

Managing Multiple Generations in Your Workforce

September 27, 2014



Founded in 1964, ASHHRA is the leading voice for HR professionals in health care - linking people and organizations to leadership practices, best practices to patient outcomes and outcomes to business results. Headquartered in Chicago, Ill., the society has more than 3,200 members and services the needs of over 40 chapters throughout the United States. For more information about ASHHRA, visit www.ashhra.org.

Vision

To be the leaders in health care Human Resources workforce policy, advocacy and best practices.

Mission

To advance the human side of health care, ASHHRA leads the way for highly effective, valued and credible leaders .

Values

Trust | People | Integrity | Leadership
Diversity | Collaboration | Excellence
Innovation

Goals

Membership. ASHHRA will meet the needs of a diverse member base, from all facets of health care and at various points within their health care careers.

Organization Management. ASHHRA will be a well managed, member responsive, fiscally sound and appropriately governed organization.

Information and Knowledge Transfer. ASHHRA will be both a recognized source and resource to its members, providing information and knowledge to support their success and professional development.

Positioning. Members, key stakeholders and policy makers will view ASHHRA as the voice of health care HR and ASHHRA's input and participation will be actively sought out.

Strategic Partnerships. ASHHRA will support its members in positioning themselves and HR as strategic business partners who actively work to attain and maintain the level of trust and respect.

The American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration (ASHHRA), a personal membership group of the American Hospital Association (AHA), in collaboration with TIAA-CREF, a financial services company and long-standing partner of ASHHRA, held its eleventh Thought Leader Forum on Saturday, September 27, 2014, in Chicago, Illinois. ASHHRA Thought Leader Forums provide a means for ASHHRA to gather information, insights and best practices regarding vital health care issues and trends and help its members successfully lead their organizations into the future.

Kevin Nazworth, managing director, Southeast Region and head of the Health Care Market, TIAA-CREF, welcomed thought leader participants to the Forum, which was chaired by Grace Blair Moffitt, ASHHRA's immediate past president. The discussion was moderated by Cindy Fineran, senior consultant with The Walker Company Healthcare Consulting.

A select group of executives working in health care or roles that have insight into the field participated in the Forum, a two-hour session titled "Managing Multiple Generations in Your Workforce." These executives provided their insights and perceptions about managing a workforce that spans four generations between its oldest and youngest employees.

This summary is a strategic overview of the discussions, thoughts and insights emanating from this Thought Leader Forum.

Managing Multiple Generations In Your Workplace

Today's workforce is comprised of four distinct generations. The distance from youngest employee to oldest may span as many as 50 or more years. Each generation has been shaped by specific events that have occurred in their lifetimes. These events significantly influence attitudes, behaviors, expectations and habits.

To discuss the implications of the intergenerational workforce, a panel of 10 executives from the health care field or in roles with insight into health care and generational diversity was convened. These individuals provided their perspectives, insights and experiences regarding managing an intergenerational workplace as well as their projections for the future workplace.

Generational Influences in the Workforce

While generalizations can be made about the different generations, thought leaders observed that no one should expect everyone within a specific generation to act in the same way. In reality, some individuals from different generations may act more alike than differently. Regardless, there is a benefit to discussing the generational influences at work in hospitals and health systems and the implications for the workplace.

"Retired in place." Traditionalists and baby boomers have long been known for their loyalty and commitment to an organization. Many can count on one hand the number

of employers they have had in their careers. For some of these individuals, their career goal is to have the longest tenure in

their organization before they retire. In terms of financial readiness for retirement, working 30 to 35 years for a single employer will mean some individuals can rely on a pension and Social Security benefits to fund their retirement.

On the other hand, many baby boomers never wanted to work as long as they have and are counting the years until they can afford to retire and pursue other interests. Many are frustrated by their current financial predicament. Retirement funds that looked strong prior to the 2008 recession are no longer sufficient enough to support the retirement they were counting on. As a result, many baby boomers are burned out, tired and resentful that they must continue working. While they may be physically present at work, employee engagement scores indicate that baby boomers are not fully present mentally or emotionally, a situation often referred to as "presenteeism" or "retired in place."

