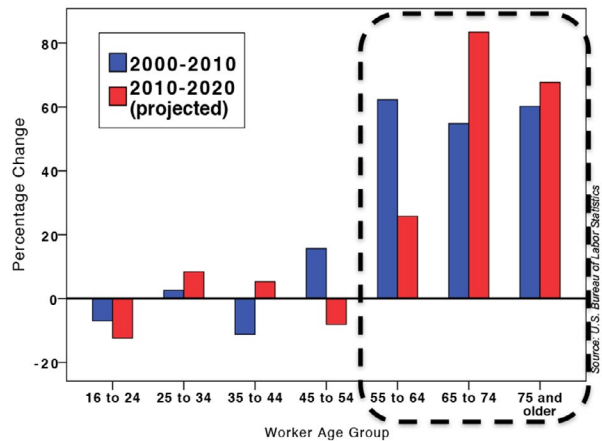
Stereotypes create barriers for older workers in the workforce.

Stereotypes around aging are creating barriers for older workers when it comes to being hired, working, and even being fired. Some examples are:

- **Hiring.** In blind studies, where the same resume was sent out to companies but the age was changed, equally qualified older applicants were 40% less likely to receive callbacks than younger applicants.

- **On the job.** A series of experiments found that people were less likely to allocate training dollars and hours to older employees than equally tenured younger ones.

- **Firing.** Age discrimination charges have risen 47% since 1999.

Older workers face stereotypes and barriers. These include the attitudes of society and employers toward older workers, language used in job descriptions and on the job to deter older employees, and the self-handicapping that older workers can fall susceptible to that are steeped in stereotypes.

Sources of Older Work Barriers

Source	Examples	
Societal and employer attitudes	Older age stereotypes: • Mortality reminder • Nice but incompetent • Useless burden • Societally invisible	Older employee beliefs: • Too costly • Receive less than half of training of younger workers
Coded language	Job descriptions: • Fit in with a young team" • New" or "recent" college graduates • "New blood" • "Willingness to learn" and "high ambition"	Older employee beliefs: • "Over qualified" or poor "cultural fit"
Older worker self-handicapping	Stereotype threat: Using the term "memory task" undermines performance, while using the term "reading comprehension" or "impression formation" enhances performance	Subjective age: How does "how old one feels" affect work performance?

Older workers are also targeted by three prescriptive stereotypes:

- **Succession.** This stereotype is the prescription that older adults should step aside to make way for younger generations.

- **Consumption.** Consumption passively suggests that older people should try not to deplete too much of the shared resources.

- **Identity.** Identity is the idea that older adults should avoid young territory.

Intergenerational tension undermines the newly multi-generational workforce.

An AARP study found that 60% of workers report the presence of generational conflict, with over 70% of older employees dismissing the abilities of their younger colleagues, and nearly 50% of younger colleagues dismissing the abilities of older co-workers. This intergenerational tension—often set in perception and not fact—is causing issues in the multigenerational workplace.

Younger generations are also blaming older generations for economic disparities, as households aged 65 and older are 47 times wealthier than under-30 households. This largest generational wealth gap in history, coupled with an unemployment rate for workers ages 20 to 30 that is more than twice as high as that for those who are 55 or older, is creating a perception that older workers are blocking younger ones from advancing.

Companies must understand what older workers want and can do.

Organizations can better integrate, use, and produce value from older workers by understanding what older workers want to do and are able to do, rather than by making stereotyped assumptions. It is necessary to reject stereotypes and understand truths.

Truths about Wants and Abilities

Assumption About Older Workers	Truth
Expect higher pay	Older workers are often willing to take less money in exchange for flexible hours or greater fulfillment
Resistant to change	Younger workers are the most resistant to change
Lower productivity	There is no overall relationship between age and job performance
Less innovative	There is no evidence that older workers are less innovative than younger workers.
Harder to work with	Managers often prefer older workers to younger ones in terms of reliability, loyalty, professional network, skill level relative to job requirements, and productivity

Companies can also make small, low-cost changes that allow them to tap into the skill sets that older workers can provide.

Four Ways to Adapt to an Aging Workforce

- Offer flexible work arrangements, such as half-retirement options.
- Prioritize older worker skill sets.
- Create new positions or adapt old ones to tap into worker skill sets.
- Change workplace ergonomics.

> "The sad reality is only a handful of organizations have enacted any changes like these. Those that have stand to profit in the long run."
>
> —*Michael S. North*

Generations will work better together if inaccurate perceptions are corrected.

Generations have more success working together, in the workplace and in society, if they can see eye to eye. One key step is correcting inaccurate, negative perceptions generations have about one another.

> "It's not constructive to put generations against one another if we're trying to get them to work better together."
>
> —*Michael S. North*

One perception is the "Lump of Labor" theory, which suggests that older workers are preventing younger workers from succeeding. A Pew Charitable Trust study looking at 40 years of economic data found this perception to be false; as older workers did better, so did younger workers.

Discussion

After the presentation participants raised several areas of discussion:

- **Technology plays a role.** Technology plays a significant role in driving generations further apart, but this does not need to be the case. Organizations are beginning to see the value of training and retraining older workers to bring them up to speed on technology.

- **Public policy can add to challenges.** Current policies, such as regulations around pensions and retirement plans, can make it more difficult for companies to offer flexible arrangements, such as phased retirements, for older workers. Academics, practitioners, and policymakers need to work together to resolve these issues.

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Navigating the Legal & Practical Issues of an Age-Diverse Workforce

Jonathan A. Siegel, Shareholder & Attorney, Jackson Lewis P.C. (Moderator)

Tom Mathews, SVP, Human Resources, Cree

Renetta E. McCann, Chief Talent Officer, Leo Burnett

Michael Poerksen, SHRM-CP, HR and University Relations Consultant

Overview

In today's rapidly changing workplace, many older workers have experienced age-related discrimination. This includes discrimination on job-search websites, human biases in the hiring and advancement process, and systemic issues in organizations, where younger people are often favored.

The most important advice from this panel is the need for workers of any age to engage in continuous learning. As the nature of work changes, employers are demanding new skills—such as analytical capabilities, technological savvy, critical thinking capabilities, and the ability to work in teams. Those who are complacent and are not constantly developing new skills will lose out. Those who continuously adapt and constantly learn will have opportunities, regardless of age.

Context

These experienced panelists, along with session participants, shared insights and experiences about legal and practical issues faced by older workers.

Key Takeaways

Mature workers are extremely concerned about discrimination in the workplace.

Discrimination is defined as unequal treatment of employees based on protected characteristics. Research shows that:

- 64% of workers say they have seen or experienced age discrimination in the workplace
- 58% of adults believe age discrimination begins among workers in their 50s

The experience of session attendees supports this data, as the vast majority said they personally have dealt with age discrimination, or they know a family member, friend, or colleague who has experienced age discrimination.

In 2016, almost 21,000 age discrimination charges were filed with the EEOC and the EEOC collected more than $88 million from these charges. But these EEOC claims and collections are just the tip of the iceberg. They don't include private litigation, settlements, or incidents that were never reported.

The experience of panelists and participants indicates that discrimination for older workers is not always blatant; it can be subtle, but can make it extremely difficult for individuals seeking a new job to get hired and can raise obstacles to existing workers getting promoted. Several stories were shared of extremely capable, well-qualified individuals in their 50s having great difficulty in finding new positions, while less qualified individuals in their 30s found employment much more easily and quickly.

The key obstacles facing mature workers are technological discrimination, human biases, and systemic issues.

Three major hurdles were identified that create challenges for mature workers:

- **Technical discrimination.** Some job search websites may inadvertently exclude older workers. For example, on one site, a drop-down menu that requires you to select the year when you graduated or got your first job only went back to 1980. As a result, they may overlook the experiences and qualifications of mature workers. An outcome is that these technologies can discriminate against older workers and don't appropriately match older workers to jobs. As an example, Michael Poerksen was told by automated websites that he didn't have adequate experience interviewing candidates, despite having interviewed thousands of individuals over 30 years.

