

LIVING, LEARNING & EARNING LONGER

A COLLABORATION FROM



Gearing up for Longevity: AARP Insights from Global Executive Roundtables

A game-changing mega trend is quickly altering the workplace as we know it. While technological breakthroughs consistently transform how we work in the 21st century, increased longevity is reshaping the workforce itself. With people living and working longer, more and more employers find themselves managing up to five generations in the workplace on any given day. To unlock future workforce potential, organizations must adopt a new approach. AARP has [resources and tools](#) that can help you assess your organization's current practices and prepare to maximize the longevity opportunity.

Recently, AARP established a collaborative, called [Living, Learning and Earning Longer](#), to identify and share multigenerational workforce practices. In alliance with the [World Economic Forum \(WEF\)](#) and the [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#), we engaged nearly 100 global employers in discussions about the changing workforce, holding regional executive roundtables in North America, Asia, and Europe. In our discussions with executives at companies such as Allianz, Bank of America, China Life Insurance, Cisco to Dell Technologies, Fujikura, Salesforce, and Singtel, we found resounding agreement that work and the global workplace are changing at a rapid pace.

Disruptive Demographics

Consider that by 2030 the population of individuals ages 65 and older will reach a record of nearly one billion. Because this age group is growing [four times faster](#) than the overall global population, people ages 60 and over will soon [outnumber children](#) ages five and under. As a consequence, in 2008, US workers ages 65 and older began

outnumbering teenagers (16-19) in the workforce for the first time since 1948. Moreover, the federal [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (BLS) forecasts that in coming years annual labor force growth for both 65-to 74-year-olds and even those ages 75-plus will consistently outpace labor force growth for any other age group. With these trends, the multigenerational workforce is here to stay.

The good news is that greater diversity—including age diversity—[drives engagement and performance](#), and that is something organizations have control over. Diversity practices that organizations can implement contribute directly to employee engagement. In fact, American business units in the top quartile of engagement [realize 21 percent higher profitability](#) than those in the bottom quartile.

Global Roundtable Highlights

How can global employers begin adapting their workplace practices to capitalize on increasing longevity? Here are a few high-level takeaways from our global learning journey with executives:

- All over the world, companies need to build the business case for change. Increases in productivity, engagement, innovation, and revenue that are a result of age diversity and inclusion need to be documented through rigorous research. Currently, few studies provide data that focus on age. Researchers in the field often cite [a study of 18,000 German companies](#) that found a 10 percent increase in age heterogeneity at innovative companies increases annual productivity by approximately 3.5 percent. But we need even more evidence across sectors and industries to establish a strong correlation between age diversity, employee engagement, and company productivity. Companies can begin by initiating an evaluation of their workforce.
- It is important to embrace a nuanced perspective on age. There are instances where a company should be age aware and there are instances where a company should be age blind. For instance, recruitment efforts should be designed in ways that recognize that you have to meet all ages and life stages

where ever they are – social media, print, radio, video, etc. Companies should take an intentional approach to ensure its recruitment language and platforms speak to and reflect a broad range of age and life stage milestones. However, companies should be age blind when it comes to assessing a candidate for the job. The candidate’s assessment for the job should purely be based on skills as they align with the position description.

- Lifelong learning is essential to everyone’s success during this digitization transition. However, we need a nuanced understanding of age when it comes to training, too. For instance, training should be delivered through many channels and created in ways that respond to various educational styles and technological abilities, allowing individuals of various learning styles, cognition, life styles, and ages to engage and see themselves in the training opportunity. And, the training should never be delivered to a specific age or life stage group as that will only reinforce stereotypes and biases.
- Workforce innovations come in many forms: policies, programs, practices, and products (e.g., those that enable older workers to participate in the workplace longer or tools to help new entries in the workforce strengthen their 5Cs).
- [Change can start small](#). Reviewing current policies through a lens of age inclusivity is possible through your current systems. Minor refinements can often make a big difference. For instance, extending a parental leave policy to cover caregiving leave for any loved one – elder, partner or child – can go a long way in ensuring the offering is relevant to your workforce across life course. [AARP’s Employer Pledge Action List](#) can help companies get started.

In addition, executives at our roundtables shared that as leaders there are key issues that need to be acknowledged in order to push organizational change forward. For instance, straight talk about the harm of stereotypes across the generations is crucial. Perpetuating misconceived conclusions such as, “She is too young to run the company” or, “He is too old to learn the new technology,” is simply [bad for business](#). Additionally,

the intense focus on disruptive technologies and automation blur the fact that organizations will still need [uniquely human skills](#)—starting with curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and change management, especially as the more repeatable tasks can be automated. These [“5C” skills and capabilities appear in experienced members of the labor market](#) and take time to accrue. However, organizations have yet to appropriate resources and generate policies to help workers of all ages and tenure strengthen their 5C muscles. To develop cross-generational 5C skills, companies could create apprenticeships and reverse-mentoring programs for all ages. Both programs could build institutional knowledge and initiate information exchange among generations.

Aging Unequally

Although globally we are marching toward healthier, longer lives, this gift is not equally shared. Often, differences in income and [inequity drive disparities in life expectancy](#). Not everyone can work longer, nor do they always want to do so. Health concerns or caring for a loved one full time can end workers’ paid employment. In addition, some jobs are not suited for older workers. We must remember these factors when we design our policies and practices.

Stepping into the Future

Over the next two years, the [Living, Learning and Earning Longer Collaborative](#) will work with at least 50 global companies to refine the business case for age diversity and highlight best practices from around the world. With WEF and OECD, we will consider the complexity of the multigenerational workforce when evaluating an organization’s recruitment and retention practices, flexible work and caregiving benefits, lifelong learning and training, and assessment procedures. Our findings will surface standards, policies, and practices that reflect an age-diverse and inclusive workforce ecosystem. Finally, at the 2021 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland we will release our conclusions in a digital learning platform.

Join Us

The systems companies build today will benefit workers who do enjoy the gift of longevity. It is time to get it right! Join the over 25 companies and knowledge partners that have already signed on to the [Living, Learning and Earning Longer Collaborative](#). We will help you assess your readiness as a company and prepare to maximize the longevity opportunity. For more information, contact Jeff Gullo at jgullo@arp.org or Ramsey Alwin at ralwin@arp.org.