Postponing retirement has other implications for organizations, including high incidents of absenteeism, leaves of absence and challenges resulting from chronic health conditions. Many chronic health conditions are muscular/skeletal, which create productivity challenges for hospitals and health systems. Thought leaders expressed concern that presenteeism and lack of full engagement in their work may contribute to lower quality of care and patient safety concerns.

Thought leaders acknowledged that organizational loyalty was sacrificed when hospitals and health systems cut jobs and eliminated defined benefit plans. They noted that 25 years ago it was predicted that employees would be unable to afford retirement on a 403(b) or 401(k) plan alone. Unfortunately, many people are now finding that to be true.

Defining the Generations

Traditionalists or World War II	Born 1922—1945
Baby Boomers	Born 1946—1964
Generation X	Born 1965—1980
Generation Y or Millennials	Born 1981—2000

Grace Blair Moffitt,
Thought Leader Forum Chair



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Molly Seals



Postponed retirement also contributes to lack of employment opportunities for generation X-ers and millennials. However, many millennials are

seeking out and creating their own career opportunities. Thought leaders observed that many are cobbling together the opportunities they find in non-traditional ways and are succeeding on their own terms. Thought leaders predict that millennials who work independently or as part of a family-run business may work for the same organization for multiple years just as traditionalists and baby boomers have.

Generational Contrasts: Adaptability, Work and Expectations

Change, adaptability and entitlement. The business of health care has been highly successful and stable for many years, yet now confronts rapid and even daily changes and fluctuations. Hospitals and health systems must be agile and flexible as they staff patient volume, change hours of operation and tightly manage the business as revenue growth lags.

Employees accustomed to being hired for a specific shift, in a specific department and who have worked that way for the majority of their careers, are often finding today's frequent changes a challenge. For some, there's a sense of entitlement that their years of commitment, loyalty and seniority should be rewarded with their choice of a stable and unchanging assignment.

Define "hard working." The different generations perceive hard work differently, which can and does create

points of tension in the workplace. Thought leaders observed that traditionalists' and baby boomers' concept of "working" is represented by being on site and visibly seen to be at work. This concept is different than generation X-ers and millennial's perception, which often includes a laptop and remote location.

Thought leaders shared that in their experience it is most common for the traditionalists and baby boomers to accept or volunteer to change personal plans to work overtime, take extra shifts or care for additional patients. In contrast, thought leaders often find generation X-ers and millennials less willing to accommodate additional work.

Work/life integration. In the past, the first questions human resource leaders were asked when interviewing new hires related to compensation. That focus is being replaced with inquiries from generation X-ers and millennial recruits about time off, how much and when.

Thought leaders observed that younger employees share a belief that "life is meant to live" and they have a high appreciation for time off from work to do what they most enjoy. Conversely, thought leaders observed that traditionalists and baby boomers expect to work a period of time before earning vacation. Earned through hard work, some thought leaders debated that perhaps baby boomers have greater appreciation for time off than do younger employees.

While thought leaders view time off inquiries from younger generations to be a reflection of their desire for a well-rounded and well-balanced life, they also believe it is a reflection of outside responsibilities and demands. With a prevalence of



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dual career couples and households headed by single adults, many employees, regardless of generation, are responsible for children, parents and other family members who need their time, energy and support. Younger generations are beginning to ask themselves how they are going to prepare for that reality.

It was pointed out by a millennial thought leader that younger individuals typically are not seeking work/life balance; instead, they want work/life integration. Younger generations don't check their cell phones for emails and messages during off hours out of fear that work will pile up or something critical needs their attention. They do it out of simple habit. Millennials are not necessarily seeking a separation of work and life. They prefer work that is not a separate, stressful piece of life; rather, work is something they are engaged in, appreciate and consider to be a part of the whole of their lives. Younger employees are not interested in fitting into a nine-to-five standard; they want work/life integration.