Several states, such as Illinois, are currently investigating job search websites to correct the issues that may cause age discrimination.

- **Human biases.** A statistic was shared that 70% of resumes are screened out before a live person even reviews a resume. Once a person reviews a resume, they bring their own biases to the table. For example, a person may look at or ask about what year a person graduated from college, which is assessing a person's age. Also, previously a person who worked for two companies over 25 years, in a series of roles with increasing responsibility, was viewed as stable. Now, managers may view the same person as lacking enough diverse experiences.

  Renetta McCann said in the advertising industry there can be "perceptual issues." For example, since most advertising is directed toward young people there is a perception that an employee needs to be young in order to target the young. A result is that older people, even with significant advertising experience, may be overlooked. Other human biases can include creating job postings that seek "digital natives" or people who are fast-paced, dynamic, creative, and innovative, which might be subtly targeting someone who is young as opposed to someone older.

- **Systemic issues.** Participants observed that in many situations an employer is looking for a very specific set of skills and experiences to fit a very specific role. Unless a person matches a very narrow set of qualifications, they won't be considered. In such situations, older workers may be deemed to be over-qualified, or if a person has worked in multiple industries as opposed to one specific industry, their breadth of experience is viewed as a negative, not a positive.

An audience member advised employers not to look at the year someone graduated but to focus on the skills and capabilities needed in a particular role and to assess how well a person's experience matches what is desired, regardless of age.

Restructurings and a reduction in force can hit older workers harder.

Historically, when an organization undertakes a restructuring or a reduction in force the primary motivation is to reduce costs. Since older workers with more seniority may cost the organization more, older workers often are adversely impacted. The panelists argued that decisions based solely on short-term costs are shortsighted. While older workers may come with greater costs, they also have more knowledge, experience, and critical skills.

One participant believes that companies today have strategic talent plans; when experiencing a restructuring or RIF they are more likely to think about staffing more strategically and not just indiscriminately target those with the highest salaries.

In this changing work environment, older workers have experienced challenges as well as significant successes.

Challenges that all workers face, and particularly older workers, are rapid changes in the types of skills demanded in the workforce. For example, today employers are looking for deep analytical skills and expertise in data science. Few older workers have these skills, putting them at a disadvantage.

In this rapidly evolving environment, what matters most for workers of all ages is engaging in continuous learning to constantly be developing relevant new skills.

While these rapid changes increase the pressure on older workers to adapt and learn, there are success stories. One participant described how a 30-year veteran middle school teacher volunteered to be one of the leads for a pilot of Chromebooks in classrooms. This teacher was not intimidated by technology, saw the need to adapt, and ended up leading younger colleagues.

> "You need to be continuously learning and changing your skills, because the workplace is moving. If you're not learning you're falling behind. It doesn't matter if you're 20 or you're 50, if you're not constantly learning the world of work is going to pass you by really quickly."
>
> —*Participant*

Another success story is that many companies are working to combat age-related discrimination by adopting new policies and practices to create more inclusive workplaces. One example of a practice is offering personal purpose workshops where individuals reflect on their purpose and passions. These can be done by multigenerational cohorts.

Organizations are having success with reverse mentoring and dual mentoring programs.

Several participants mentioned successful reverse mentoring and dual mentoring programs. With reverse mentoring, younger individuals, who are comfortable with technology, serve as mentors for older workers who want to learn more about technology. This builds skills and relationships, and exposes individuals to different roles in the organization.

One individual shared a different model termed "dual mentoring." In this model, individuals—of any age—identify something of value that they can teach to others, and also identify something that they want to learn from someone else. Thus, each person is both a mentor and a mentee. With this model, the role of HR is to match people who want to learn and assist others, which can be an excellent way to get generations talking to and learning from each other.

Discussion

Additional comments and reflections include:

- **Leadership.** One participant argued that as companies wrestle with age-related issues, a company's behavior is based on the behavior of its leaders, particularly the CEO and CHRO.

- **Fear of litigation.** In some cases, companies could implement more creative policies that would be attractive to older workers, such as phased retirement or encouragement to downshift, however many employment laws have not caught up to these practices. So companies may be reluctant to try them for fear of litigation and discovery.

  HR engages in both talent management and risk management. While various policies might be beneficial to some older workers, such policies could expose a company to legal risks, which prevents companies from pursuing these policies.

- **Tips for transition.** For anyone going through transition, Michael Poerksen suggested:

  1. *Don't neglect your local HR network.* People are often so focused on their online network that they forget to constantly nurture their local network.

  2. *Take care of your LinkedIn profile.* Keep it up to date and secure recommendations, which speak to your character.

  3. *Embrace support.* During transitions, it is important to have support from family, friends, and coworkers.

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Five Generations in the Workplace: Real World Issues & Solutions

Neddy Perez, Principal Consultant, D&I Creative Solutions

Overview

The multigenerational makeup of the modern workplace is a driving force of change for organizations. Companies are finding they need to be flexible to handle the vast differences in their employees—from Baby Boomers to Generation Z—in areas ranging from the use of technology to expectations around how the company will interact with them, support them, and allow them to do their jobs.

This workplace makeup is also behind trends in HR policies and tools, from the hiring process to benefits offered.

Context

Neddy Perez discussed the multigenerational workplace and the opportunities and challenges it is presenting to companies.

Key Takeaways

Today's multigenerational workplace is like being a part of "Modern Family."

Today's multigenerational workplace has similarities to the popular television sitcom "Modern Family," complete with misunderstandings and disagreements. Just like the family members in the show, employees—regardless of which generations they belong to—want to be accepted for who they are and what they bring to the table.

When it comes to Millennials and Generation Z, they need to immediately see and understand the value they bring to the organization. If they don't see themselves adding value to the company, they don't hesitate to leave, but they are also open to returning later.

Companies see benefits in encouraging top talent to return and some are spending money on alumni associations to stay in contact with former employees. Others like UPS, which once discouraged former employees from returning, are changing their culture to invite former employees back.

The multigenerational organization provides opportunities for change.

The multigenerational workplace is offering other opportunities that companies and their HR departments can take advantage of, including those shown below.

Opportunities in the Multigenerational Workplace	
Communication	Interact with employees and prospects in the way they want to be communicated with, such as phone, email, or text.
Expectations for advancement	Make expectations around advancement clear to employees, and understand their plans and expectations as well.
Work differently	Remain open to different ways of working; recognize that people and generations may have different ways of approaching work, such as adding an element of fun into the task.
Take a stand/make a statement	Millennials and Generation Z, in particular, believe in collaborating and mobilizing others to take a stand and support their beliefs, and will look to their companies to make statements or be involved.

For example, Intel engaged its Millennial employees in a conversation on how the company should discuss and respond to President Trump's stance on immigration. The employee resource groups had input into the redesign of the company's position on the immigration issue.

> "Millennials and Gen Zs are willing to take a stand for what they believe in regardless of what's happening in the work environment or in the world."
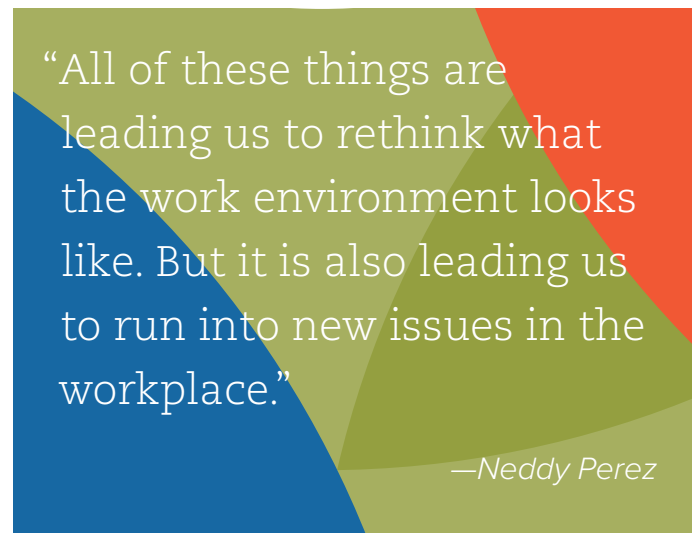>
> —Neddy Perez

The changing workplace is impacting trends in HR tools and policies.

