



The Potential of AI in Advancing Workplace Changes That Support Longer Working Lives

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Tech developments and artificial intelligence (AI) applications are quickly proliferating across industries and workplaces. **Accenture's AI division defines AI** as follows: "Artificial intelligence is a constellation of many different technologies working together to enable machines to sense, comprehend, act, and learn with human-like levels of intelligence."

Experts have been speculating about how AI will impact the future of work for at least a decade. Published in 2014, **The Second Machine Age: Progress and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies** detailed how the tech revolution would change our work and lives. Authors Eric Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee stated that we were living in a time of "astonishing progress" due to technological transformation. That progress has only accelerated since that book was written. Their opening observation still applies today: that the second machine age is "unfolding right now—an inflection point in the history of economies and societies because of digitization. It's an inflection point in the right direction—bounty instead of scarcity, freedom instead of constraints—but one that will bring with it some difficult challenges and choices." As of 2021, data revealed that the use of AI in many business sectors had grown by 270 percent over the previous four years, **as reported in Forbes**.

The Second Machine Age highlighted the many benefits of tech and aptly noted that new jobs would be created, some jobs would be eliminated, and new work environments would evolve. The use of tech and AI can also help companies enhance work environments and help individuals modify their career paths. Thus, using AI in the workplace can lead us toward work environments that benefit older workers if we make the thoughtful and equity-focused use of it a priority.

Age Diverse Workforces

The business community has increasingly focused on diversity and inclusion in hiring, but less has been written about the benefits of age diversity. Contributing to the growing dialogue about this topic is particularly important given aging demographics in the United States. In 2030, the number of people 60 years and older in the U.S. will grow by 56 percent and older people will outnumber children under 10, according to the **World Health Organization** and **U.S. Census Bureau**. Maximizing opportunities presented by age-diverse workforces will increasingly become a must-have rather than a nice-to-have.

Age-diverse hiring and multigenerational workforces do not generally come up in discussions of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices, and this needs to change. This was one of the recommendations in Milken Institute's recent, comprehensive report focused on lifetime financial security for all Americans at each stage of their lives and in retirement called **"Shifting the Retirement Paradigm: Moving Toward Lifetime Financial Security,"** which called on employers to include age in their diversity, equity, and inclusion training and practices.

The Milken Institute's Center for the Future of Aging focuses on many issues related to aging and living well over time and has highlighted the importance of multi-generational workforces and the need for longer working lives. Age is a universal diversifier, and one that in our society often presents issues as we change jobs at an older age, the details of which are outlined in **Overtime: American's Aging Workforce and the Future of Working Longer**.

Potential Opportunities for Artificial Intelligence to Support Age-Diverse Workforces

It appears that AI has the potential to help older workers rather than just eliminate jobs as many have discussed. AI tools and programs could be created that would be impactful to millions of age-diverse workers and should be considered as AI is being rapidly deployed in a variety of ways by corporations and employers.

Here are several key opportunities that emerge at the nexus of AI and age-diverse workforces:

Leveraging AI as a Tool to Eliminate – Not Perpetuate – Age Bias in Hiring

According to **The Wall Street Journal**, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has been studying AI in hiring to look for issues like input bias. To leverage AI as a tool for building age-diverse workforces, there is a need to ensure that bias is not embedded in the questions or process. If used for good, AI has the potential to become a valuable tool in the fight to eliminate ageism in hiring and could contribute to accelerated change. For example, companies are already developing programs that automate the application review process to eliminate bias; the elimination of age bias should be factored into such programs.

Using AI to Allow Older Workers to Continue Working and Train New Employees

Designing workplaces that allow older workers to not only get hired but also thrive in their workplaces is key to their long-term financial security. For example, a significant issue faced by many older workers that gets little attention is the need to create new jobs for workers who are in physically demanding jobs and need to transition to other roles as outlined in **"Shifting the Retirement Paradigm: Moving Toward Lifetime Financial Security."** A paramedic, for instance, may be unlikely to be able to continue in the same role until age 65 or 67, given the physical demands of the job. Workers in physically

demanding jobs often have earned less and saved less for retirement, making the need to develop a new working model for them even more important, as noted by the **Economic Policy Institute**.

AI programs could facilitate the creation of teaching models for workers in physically demanding jobs so that they could seamlessly transition to a training role later in their careers. A long list of companies create employee training programs using AI. Digital adoption platforms (DAPs) integrate with digital tools and can outline ways to walk through work processes or activities, as **outlined in Forbes**.

The lived experience of many workers is often invaluable. If they could help program training modules, they could impart their experience to younger workers and continue working until retirement. Senior workers could also meet with new employees to understand where they need to develop more skills. AI and tech developments such as virtual meeting platforms, including Zoom or FaceTime, make it possible for experienced paramedics, for example, to be available to advise more junior staff in the field virtually to deal with more complex situations as the need arises.

Working Longer with AI as a Way to Enhance Long-term Financial Security

Overall, a hybrid human and AI approach could work well. In many instances, a joint approach is needed when programming for soft skills or human elements such as decision-making, critical thinking, or diagnosing illnesses. Widespread adoption of programs that have older workers use AI to develop training programs for others could impact the millions of workers who would like to or need to continue to work into their 60s or longer. This change would enhance the lives of these workers and allow them to continue to earn and save more, thereby improving their financial security.

The Milken Institute agrees that workers should have opportunities to retrain, upskill, or switch roles as they age. As noted in **“Shifting the Retirement Paradigm: Moving Toward Lifetime Financial Security,”** a personal “career longevity plan” can help workers consider the next stage of their careers in an informed way. Planning for a career change and next steps is key.

Looking Ahead

There is room for optimism. Employers can use AI to help ensure that qualified older workers are not screened out of the hiring process and enable them to continue to contribute in their current jobs for longer, thereby enhancing their long-term financial security. Keeping the dialogue open and public and connecting with a variety of employers as well as companies developing AI programs related to work are vital. The “second machine age” is here, along with the potential for AI solutions to create workforces that support older workers and job seekers.