It was observed that millennials don't want to work as much or as long as older generations have, nor do they believe they need as much time to accomplish their work. Thought leaders believe that regardless of generation, people are challenging conventional thinking in efforts to find better and more efficient ways of working.

Pay for potential. Based on their experiences, thought leaders commented on the fact that younger individuals expect to move quickly up the career ladder. They find that younger employees reject the notion that they might need to work the length of time or the extent of hours that their predecessors have in order to advance.

Thought leaders agreed that organizations need to modify hiring practices that give simple priority to individuals with the longest track record or seniority. Instead, organizations need to develop the capacity to assess individuals' potential and give greater consideration to hiring employees for their intelligence, knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes, even if the individual is a generation X-er or millennial.

Aligning values. Citing research conducted by the Pew Research Center, thought leaders observed that millennials are the first of at least two generations that are not going to have the same standard of living as their parents have enjoyed. Despite having a greater percentage of college graduates than past generations, millennials lag behind on key economic indicators.¹ As a result, they're not interested in striving for the same material things that their parents have sought. Millennials are hard working as a group, but if the mission, values and vision of the organization and their jobs are not congruent with their own, they are willing to walk away. They don't have a preconceived need to earn a certain salary or continually earn salary increases. Millennials are willing to work at something with less significance and make less money, provided that work fulfills a strong personal sense of mission and values.

As a result, thought leaders posed the challenge of keeping millennials engaged when they're willing to walk away at any time. They cited high degrees of turnover for new nurses in their first year of work and commented that millennials on average have been projected to turn over every 18 months. While millennials may not leave an organization, they may choose to leave their shift, unit or department, which creates disruption for the organization.

There was some dissent among the thought leaders on this point. Some thought leaders recognized that the

"How do you keep engaged a group that's willing to walk away at any time?"

-Thought Leader

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Fred Berger



economic recession has created an employment environment in which many millennials are unable to find desired employment upon

graduation from college. Saddled with large student loan debts, they are taking jobs they may not like and are not walking away. However, these young people often exhibit the same presenteeism issues that traditionalists and boomers wishing to retire experience.

Observing that many work practices have not changed and have been in place for years, thought leaders suggested taking a holistic look at these practices and identifying how technology might be deployed to help nurses manage work in more efficient, energizing and patient-centered ways. This shift would be well-aligned with the health care transformation from volume to value-based care.

New views of adulthood. Citing a National Public Radio (NPR) series, #newboom, thought leaders considered 16 to 18 year olds' views of what they expect adulthood will be like for them.² Almost none of the teens are interested in purchasing a home or a car because it would obligate them to a particular type of job to be able to afford these items. In addition, the majority are not interested in being married, but do see themselves having children. This discussion led to consideration of a September article in *Forbes Magazine*, "Millennial's Zesty New Identity: The Burning Man Generation."³ The article cited a small survey by Harris Poll for Eventbrite, in which 72 percent of millennial respondents said they want to increase their spending on experiences rather than physical things.

Thought leaders advised that as this younger generation develops, human resource leaders should not expect that

the same desires for tangible or material goods (e.g., home, car) which have tethered people to their jobs in the past, will continue to be the same in the future.

Alignment Among the Generations

Thought leaders observed that baby boomers and millennials often work well together in teams. When paired in project work, baby boomers are able to share the wealth of their skills, knowledge and experience. Millennials, who typically want to learn everything and learn it quickly prove to be willing "students." Reverse learning, training and mentoring also works well for these groups, particularly in areas of technology. Watching younger generations use smart phones, apps and more, older generations find themselves asking "What are you doing and how are you doing it?" The speed of adoption, rather than use of technology, is often the primary difference between the generations.

It was also observed that there are more similarities between the generations around sociological needs. If an organization clearly identifies its cultural value system and hires individuals aligned with those values, the similarities among individuals will span the generations and outweigh the differences.