The multigenerational workforce is now driving change in HR practices and policies.

Impact on HR Practices

HR Area	Trends
Hiring	• Gaming is growing as a way to test skills during the hiring process, and allow the prospect to see potential fit with the company culture • Artificial intelligence is being used to quickly assess resumes for top prospects • Video interviewing is increasing • College recruiting tools, such as Piazza, are giving companies insight into which students are studying in specific fields and how well they are doing in their studies
Engagement	• Internal Shark Tank/incubator teams are being used for idea generation • "Wisdom of the Crowd" tools such as Yammer and LinkedIn are helping solve problems and surface ideas • Hackathons are driving employee engagement and solving problems
Culture	• Companies are increasing internal communication and are providing platforms for feedback • Firms have initiatives and activities focusing on corporate social responsibility, including the environment
Retention & loyalty	• Boomers want to stay in the workforce longer but want to work on a part-time basis or have a transition plan • Gen Xers want to know when they will be vice presidents • Millennials and Gen Zs want quality of life and opportunities to develop skills
Benefits	• Companies are adding benefits like parental leave, pet care/insurance, paid social involvement, and paid vacations

In light of workplace changes, organizations are finding themselves facing new scenarios, from the employee who needs to bring their pet to work for the day because their pet sitter couldn't make it, to employees who want to work from home for the week, where "home" for that particular week is in Greece. Employees are also expecting flexibility outside the workplace, allowing them to have an online image that is separate from their work life, or enabling them to work part-time in the gig economy, for instance as an Uber driver.

> "All of these things are leading us to rethink what the work environment looks like. But it is also leading us to run into new issues in the workplace."
>
> —Neddy Perez

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Longer Lives: Opportunities and Challenges for the Workplace

Ursula Staudinger, Founding Director, Robert N. Butler Columbia Aging Center

Overview

As human life expectancy increases and the quality of life in the older years improves, older adults are more likely to stay in the workforce longer. As this shift occurs, rethinking how people live their lives can help provide the work-life balance that many people seek as they look to remain employed longer. Still, the myths of what people can and cannot do are often challenging for older workers and for their workplaces. These myths—such as "productivity declines with age" and "older people have difficulty learning new things"—need to be refuted and the realities of an aging workforce better understood.

Context

Ursula Staudinger shared studies and findings that debunked—or in some cases, supported—the seven myths about older people.

Key Takeaways

Society needs to embrace that people are living longer.

In just the last 100 years, the average life expectancy has increased by 30 years, but the way society thinks about how we live our lives has not changed. It is time to rethink the classical sequential life structure, and instead consider a more parallel way to construct our lives.

Today's sequential lifestyle encourages people to:

- Start with education
- Move into working for the middle of life
- Partake in private life at the end

Longer lifespans make it easier for people to construct their lives in a parallel way, moving in and out of private life with episodes of work and learning interspersed. This parallel method allows for a better work-life balance throughout life.

But society and the workplace struggle with making these changes and allowing people to make use of their longer lives because of seven myths around aging.

> "We should use our longer lives to distribute our lifetime differently to allow us to accommodate the different priorities that we have in life in a better way."
>
> —Ursula Staudinger

Myth #1: A person's chronological age is informative.
False

Staudinger advises moving beyond the chronological age when considering productivity and efficiency, as age does not indicate what a person can do, what they would like to do, or what their priorities or attitudes are.

People are living longer lives as a result of concerted efforts in healthcare and education—efforts which could be reversed by something like the obesity epidemic—and they are living more years as active adults. A Denmark study showed that in 1987 a 75-year-old man could expect to live 8.5 additional years, but half of that time would be dependent on others. In 2005 a 75-year-old man could expect to live another 9.5 years, with only one-third of that time dependent on others.

Studies also show that someone who is 70 today has the same health profile of a 60-year-old in a previous generation.

Myth #2: As we get older, we have difficulties learning new things.
False

Those who are not continuously engaged and challenged do have difficulties learning new things. But adults who are active and regularly experience change, and who are challenged, are able to adapt and learn, even as they age.

Studies have shown that older people who remain active with regular exercise at a moderate level of exertion, such as walking, experience improvement with the speed at which they can process new information.

> "As we get older, the brain needs more and more activity to compensate for some age-related changes."
>
> —Ursula Staudinger

Regularly challenging employees through task modification and retraining also helps employees engage their brains and continue to learn.

Myth #3: Productivity declines with age.
False

Productivity doesn't decline with age; instead, older and more experienced employees are less likely to commit mistakes. One study focusing on age-mixed teams in a manufacturing environment found that older employees with longer tenure committed fewer errors.

Myth #4: Life priorities stay the same across the lifespan.
False

Priorities—especially the importance of work—change across a person's life. A 2000 study of German workers found that work was the top priority for people ages 20 to 35, it fell to the second ranked priority between the ages of 35 and 54, and then wasn't even a top four priority after age 54.

Life Priorities

Age range	Priorities (in rank order)
21-34	Work, friends, family, independence
35-54	Family, work, friends, cognitive fitness
55-65	Family, health, friends, cognitive fitness
65-85	Family, health, cognitive fitness, friends
86-104	Health, family, thinking about life, cognitive fitness

This de-prioritization of work for older employees is skewed, however, as at the time of the study, German employees expected subsidized early retirement in their early middle years. This expectation has changed as demographics have changed; in 1996, 50% of Germans between the ages of 40 and 60 expected to retire by age 60, while in 2014, only 15% expected to retire by that age.

People often underestimate the importance of work in their lives while they are still working. That feeling of being needed is one of the most important determinants for staying in the workforce. Those who do stay in the workforce react less to pay and promotion, and more to rewards around their experience, such as opportunities to collaborate. They also value worktime flexibility, and derive pride and value from their work.

Myth #5: Older employees are less flexible and open.
It depends

People of all ages are more likely to remain flexible and open if they feel empowered and are given the skills to be successful in a new environment. Positive feedback also helps these employees take on new roles and participate in new scenarios. If employees are given the right opportunities and circumstances to be successful, they are much more likely to seek out more new experiences, regardless of age.

Myth #6: Age heterogeneity at work supports productivity.
It depends

The idea that workers of the same age are more likely to be productive than those of different ages is true in some scenarios. But combining older and younger adults can also boost the cognitive performance of older adults, and foster prosocial behavior and a lack of egocentrism in younger adults.

When older and younger people work together, fluency of thought for the older person can improve with only 30 minutes of interactions. However, this is only true if the older adult can provide advice to the younger one, such as in a life problem. In other problems, such as media, where the younger person has the advantage, the older adult's ability dampens.

Myth #7: What others—and you—think about aging affects aging.

True

Stereotypes negatively impact the productivity of older workers. In a study of age stereotypes within companies, those firms with weaker stereotype were more productive. Employees at these companies had a higher level of motivation and investment in their work. Older workers were also more confident in their ability to succeed when they felt their supervisors were supportive of their learning engagements.

Old age stereotypes also impact the turnover rate of younger employees. Companies with the weaker old age stereotype saw a lower turnover rate than the companies with the stronger stereotype, as younger workers recognize how older employees are treated.

> "Younger workers see what is happening with their older colleagues and they try to switch companies to where they see all the workers are treated more fairly and supportively."
>
> —*Ursula Staudinger*

The Workplace of the Future: New Ways to Engage Multiple Generations

Karie Willyerd, Head, Global Customer Education and Learning, SAP

Overview

As the workforce and workplace rapidly evolve due to demographic and technological changes, what people want to learn at work and how they are learning is changing. People want to learn skills that make them valuable to the organization and prevent them from becoming obsolete. Yet, as important as learning and development are, on average employees only devote 1% of their time (24 minutes per week) to learning and development.

To help employees grow in this environment, the corporate learning function must understand today's realities and must make the learning experience engaging. Learning must be purposeful, convenient, varied, social, challenging, and led by experts who are motivating. Examples of successful learning initiatives include reverse and mutual mentoring, peer-to-peer learning, and curation.

Context

Karie Willyerd discussed major changes in the workforce, shared what today's learners want, described the implications for the learning function, and offered suggestions for senior HR professionals.

Key Takeaways

The future workforce will be dramatically different.

The major changes affecting the workforce are demographic and technological.

- **Demographic inevitabilities.** Baby Boomers—born from 1946 to 1964—are today the largest generation in the workforce and in management positions. However, about 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 each day and the majority (about 80%) still retire shortly after turning 65. As shown below, there are not enough Gen Xers to fill all of the positions that Baby Boomers are vacating, meaning Millennials will need to step into these roles.

  Previously, developing a leadership pipeline was a 20- to 25-year process. But that is an old way of thinking. Changes will have to be made to get Millennials ready for big jobs very quickly.

Shifting Generational Demographics
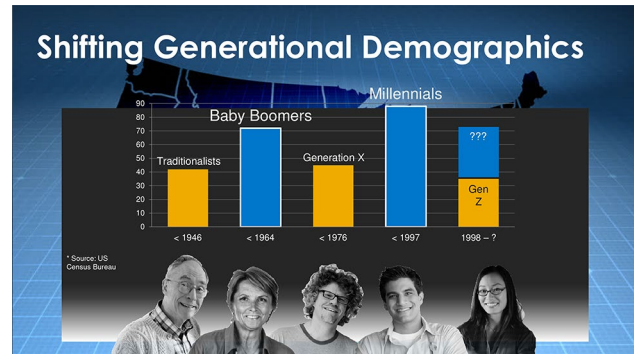
"The talent challenge of the next decade is getting Millennials ready really fast for really big jobs."

—Karie Willyerd

- **Technological transformations.** Digitalization is happening at an unprecedented rate, which affects all company processes. New technologies that are rapidly transforming the world of work include Big Data, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

  These technologies are impacting the user experiences of customers and employees. Consider the impact of technology on remote work. Today coworkers can collaborate virtually for years without ever meeting in person. Advancing technologies will further enhance what people can do remotely.

  In addition to changing how people work, technologies like machine learning are creating workplace anxiety. When asked what worries them most at work, employees are most concerned about their position changing or becoming obsolete.

What do people worry about most at work?

Position changing or becoming obsolete	40%
Not enough resources	35%
Inadequate staffing	31%
Wage stagnation	27%
Technology changes	19%
Economic uncertainty	19%
Layoffs	18%
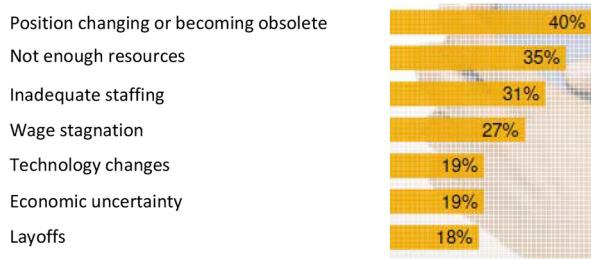
McKinsey & Company has developed on online engine called "Will a Robot Take My Job?" that assesses how likely it is for each of 700 jobs to be taken by a robot. The good news for HR professionals is that only 14% of a human resources manager's job can be done by a robot.

Will a Robot Take My Job?

Enter your occupation

Source: McKinsey&Company

### To know what corporate learners want, study Peloton.

Amid these demographic and technological changes in the workforce and workplace, a relevant question is, "What do learners want?"

Answers can be found by looking at Peloton, an exercise bike with a video screen that connects users to live and on-demand spin classes. Peloton's experience has 10 elements that apply to learners.

1. **Convenience.** Billed as "a private indoor cycling studio in your home," exercisers can participate in live spin classes or on-demand classes of varying lengths, accessible at any time. This provides convenience in terms of time and location.

2. **Access to experts.** The instructors are all experts and users can sign up for classes led by their preferred instructors, whom they like and trust.

3. **Challenge.** The instructors are trained to challenge the participants. Being challenged provides a sense of satisfaction when accomplishing results and making progress.

4. **Feedback.** Users get extensive real-time feedback on their exercise experience, with data and progress reports on all types of metrics. This provides an element of gamification that makes the experience motivating and addicting.
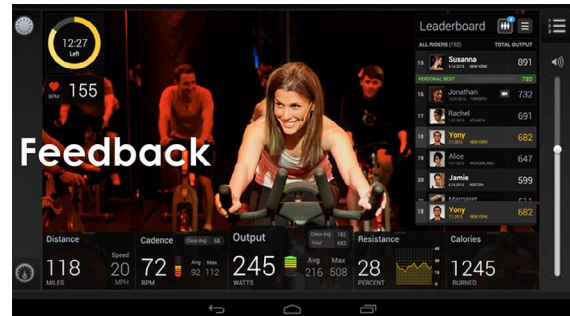
5. **Variety.** Peloton provides a wide range of live streaming classes, of different lengths, with different instructors, along with over 4,000 on-demand classes. The variety includes bike rides with scenery from beautiful spots around the world.

6. **Motivation.** The instructors are not just experts; they are master motivators who inspire people to achieve their best performance.

> "Too often companies have instructors who are experts but who don't motivate. Peloton's instructors are experts who are great motivators. That's what companies need."
>
> —Karie Willyerd

7. **Purpose.** Peloton doesn't just sell an exercise bike or a spin class; the company taps into the importance of purpose as a motivator by asking people why they ride.

8. **Social.** Peloton has made home-based exercise a community experience by allowing people from across the world to join together.

9. **Be with my people.** People are motivated when they are connected with a tribe of like-minded people. Peloton brings this to life.

10. **Mobile.** Peloton now has a mobile app that allows people to ride their bike outdoors, track their results, and have the same Peloton experience.

All of these elements are directly applicable to factors that engage corporate learners: making learning convenient and easily accessible in portions of differing lengths; providing access to motivating experts; having variety and challenge; providing frequent feedback; and making the experience social.
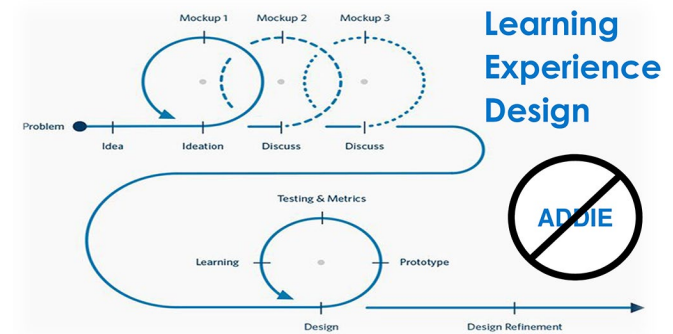
The elements of mobile, social, and variety resonate strongly with Millennials. In addition, so do the elements of purpose and challenge. They want development activities that challenge them and provide satisfaction when achieved.

For the corporate learning function, accessibility and design thinking are keys.

In addition to understanding what learners want, it is also necessary to understand realities related to learning. Two critical realities are:

- **Learning is messy: It is not a linear, structured event.** It is a disorderly, messy process. And, the more difficult the learning and the transformation, the messier the process will be.

- **Learning receives little time.** Researchers from Deloitte Consulting found that in the typical workweek, employees devote 1% of their time to training and development, which is only 24 minutes per week. Training and development receives so little time because people are overwhelmed, distracted, and impatient.

> "The reality of learning today is that it's 24 minutes per week."
>
> —*Karie Willyerd*

So the Reality of Learning Today:
24 Minutes A Week

Corporate learning needs to respond by developing learning that fits within these realities. This means developing learning experiences in small, engaging, easily digestible pieces, and using design thinking. Design or agile thinking involves ideation, mockups, testing, and constant improvement. It is operating in permanent beta mode.