Thought leaders identified the challenge of creating a work environment that provides opportunities and incentives for individuals to work together, support each other and potentially be rewarded across the organization or across teams. At the same time, individuals raised in educational environments that reward personal accomplishments still drives most employees to evaluate

"Assuming more diversity, more heterogeneity, we've got to stop trying to deliver the same message to all people...it's a message that you deliver in a way that people can hear through their own ears and look at it through their own lens."

-Thought Leader

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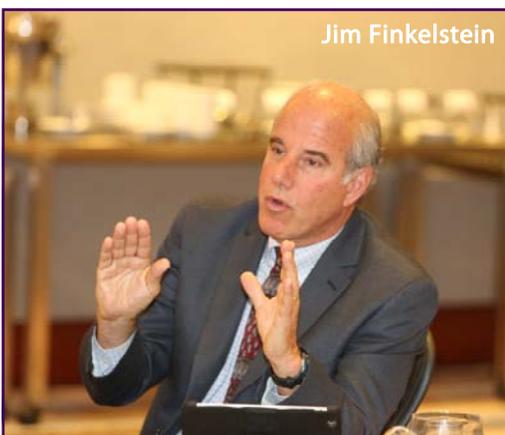
what an issue or action will mean for them individually as opposed to what it will mean to the team or organization.

Customized Management

Thought leaders observed that strong managers will not hire individuals like them; instead, they will hire individuals who are different, yet who complement one another. Managing a team of very different individuals requires the leader to bring focus not only to commonalities, but also to the positive characteristics that each individual offers. The leader must ensure the confidence of each individual and encourage them to build on each other's strengths. For example, how can a millennial leverage the knowledge of a baby boomer? How can a baby boomer engage the millennial to help strengthen the boomer's technology skills? How can a team gain advantage from the strong planning skills of generation X-ers?

Thought leaders concurred that personalizing approaches to management is key. Regardless of generation, every employee wants to know that leadership is looking out for them and for their careers.

It was observed that the use of guiding principles creates a platform that allows individuals with different skill sets and backgrounds, from different departments and with different roles to align as a team. When conflict arises, the guiding principles serve as a reminder as to why everyone is present and the value each brings to a team.



Thought leaders believe that acting intentionally is essential to successfully managing today's workforce.

"How do we work in a standardized world and still be customizable?"

-Thought Leader

Managing different people from different generations requires leaders to thoughtfully consider how they will interact with individuals and how they should prepare for conversations that will inspire or engage employees. Thought leaders underscored the critical importance of strong communication, noting that it's at the heart of setting a common framework and foundation. Good communication is the essence of collegiality and collaboration, yet is something that requires ongoing training, learning and study. Thought leaders observed that how one person hears a message will be different than another person. They noted that managing a heterogeneous and diverse workforce requires that leaders stop trying to deliver the same message to all people. Managers instead must focus on individuals' unique motivational profiles and intentionally identify how to best communicate with them. Messages must be delivered in a way that people can hear them through their own filters. This is similar in concept to how hospitals and health systems train caregivers to relate to patients. While hospitals and health systems have standards of care, best practices and protocols that must be followed, every interaction and connection with a patient and their family is custom-tailored to meet the individual's needs, experience and situation.

Custom-tailored communication that is delivered with intent is the foundation for influencing and inspiring people rather than commanding or controlling them. Thought leaders believe millennials in particular prefer this type of customized connection. While some individuals may be concerned about personal privacy, nearly everyone wants a leader they believe is authentic. They want a leader who values and looks out for employees' interests.

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Alison Wyler, Jim Frain, Cindy Fineran



The leadership challenge in today's rapid fire health care environment is in finding time to work with purpose and focused attention to adapt, customize and personalize one's management style to meet the different needs of employees. In turn, the challenge for human resources is to support managers and leaders in doing what is needed faster, easier and more efficiently.

Leaders must manage their employees creatively and with flexibility, empowering people to partner with each other to devise workable solutions to challenges, barriers and points of contention.

Retirement Readiness and Benefit Value

Retirement readiness. Years of economic prosperity lulled many baby boomers into a sense of complacency and belief that retirement would be available for them when they were ready. With retirement age now clearly in sight, many are confronting the reality that they are financially unable to retire, a situation exacerbated by losses during the recent recession. Thought leaders are consistently hearing from employees that even with early retirement packages, most baby boomers don't really have enough money saved to retire.

Thought leaders share a concern for today's employees and their future retirement readiness. They suggest that organizations offer financial wellness programs which are designed to help employees to manage debt, balance

daily living expenses and adjust their lifestyles to achieve financial retirement needs.

Employee choices regarding work and retirement have been further limited by laws and pension plan requirements. Accepting the fact that many baby boomers are now planning to work well past age 65, thought leaders observed that more organizations are offering retirement transition coaching and new ways for individuals to continue to work, but not necessarily work full time.

Rethinking benefits. Thought leaders commented on efforts to emphasize total compensation and total rewards, not just compensation alone, during recruitment and retention efforts. Organizations must be creative in looking for other areas of resources and benefits to support employees over the long-term, aligning, connecting and retaining them with the organization.

Many employers, including hospitals and health systems, have felt forced to shift a greater percentage of benefits costs to their employees to stay in business; and some individuals have remained employed until the age 65 for the sole purpose of obtaining health insurance. At the same time, thought leaders recognized that the transition of benefits costs to employees has contributed to issues of "presenteeism" in the workplace.

Human resource professionals will be looked to as the leaders in crafting benefits programs that provide the best value to employees in the future. Rethinking benefits programs for younger generations will be particularly essential, meeting the needs of a generation that doesn't really know what it is going to need, but knows what it

"Seventy-eight percent of millennials would rather spend money on a desirable experience than buy coveted goods, and there's a willingness to shrug off money and careers, in favor of exciting, first-hand experiences."

-Thought Leader³

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likes. Referring to educational loan debt and the increasing reality that education beyond a four-year college degree is often needed to obtain a desired job or career, thought leaders questioned their organizations' education benefits, many of which still reference General Educational Development (GEDs).

Although thought leaders believe future benefits programs must differentiate the organization, making it more attractive in terms of recruiting and retention, they also explored the long-term possibility that organizations may not offer any benefits and individuals will purchase benefits independently.

The challenge for younger generations. Thought leaders noted that generation X-ers and millennials realize that changes in the country's economic prosperity mean it's likely they will not have what their parents have had. They are unhappy with the price of health care, a feeling that is exacerbated by the knowledge they will live longer and potentially face more age-related health needs. They are questioning how to prepare for that eventuality.

Despite the challenge of getting millennials to consider retirement needs that are 40 or more years in the future, thought leaders are observing more people committing to a 403(b) or 401(k) earlier in their careers than previously. Part of this may be to benefit from employer matches. Thought leaders believe that younger people are paying more attention to their financial future, driven by significant student loan debt and the knowledge they may be taking care of others, such as parents or siblings, well into later years of life. There is no longer a presumption that there will be a "social security" net for people in the future, whether it be pensions, government supplied benefits or Medicare. The real challenge for many who are in their 20s and 30s may be figuring out how to save for their children's education while investing for their own retirement, just as those in their middle ages are now confronting the same challenges. Employees are challenged by competing needs to allocate limited resources for student loans, health insurance, retirement and more, and how best to balance their spending choices.

Baby Boomer: *"You're not full time; you're not working 40 hours a week."*

Millennial: *"I work as much as I want to work; I'm full time."*

-Thought Leader

We Will All Have to Think Differently

Preparing for the workforce of the future means changing mindsets and shifting paradigms. While a difficult yet essential task, human resources and other leaders within their organizations must begin now in order to be viable in the long term.

Is scheduling really a generational issue? Thought leaders observed that traditionalists and baby boomers are generally more willing than generation X-ers or millennials to change personal plans and voluntarily accept additional shift work on short notice, for example, filling in when a co-worker is sick or census is unexpectedly high. Thought leaders have found that advising less tenured staff to voluntarily accept occasional shift changes or additional shifts "goes a long way" with colleagues. The perspective helps to establish a culture of shared responsibility across a team and fosters good will among colleagues. It also relieves tension for charge nurses and others who regularly confront scheduling challenges.