Learning Experience Design

By developing learning using a design thinking process, organizations can incorporate all 10 of the elements demonstrated by Peloton that get at what users want.

What learners want	What learning organizations can do
• Convenience • Mobile • Variety	• Design short modules that can be combined • Design for mobile access • Make easily findable • Multiple formats
• Challenge • Motivation • Purpose	• Inspirational and visionary content • Reinforcement and gamification • Access to a cohort
• Access to experts • Feedback	• Mentoring • Social platforms with other learners • Performance metrics and virtual help
• Social • With my people	• Live events, virtual or location-based • Interest-based cohorts

Examples of effective learning initiatives that get at what learners want and that deal with today's learning realities are:

- **Reverse mentoring.** Several companies, such as American Express, have initiated reverse mentoring programs where younger workers are connected to older workers for mentoring on social media and technology. It turns out, these younger mentors provide even broader mentoring on topics such as how younger generations think and how they make purchasing decisions. And, the mentoring goes both ways as the older workers share wisdom and advice. Reverse mentoring often turns out to be "mutual mentoring."

- **Curation.** Increasingly, learning is not merely provided in classes; it involves curating information and content so learners can easily find what they need.

- **Peer-to-peer.** Often, the best learning comes from interactions with peers, such as a store manager from one location sharing with managers in other locations a tip that drove sales. The role of corporate learning becomes to identify "centers of expertise," facilitate connections, and manage communities.

HR professionals can stay current and connected by building and nurturing a diverse network.

In this rapidly changing world, a common question for professionals in all functions is what can be done to stay current. Karie Willyerd offered advice from her book Stretch (and suggested buying the book for far more information). Her leading suggestion for staying current is to build a diverse network that includes people with whom you have:

- **Strong ties.** This includes family and very close friends. They will provide valuable support during a transition, but this group is often not very diverse or widely connected.

- **Weak ties.** It is through your weak ties that the most valuable connections often come. A person may have weak ties with up to 150 people. This doesn't include everyone you are connected with on LinkedIn or Facebook; it is people with whom you have a real professional relationship. To sustain the relationship, touch base with each person at least once per year.

In addition, pick "5 to thrive." These are five diverse, smart individuals who motivate you, inspire you, cause you to think differently and creatively, and help you become better. Plan to meet with each of these individuals at least once per quarter.

Other Important Points

- **Bloom's taxonomy.** While learning is messy, Bloom's taxonomy is an instructional design approach that uses hierarchical models to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity. It tries to make learning a little more systematic and categorized.

- **Helicopter parents.** The majority of HR people have experienced Baby Boomer parents who are involved in the interview process with their Millennial children. Parents also frequently get involved in the personnel review and reprimand process. Instead of fighting this trend, some employers are tapping into it by having "bring your parent to work day." This can create good will with parents and actually lead to higher retention among Millennials, who listen to parental career advice.

SHRM Foundation

Integrating Millennials into the Workplace

Melissa Louis, Managing Consultant, Gallup Workplace Solutions Practice

Overview

Gallup has gathered data representing 98% of the world's population and analyzed information on over 2.5 million managers and more than 27 million employees. This wealth of information reinforces how Millennials are transforming workplaces. As the largest demographic group in the labor force, Millennials are affecting how organizations hire, manage, and retain employees. To engage the Millennial workforce, organizations must focus on job clarity and priorities, accountability, ongoing feedback and communication, and development opportunities. Experience has shown that strong relationships between managers and employees are the key to harnessing the talents of a multigenerational workforce.

Context

Melissa Louis shared insights from Gallup's research on the Millennial generation and how they want to work and live.

Key Takeaways

The world of work is evolving at a rapid pace.

Five trends affecting the world of work are:

- **Demographics—Millennials & Women.** From a demographic perspective, Millennials will make up 50% of the U.S. workforce by 2020 and 75% by 2025. Women are more educated than ever and represent a larger portion of the workforce than in the past. Gallup found that 54% of women in the United States with children under the age of 18 would prefer to stay home. This is surprising, given all the work that has been done to help women break through the glass ceiling.

- **The war for talent.** There is currently a leadership deficit. To address the war on talent, organizations must focus on developing emerging leaders with a global mindset. Getting the right talent at the leadership level sets the tone for the rest of the organization.

- **Rethinking performance and productivity.** Performance management is evolving. Real performance development won't happen, however, until organizations shift away from systems that focus on "'rating or not rating" paradigms.

- **Globalization.** Organizations are now operating in a world where boundaries don't exist.

- **Technology disrupters and enablers.** Technology can be an enabler or a disrupter, especially when it comes to older generations in the workforce. New technologies include big data, collaboration platforms, the Internet of Things, robots, automation, wearables, and more.

Millennials seek different things from the workplace than other demographic groups.

There are 73 million Millennials in the U.S. today, born between 1980 and 1996. They range in age from 21 to 37. Many have already been part of the workforce for 10 to 12 years. In 2015, Millennials overtook Baby Boomers as America's largest age group in the labor force. By 2020, they are expected to represent nearly 50% of the workforce.

U.S. Labor Force by Generation, 1995-2015

In millions
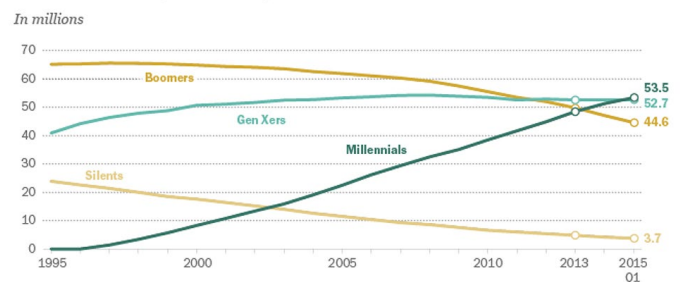
Note: Annual averages plotted 1995-2014. For 2015 the first quarter average of 2015 is shown. Due to data limitations, Silent generation is overestimated from 2008-2015.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of monthly 1995-2015 Current Population Surveys, Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Gallup's research has found that Millennials are seeking different things from their careers than other demographic groups. Their preferences fall along six dimensions:

1. **Focus on purpose, rather than paychecks.** Unlike other demographic groups, Millennials are more purpose driven. Since they grew up in a tumultuous time, they want to ensure that their work and their employers have a greater purpose to society. To attract Millennials, organizations must articulate their purpose in their employment branding and during recruiting.

2. **Focus on personal development over satisfaction.** Millennials like to multitask, and the top performers in this group are looking for on-the-job development. Employers should communicate to Millennials that they will work in challenging environments where they will learn a lot quickly. The more you can convey development opportunities in hiring and recruiting processes, the more likely your organization will be to attract the strongest Millennial candidates.

3. **Focus on coaching, rather than being a boss.** Traditional command-and-control approaches to management don't work anymore. Millennials are looking for feedback and mentoring relationships with their bosses. Organizations must focus on putting the right people in management roles.

4. **Engage in ongoing conversations, not annual reviews.** Frequent feedback in the moment is what matters most to Millennials.

5. **Focus on strengths, not weaknesses.** The more organizations can put employees in roles that they are naturally good at, the more likely they are to excel. With Millennials, it is important to focus on their strengths and identify multiple paths to the same outcomes based on those strengths.

6. **Focus on life, rather than the job.** Millennials are seeking more work-life integration. Since they are marrying and having children later, Millennials tend to see their jobs as a defining feature of their lives.

> "With Millennials, focus on their strengths and identify multiple paths to the same outcomes based on their strengths. It's all about harnessing people's potential to make them great."
>
> —*Melissa Louis*

When it comes to employee engagement:

- Only 29% of Millennials are engaged in the workplace

- 16% are actively disengaged

- 55% are not engaged or are "checked out"

Engaged employees are emotionally and psychologically connected to what they do. The actively disengaged are unhappy and vocal, doing more harm to an organization than good. For employers, it is troubling that high numbers of Millennials are checked out and looking for other jobs. Research shows that 21% of Millennials have changed jobs in the last year and only 50% plan to be with their existing company next year.