Discussion of this issue by thought leaders led to the observation that an underlying problem with scheduling is not being



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“We’re not dealing systemically with the right issue. We’re blaming [scheduling problems] on generational issues...but we’re not solving the underlying problem.”

-Thought Leader

addressed. Thought leaders considered whether current scheduling practices are culturally incompatible with all generations. In today’s environment of transformation, hospitals and health systems must be nimble and responsive, adapting to rapid change and responding to fluctuating censuses. Thought leaders observed that many successful organizations are now hiring nurses into their hospitals, but are not assigning them to a particular unit. And some health systems are introducing “hospital sharing” as volumes fluctuate and their various hospitals are over or understaffed. Thought leaders recognized and acknowledged that most individuals, regardless of generation, are not happy to be “floaters.” It’s harder to establish team rapport, find the location of supplies and more. These are challenges that thought leaders believe must be overcome.

Promotions for talent or seniority. Thought leaders also challenged the presumption that people advance in their careers through increased operational responsibility. Individuals climb the leadership ladder by managing more dollars, people, functions and operations. Thought leaders believe viable alternatives for growth should be given to people in ways most relevant for them, recognizing that not everyone makes a great manager. Thought leaders believe the way people are promoted today poses a challenge. It is not uncommon for an individual to be promoted to managing people because they excel at their job or perform a skill particularly well. They noted that succession planning has traditionally been vertical and promotion of great employees has generally been into management positions. Thought leaders advocate for more creative thinking around promotional opportunities for great employees,

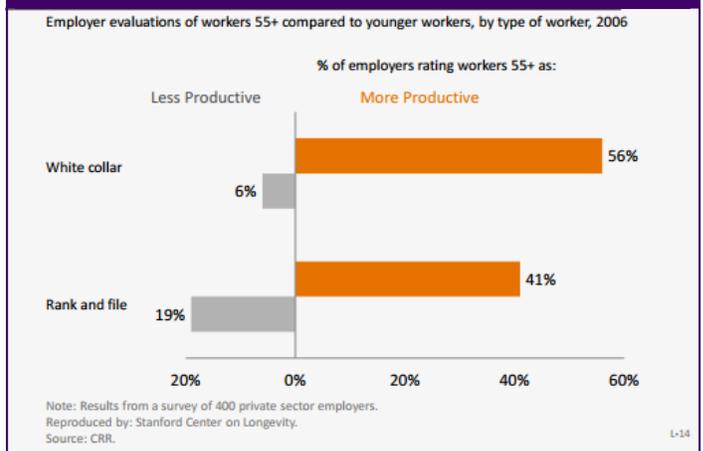
opportunities that don’t force individuals into something they don’t have the skills, expertise or talent for. Successful leaders look for individuals with the potential to add continued value to the organization and script a path for them that will make a difference to their lives and the organization.

Assessing good leadership and ensuring the organization is skilled in selecting and identifying leaders and educating and developing them in their roles is critical to ensuring the organization has the right people with the right skills in leadership positions.

Generational bias. One thought leader has conducted an exercise with different leadership teams, asking them to record words used by leadership that reflect each of the generations. It was observed that words about traditionalists and baby boomers are generally positive, while words about millennials tend to have a more negative connotation. The concern is that people are hired and promoted into a system that has a bias against millennials. Overcoming generational differences and enhancing leadership skills will require resetting leadership’s value systems and holding people accountable to them.

Can we customize a standardized world? Thought leaders acknowledged that hospitals are challenged by the way they operate, which is the way they have

Most employers think workers 55+ are more productive than younger workers⁴



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operated for many years. A key example is that most hospitals have eight and 12 hour shifts. Hospitals believe they are creative if they have four, eight, 10 and 12 hour shifts, yet thought leaders believe that will not be sufficient to retain staff in the future. Millennials and the generations following them are going to want more work flexibility, and organizations will have to figure out how to operationalize that. As hospitals and health systems employ standardization across their organizations, thought leaders questioned how to work in a standardized world and still be customizable for employees as well as patients.

Speaking from a patient perspective, thought leaders indicate patients are less concerned with the hospital's shift structure and more concerned with the relationship they've developed with a particular nurse who they believe has their best interests in mind. This is viewed as an indication that hospitals and health systems must stop thinking about how to staff the organization and start giving greater thought to how they serve the patient and how they can organize the work around serving the patient.

What is full time anyway? Thought leaders predict that fewer people will be working full time. They believe that the youngest generations accept that they are not going to attain the standards their parents did and thus are not interested in working full time. Similarly, they want a family, but don't necessarily want to be married. These changing preferences will influence benefit programs offered by employers. Illustrating the point, a first-hand conversation was shared regarding a mother chiding her son about his lack of desire to work full time. Challenged that he was not working 40 hours a week, the son replied

"We've hired and promoted people into a system that is fundamentally prejudicial against the young people that are working for us?"

-Thought Leader

Molly Seals, Lotus Yon



that he works as much as he wants to work, therefore he works full time. This led thought leaders to question 40 hours as a definition of full time, noting that even union contracts are defining 30 hours as full time in terms of benefits qualification.

No employees, just free agents. Thought leaders explored the concept of not having employees but utilizing a "free-agent" workforce instead. For example, a company comprised of well-qualified nurses might contract with a hospital for the purpose of staffing the hospital's critical care unit. The company would have the latitude to identify how shifts would be structured. As hospitals and health systems consolidate, they typically lose flexibility in favor of standardization. Employees may prefer a free-agent concept that replaces lost flexibility. The concept of a contingent workforce is already occurring in long-term care, home health and hospice, though it hasn't yet taken hold in acute care.

Taking the concept further, thought leaders posed a potential future in which technology will enable a registry comprised of pre-certified individuals. Hospitals and health systems would be able to locate a nurse or other staff person on demand, not unlike the manner in which Lyft or Uber function today. It was not lost on thought leaders that Lyft and Uber are considered "disrupters" in the way transportation has historically been provided,

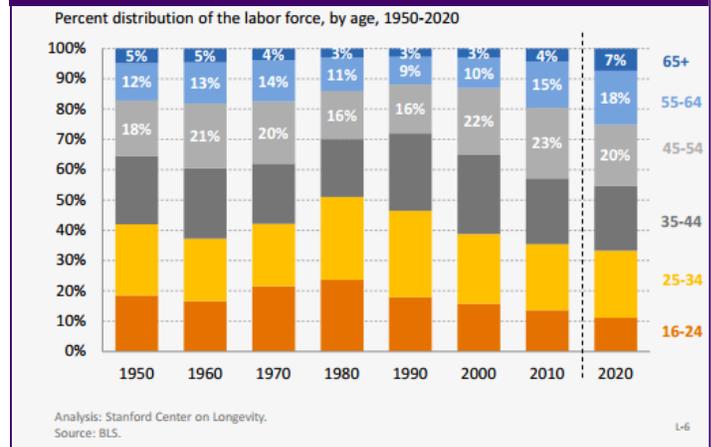
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including market threats to taxi companies, drivers and unions.

Communication. Thought leaders illustrated the communication challenge between generations with a first-hand experience in which a more senior nurse was concerned that a young nurse was not social, appearing not to create relationships with other nurses in the unit. However, the younger nurse felt she had better relationships with the other nurses than the first nurse did. The difference was how the relationships were perceived. The relationships the younger nurse had established included texting with others in the unit and getting together after work. Thought leaders observed that these types of misperceptions and communication challenges will increase in complexity as individuals from outside the organization are brought in to work on a regular basis. They recognized that human resources must change its thinking and find new ways to reach individuals and create the kind of engaging and collaborative work environment individuals are seeking.