Millennials are highly diverse, but suffer from high rates of unemployment and underemployment.

Millennials are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation. Around half (54%) identify as non-Hispanic white and around half (47%) identify as Hispanic, non-Hispanic black, Asian, other, and undesignated. Many Millennials want to work for inclusive organizations. Inclusivity may be defined based on race, qualifications, or other criteria. The more that organizations can incorporate inclusiveness into their hiring strategies and development plans, the more likely they will be to retain Millennial employees.

Unfortunately, Millennials have the highest rates of unemployment and underemployment. Of Millennials who want to work, 7% are jobless and 10% are employed part-time but would prefer to find full-time jobs. They are the most educated group from an age demographic standpoint, but have failed to get great jobs after graduation. On average, Millennials have $30,000 of student loan debts. They are likely to live at home with their parents, earn less money, delay marriage, and depend on technology. Millennials are much more politically independent than other demographic groups: 44% are independents.

To leverage the Millennial workforce, employers must focus on job clarity, accountability, ongoing feedback, and development.

To leverage the Millennial workforce, employers must pay attention to:

1. **Job clarity and priorities.** Close to three quarters of millennials (72%) who strongly agree that their manager helps

them set performance goals are engaged. When setting job expectations for employees, it is important to develop them collaboratively, articulate them clearly, aim them at excellence, and individualize them to employee strengths. Interestingly, Millennials have a harder time prioritizing work responsibilities than other groups. Around half of Millennials (54%) know how to prioritize work responsibilities compared to 71% in other demographic groups.

2. **Accountability.** Almost 60% of Millennials who report that their manager holds them accountable are engaged in their work.

3. **Ongoing feedback and communication.** Millennials want more frequent, two-way communication. Yet, they aren't likely to ask for it. They expect managers to approach them. Organizations must think about conversations related to role and relationship orientation. When a new employee comes on board, organizations must set very clear expectations about what the job is. It is important to get feedback from the employee about how expectations need to be adjusted to suit their personality and what they are looking for from the job. Quick connects are also important; for example, touching base as you walk by in the hall. In addition, it's a good idea to have formal check-ins once a week or once a month. Other important forms of feedback and communication include developmental coaching and progress reviews.

4. **Opportunities to learn and grow.** Nearly all employees (93%) say that the last time they changed roles, they left their employer in order to learn and grow. This is discouraging since many development opportunities exist within organizations. Those opportunities must be more clearly articulated, but it can be challenging to do so in matrixed organizations. Millennials are job hoppers: 6 in 10 are open

to different job opportunities and only half plan to be with their company one year from now. Yet, Millennials who are engaged at work are 64% less likely to say they will switch jobs if the job market improves in the next 12 months compared with those who are actively disengaged.

Performance Management Model

"The one thing I want you to take away is the more you can talk about development and continue to focus on it throughout the employee life cycle, the more likely you are to retain Millennials."

—Melissa Louis

Five Conversations That Drive Performance

Establish Expectations	Continually Coach			Create Accountability
1 Role and Relationship Orientation	**2** Quick Connect	**3** Check-In	**4** Developmental Coaching	**5** Progress Review
Onboarding (1–3 hours)	Daily (5–15 minutes)	Regular Intervals (Weekly/Monthly) (30 minutes–1 hour)	As Opportunities Arise (30 minutes–1 hour)	Twice Each Year (1–2 hours)
• Role orientation • Understand and appreciate strengths • Build engagement and collaboration • Establish expectations and priorities	• Emails, phone calls and hallway conversations • Successes: What is going well and why? • Barriers: What is getting in your way that I can help with?	• Expectations - Touch base - Workload - Goals - Needs • Successes and barriers • Align and set priorities	• Immediate feedback following performance • Scheduled skills training • Strengths coaching • Engagement action planning	• My purpose • My goals • My metrics • My development • My strategy • My team • My life

CULTIVATING INDIVIDUALIZED DEVELOPMENT ———————→

Disrupt Aging! The Business Case for Hiring and Retaining Mature Workers

Libby Sartain, Vice Chair, AARP Board of Directors

Overview

The prevalence of ageism—not just in the workplace but in society and in ourselves—and a continuing belief in common but false myths make it difficult for older workers to get hired and participate in the workforce today.

But hiring and retaining mature workers benefits businesses in more ways than just complying with the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA). Older workers are often more engaged and motivated than younger workers, bring more baseline skills—like professionalism, problem solving, and self-direction—to their jobs, and can share knowledge with other employees.

Context

Libby Sartain discussed how ageism is still prevalent, even though humans are living longer, healthier lives. She shared how businesses can benefit from employing older workers, and discussed steps organizations can take to hire and retain aging employees.

Key Takeaways

Aging today is about growth, new opportunities, and contribution.

The old stereotypes about aging—that it's about decline, that it presents only challenges, and that older people are burdens—need to change to reflect the reality of how people are living longer and healthier lives. Today, aging is about growth, creating new opportunities, and seeing older people as contributors.

> "We're changing the way we age. We're staying healthier longer and our lives are full."
>
> —*Libby Sartain*

As the human lifespan continues to lengthen (people born in developed countries in 2007 or later are likely to live well past age 100), the way society thinks about how people live their longer lives also needs to change. People will no longer work from age 25 to 65 and then live another 40 years not doing anything; they will live less linear lives, moving in and out of jobs and education to try new things.

This change to how people work means that HR needs to change as well. Companies may need to offer career development programs that allow, and even guide, employees to work for a bit, leave to pursue another interest, and then return, potentially in a different role.

Ageism is prevalent in society, the workplace, and ourselves.

Job postings, everyday conversations, and even websites reflect prejudices against older workers. But ageism isn't just confined to the workplace; it is prevalent in society and ourselves.

Examples of Subliminal Ageism in the Workplace

Hidden in Job Postings	Hidden in Conversations
• Super fun • Young • Dynamic • Digital native • Years of experience • Website photos of staff showing only younger employees	• You remind me of my mom! • Back in the pre-historic era I used to work in sales. • I like this candidate, but I don't think we can afford him. • You're on Snapchat? Really?

Three reasons why people are ageist:

- **We don't think of ourselves as old.** "Old" almost always means "older than me." People often perceive conversations about age as about people other than themselves.

- **We believe getting old is a choice.** There is tremendous emotional motivation to believe it is within a person's power to slow or prevent aging. Articles and ads about "anti-aging" solutions are an example of a way this belief is perpetuated.

- **We believe employer rules.** Even though age discrimination in the workplace is illegal, people still believe that long-held myths are true, including that older workers cost companies more in insurance costs or that they are not as tech-savvy as younger workers.
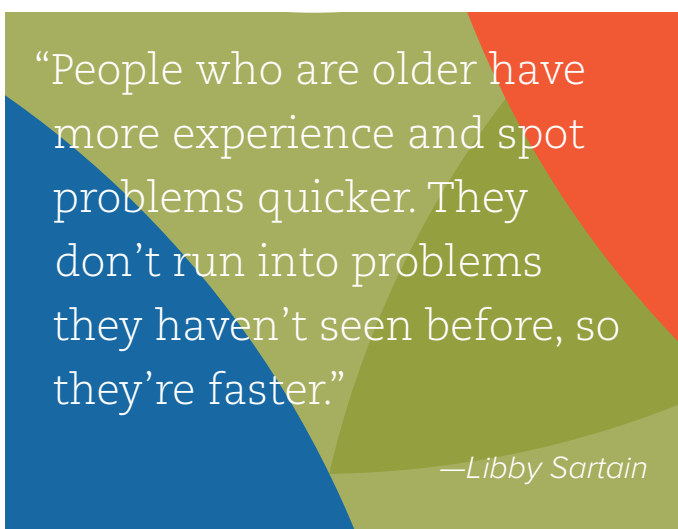
Ms. Sartain shared her own experience with insurance costs when she ran benefit plans. The most costly insurance claims came not from older workers due to illness or disability, but from parental claims for premature births.

Many common myths around aging workers' productivity and skills are false.

Ageism in the workplace is supported by several common but false myths that focus on productivity, comfort with technology, and desire to learn.
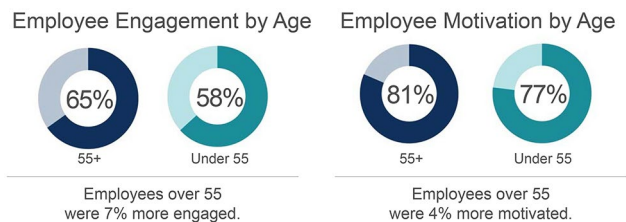
Three Common Myths about Older Workers

Myth	Fact
Older workers are slow and can't keep up with their younger counterparts.	Productivity actually increases with age, even in an environment requiring substantial physical activity.
Older workers are uncomfortable with technology and unable to learn new technologies.	On average, computer programmers in their 50s had higher reputation scores in online forums than younger users.
Older workers are coasting toward retirement and are not interested in learning new skills.	More than 8 in 10 workers ages 45 to 65 say that the opportunity to learn something new is an essential element in their job.

> "People who are older have more experience and spot problems quicker. They don't run into problems they haven't seen before, so they're faster."
>
> —*Libby Sartain*

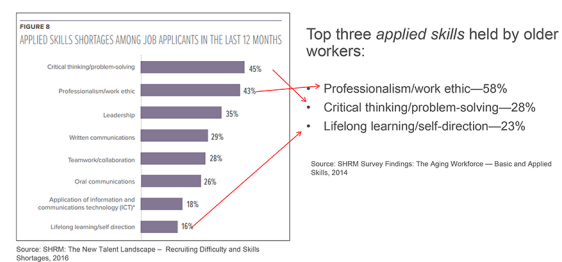## Older workers are more engaged and motivated than their co-workers.

By 2024, workers age 55 and older will be the largest age demographic in the workforce, comprising about 25% of total employees, compared to just under 12% in 1994. Companies will benefit from hiring and retaining these employees, as older workers are engaged, motivated, rich in applied skills and experience, and at a lower risk of turnover.

An AARP study found that older employees are 7% more engaged and 4% more motivated than those under 55. Younger workers under 50 also had a higher unexpected turnover rate (49%) compared to employees 50 and over (29%).

Employee Engagement by Age

65% 55+   58% Under 55

Employees over 55 were 7% more engaged.

Employee Motivation by Age

81% 55+   77% Under 55

Employees over 55 were 4% more motivated.

Older workers also bring with them applied or baseline skills, which in a 2016 SHRM survey, many businesses said were lacking in applicants. The top three applied skills older workers bring are professionalism and work ethic, critical thinking and problem solving, and lifelong learning and self-direction.

Rich in Applied Skills & Experience

FIGURE 8
APPLIED SKILLS SHORTAGES AMONG JOB APPLICANTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

Critical thinking/problem-solving	45%
Professionalism/work ethic	43%
Leadership	35%
Written communications	29%
Teamwork/collaboration	28%
Oral communications	26%
Application of information and communications technology (ICT)*	18%
Lifelong learning/self direction	16%

Top three *applied skills* held by older workers:
- Professionalism/work ethic—58%
- Critical thinking/problem-solving—28%
- Lifelong learning/self-direction—23%

Source: SHRM Survey Findings: The Aging Workforce — Basic and Applied Skills, 2014

Source: SHRM: The New Talent Landscape – Recruiting Difficulty and Skills Shortages, 2016

Companies benefit from a multigenerational workforce that includes older workers.

Organizations that leverage the multigenerational workforce and include older workers will benefit from the diversity in ages and experience. Strategies that companies can implement to take advantage of these benefits:

- **Include age in your D&I (diversity & inclusion) strategy.** Only 8% of companies include age categories in their D&I strategies. Adding this metric enables companies to be more proactive in hiring and retaining older employees.

- **Focus on recruiting older workers.** In addition to the skills and experience older workers bring, in some businesses hiring older workers can also help a business market to and better understand its client base.

- **Create mixed-age teams.** When managed well, multi-generational teams improve organizational performance for both older and younger workers. Age diversity has a positive effect on teams performing both creative tasks and decision-making tasks.

- **Be flexible.** Employees both young and old benefit from the flexibility of being able to move among work, education, and caregiving life stages. This flexibility can include offering work-at-home options, phased retirement programs that allow people to work part-time, and caregiving leave.

> "If we want to attract some of the best and brightest, we're going to have to figure out how to make these flexible arrangements work."
>
> —*Libby Sartain*

Discussion

After the presentation, participants made several observations:

- **Gig work plays a role.** Older workers often enjoy gig work, such as driving for Uber or freelancing, as it gives them time to spend with family or volunteer, but still earn an income. Companies that hire people for gig work are generally less picky about how the work gets done; they just want it done.

- **Public policy needs to change to support older workers.** Smaller companies hiring older employees can see a negative financial impact from higher insurance premiums if there is an age-rated program. Public policy changes around healthcare are necessary to resolve this potential cost disadvantage. Many health plans proposed under the current administration impose higher premiums for older people, not lower.

- **Knowledge transfer is important.** Companies like GE, where an employee can take 20 years to become an expert, encourage knowledge sharing between employees. Technical tools, like Slack and online groups, also encourage knowledge sharing and offer a repository so information is not lost.

Reap the (re)wards of a multigenerational workforce

Maturity. Judgment. Work ethic. This is the value experienced workers can bring to your workforce. When younger and older employees work together, everyone is more productive.

Learn more at aarp.org/shrmfoundation

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About the Presenters

Melissa Louis

Melissa Louis, managing consultant, leads Gallup's Workplace Solutions Practice throughout the Eastern U.S. Melissa specializes in improving business performance by aligning and optimizing her clients' workplace and marketplace strategies. Her expertise includes advising organizations throughout their entire talent management cycle: hiring the right employees; engaging employees and improving customer interactions; revamping performance management; creating strengths-based cultures; designing employee well-being programs; optimizing organizational design; and enhancing leadership development and coaching. Melissa received a bachelor of commerce degree in economics and finance from the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. She received her master's degree in business administration from the Schulich School of Business at York University.

Tom Mathews

Tom Mathews is the senior vice president, HR and CHRO at Cree Inc. in Durham, North Carolina. Tom joined Cree in 2015 to help lead the company and its HR function through the next phase of growth. Prior to this, Tom was the head of HR for Asset International, a private-equity owned business in New York City, where Tom helped the management team sell the business to Genstar Capital. Before that, Tom worked for 12 years as executive vice president of human resources for Time Warner Cable, where he built a world-class HR organization. As a strategic partner at the executive level, he evaluated the HR implications of all major business decisions affecting 50,000+ employees, and identified HR programs, services and initiatives aligned with business growth needs. Prior to Time Warner Cable, Tom served as vice president of international human resources for AOL, where he built an international HR function for the organization and was responsible for developing and implementing AOL's HR strategy for its workforce outside the United States. Tom has an M.S. in organization development from Queens University in Charlotte, an MBA from the University of Michigan and a B.S. from Trinity College.

He is active in a variety of professional associations and nonprofit organizations and currently serves as an advisory board member of UNC-Charlotte's Belk School of Business.