To address this concern, one thought leader shared that her organization has established a new division within human resources, called the “Employee Experience Division.” The division is focused on principles that have been used in marketing, branding and research to structure a communications experience that will meet employees’ needs. The new division is comprised of certified project management individuals and communications experts, bringing them together to apply the theories and principles used to build customer experiences and apply them to the organization’s primary customer-employees. The new approach is delivering

By 2020, 25% of the labor force will be age 55+, up from 12% in 1990⁴



completely different and highly positive experiences.

Thought leaders commented that organizations, and human resources in particular, must seek out and bring solutions that have worked in other environments into hospitals and health systems. They must think differently about employees, focusing not on how to manage compliance, but how to manage engagement and better understand individuals’ experiences and how to meet their primary needs. Thought leaders recognized the need to bring younger employees into conversations designed to solicit their thinking about work-life integration vs. work-life balance, schedule flexibility, benefits, expectations and more. Thought leaders agreed that personalizing communication is critical, and while age plays a role in communication, it is more about the person. Accomplishing these things is a challenging, yet rewarding accomplishment.

Thought Leaders' Recommended Actions

For Managing Multiple Generations in the Workforce

Thought leaders believe the complexity of the health care system offers significant opportunity for improvement through simplification and changing perspectives and paradigms. Recommended actions emerging from the Forum are outlined below:

- **Leverage technology.** Update workplace practices, taking a holistic look and identifying how technology might help staff manage work in more efficient, energizing and patient-centered ways.
- **Seek simplicity.** Many benefits programs are so bureaucratic and complex that employees have difficulty understanding, appreciating and engaging in benefits programs. Leaders in the field will be well-served to demystify and simplify benefits programs.
- **Advance cultural competency beyond compliance.** Equal opportunity employment requires reporting, tracking and affirmative actions; however, these actions alone fail to achieve the goals of providing culturally competent care, eliminating disparities and improving approaches to diversity. Observing that individuals no longer self identify into existing diversity categories, thought leaders believe cultural diversity and competency is an area in which greater focus and intention needs to be made.
- **Know the customer.** Thought leaders questioned whether organizations truly know their customers. Most identify a limited few of the different populations for which they provide different care models, support, resources and programming. Thought leaders doubted whether organizations fully understand what they're looking for and how to interact culturally.

Thought leaders believe strengthening organizations' cultural competency and customer knowledge is where human resources' future success lies. ASHHRA can help its members strive for that success, helping them learn the skills and techniques for true customer understanding, tailoring and personalizing customer approaches that are critical to their future.
- **Build the pipeline.** Human resources will continue to be relied upon to ensure that enough young people will be interested and enticed to work in health care and will pursue new health care roles that evolve.
- **Develop financial decision-making tools.** Thought leaders value the tools that AHA, ASHHRA and TIAA-CREF have provided and would appreciate development of additional tools that will help to prepare employees for a retirement future which takes into account longer lives and the changes ahead.
- **Hold a retirement readiness forum or program.** Host a roundtable to explore ideas for engaging employees to consider investing retirement savings programs and educating them on the benefits of saving long-term for retirement.
- **Explore and disseminate information about new benefit designs.** Thought leaders are interested in the development of innovative benefit programs that are flexible and allow employees to tailor benefits to meet their individual needs. Having ASHHRA and others outside of an organization's day-to-day routine contribute fresh ideas is a significant value in today's rapid-paced environment.
- **Engage in futuristic thinking.** Organizations and their leaders are often stuck in their paradigms and struggle to shift their business models to match or lead their competition. Oftentimes, it takes a market disrupter to open up possibilities. Thought leaders suggest that human resources leaders, their organizations and ASHHRA engage in futuristic thinking, taking a 30-year look.
- **Continued thought leader forums.** Individuals working in human resources value the perspectives and experiences of others as they pertain to a variety of critical issues. Thought leaders encouraged the continuation of thought leader forums and dissemination of informative white papers.

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Managing Multiple Generations In Your Workplace

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