Renetta McCann

Renetta McCann is one of the leading innovators and most influential executives in the advertising industry, with a global reputation for building not only brands but also the organizations and leadership to sustain them. As chief talent officer at Leo Burnett, she heads up the agency's People & Culture department, where she oversees the agency's U.S. recruitment, training, benefits and talent management. A champion for women and for the development of minorities in the advertising industry, Renetta dedicates her time outside the office to organizations like Viva Women, the Publicis Groupe internal women's network, and No2six6, an organization launched in 2013 to advance the hiring rate of minorities in advertising. Over the course of her career, Renetta has been a frequent name in the press. She was named one of the 100 Most Powerful Women by *Forbes* and a woman to watch by both *Fortune* and *The Wall Street Journal*. She was awarded the title Corporate Executive of the Year by *Black Enterprise* magazine and was selected by *Ebony* as one of the 57 Most Intriguing Blacks. *Essence* named her one of 50 Women Who Are Changing the World, and she has appeared on the pages of *Advertising Age*, *BusinessWeek* and *Chicago* magazine. The American Advertising Federation honored her with a Diversity Achievement Award for her contributions as an Industry Influential, and she's the recipient of the 4A's Pantheon award. Renetta holds an M.S. in learning and organizational change from Northwestern University, where she also serves as an adjunct faculty member.
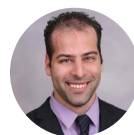
Michael North, Ph.D.

Michael S. North joined New York University Stern School of Business as an assistant professor of Management and Organizations in August 2015. Professor North's research, rooted in social psychology, focuses primarily on challenges of, and considerations for,

the aging and increasingly intergenerational workforce. He is the founding director of the AGE Initiative. He has published research in leading academic journals, including *Psychological Bulletin, Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* and *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* and has authored articles for *Harvard Business Review* and SHRM. Professor North's work has also been featured in media outlets such as *The New York Times, TIME, Huffington Post, Scientific American* and NPR. Prior to joining NYU Stern, Professor North completed a two-year postdoctoral position at Columbia University. He received his B.A. in psychology from the University of Michigan and his Ph.D. in psychology and social policy from Princeton University.

Nereida (Neddy) Perez

Nereida (Neddy) Perez, the CEO and founder of D&I Creative Solutions, is an internationally known human resources and diversity practitioner with more than 20 years of experience working with Fortune 50 and Fortune 500 corporations. She has developed and implemented business strategies designed to remove organizational and cultural barriers to spur talent and business growth. Neddy has been a speaker at numerous national conferences and events in HR, diversity, supplier diversity and STEM space. She has served as an advisor on diversity initiatives at an array of companies and government agencies and is a trusted advisor to senior corporate leaders as well as chief diversity officers. Neddy has developed and executed supplier diversity programs at KPMG, National Grid and Ingersoll Rand. In partnership with the New York Governor's Office, she helped National Grid launch the first ever Supplier Diversity Energy Summit bringing together more than 200 business owners and supplier diversity leaders. In 2015, Neddy was named one of the most influential global diversity officers by *Diversity Global Magazine*. In 2014, she was honored as the Top Hispanic Executive in the U.S. by the National Hispanic Business Group. A thought leader in talent and diversity, an advocate for women and underserved groups and a champion for innovative thinking, Neddy has helped numerous businesses increase retention, improve engagement and grow the STEM talent pipeline.

Michael Poerksen, SHRM-CP

Mike joined the global staffing firm of Robert Half as client service director this summer. He has spent the past 25 years in progressive HR and talent acquisition roles at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) and Ernst & Young (EY) respectively. Most recently, Mike worked for 10 years in university relations and recruiting leadership roles at EY. Prior to that, Mike spent 16 years at PwC as a client serving auditor and tax accountant initially, and then in a series of HR roles, including HR generalist, office HR manager, regional talent leader for a consulting practice and finally PwC's Southeast Region Campus Recruiting Leader. Mike has frequently instructed firm training and college classes, and has been recognized by EY four times as a Top Tier Instructor from 2012 through 2015. Since 2012, Mike has been an adjunct instructor at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, where he received the 2015 BGMT 367 Instructor All-Star Award. Mike also currently serves on Penn State Smeal's Accounting External Advisory Board and received the 2016 Penn State Smeal Alumni Service Award. He was the 14th recipient of this award, which "honors an alumnus/alumna whose exceptional allegiance and involvement with Smeal has brought distinction to the college and the University." Mike earned his MBA in HR management from the University of Pittsburgh.

Libby Sartain, CCP, SHRM-SCP

After a distinguished 30-year career in human resources, Libby Sartain is now an active business advisor, board member and volunteer. As head of HR for both Yahoo! Inc. and Southwest Airlines, Sartain led significant business transformation initiatives as a member of executive leadership teams and guided global HR efforts focusing on attracting, retaining and developing employees. Both Yahoo and Southwest were listed on the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work for in America and the Fortune 500 during her tenure. Sartain has served on the board of AARP since 2014 and was elected to the vice chair position in 2016. Sartain also served as chairman of the board of the Society for Human Resource Management in 2001 and was named fellow of the National Academy of Human Resources in 1998. Sartain serves on the boards of directors

of ManpowerGroup and Shutterfly Inc., and was a director of Peet's Coffee and Tea, Inc., from 2007 to 2012. She is an advisor/board member to several startup companies and consults with corporate clients. She holds an MBA from the University of North Texas and a BBA from Southern Methodist University. She was named by Human Resources Executive as one of the 25 Most Powerful Women in HR in 2005.

Jonathan Siegel, J.D.

Jonathan A. Siegel is one of the founding principals of the Orange County, Calif., office of Jackson Lewis P.C. He practices before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, National Labor Relations Board, state and federal agencies and courts. Mr. Siegel also provides advice and counsel regarding labor and employment law with respect to various issues ranging from wage and hour law, reduction in force, WARN Act, discipline, leave management, and harassment and discrimination issues. He defends employers regarding different varieties of wrongful termination and discrimination claims. Mr. Siegel has represented management in union organizing drives and regularly defends employers in unfair labor practice proceedings as well as in collective bargaining and arbitrations. He also has extensive experience conducting wage and hour preventive audits. In 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, Jonathan was selected by SHRM to review and revise the SHRM California Learning System, which is a comprehensive resource and study guide. He regularly speaks on a variety of topics, has moderated numerous programs and has been featured as a keynote speaker for several different organizations. In 2009, Mr. Siegel was selected as one of the Top 100 Labor Attorneys in America by Labor Relations Institute, Inc.

Ursula Staudinger, Ph.D.

Dr. Ursula M. Staudinger is a lifespan psychologist and aging researcher. She is known for her work on the positive plasticity of aging (cognition, personality) as well as her research on resilience and wisdom. Recently she has conducted groundbreaking studies to better understand the cumulative effects of work on cognitive aging. She received her Ph.D. from the Free University of Berlin, was senior researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, professor for Lifespan

Psychology at Dresden University, and founding dean of the Jacobs Center on Lifelong Learning and Institutional Development at Jacobs University Bremen. Since 2013 she has been the founding director of the new Robert N. Butler Columbia Aging Center (CAC). In 2014, Dr. Staudinger was awarded the Braunschweig Research Prize for her outstanding research on the plasticity of the aging process and its consequences for demographic change. She is also the 2016/17 recipient of the Seneca Medal that acknowledges outstanding research on aging with international impact.

Karie Willyerd

Karie Willyerd is the head of SAP's Global Education business unit. Previously she was the workplace futurist at SuccessFactors, an SAP human capital software company. Prior to that she was the co-founder and CEO of Jambok, the industry's first video-based informal social learning software platform, which was acquired by SuccessFactors in 2011. Karie was formerly chief learning officer for Sun Microsystems, and in that role she was responsible for employee, customer, partner and Sun community learning. The customer business of Sun trained over 600,000 students a year in 125 countries. ATD named Sun the #1 BEST learning function in the world. Karie is the coauthor of the award-winning bestseller, *The 2020 Workplace: How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop & Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today.* She is a regular blogger for Harvard Business, coauthored a feature article on mentoring Millennials in *Harvard Business Review* and has authored dozens of other articles and publications. Karie holds a bachelor's degree from Texas Christian University, a master's degree in instructional and performance technology from Boise State University and a doctorate in management from Case Western Reserve University. She serves on the global leadership council for the business school at Colorado State University. In addition, she serves on the board of City Year, San Jose supporting the young leaders who are making remarkable changes in high school dropout rates. Karie's newest book is *Stretch: How to Future Proof Yourself for Tomorrow's Workplace*, which was selected as an Amazon Editor's Pick in Business and Leadership in January 2016.

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