

# Introduction to the Special Issue on Workforce Planning, With a Particular Focus on Succession Planning Issues as a Result of or Relating to the Aging of the Workforce

*Special Editor Thomas J. Calo, Ed.D.*

I was a history major in college. We were told repeatedly that the value in studying history was to learn from the wisdom and mistakes of the past to guide us in approaching the challenges of the present. When we candidly confront the demographic challenges of an aging workforce that are facing us today, we quickly realize that history provides us with little guidance. For the first time in the history of humankind, the older segments of the population are growing at much faster rates than the younger segments of the population. Rather than *repeating* history, we are now *creating* history.

Confronting the challenges of this demographic shift will require a reorientation of our thinking and our practice. Anyone who has tried to bring about fundamental change within an organization, however, has quickly recognized that resistance to changing entrenched ideas and ways of solving problems is very strong. Yet, our old assumptions and techniques for workforce and succession planning will no longer continue to serve us well. As explorers and adventurers in history, we are embarking on an unknown journey. Whether as an organizational leader, a public policy developer, a human resources professional or a member of this aging cohort of workers, we will be exploring this demographic challenge together.

In this special issue we have assembled original articles to address the wide spectrum of organizational challenges associated with workforce and succession planning for an aging workforce. Rather than presuming to solve this challenge, though, our purpose is to stimulate ideas and dialogue. To initiate this important discussion, these articles will provide you with background, perspective, and

descriptions of our initial attempts at confronting this challenge. This topic is approached from both a research and an applied perspective.

We are fortunate and honored to have had our opening article written by the Hon. David M. Walker who is comptroller general of the United States. In his article he alerts us to the reality that this demographic challenge will ultimately affect all of us as Americans. Specifically, he examines how the U.S. Government Accountability Office has undertaken a range of initiatives designed to strengthen its workforce and better position the agency for the future. We should all take great comfort that this essential government agency is addressing the need for government agencies to rethink what they do and how they do business.

Another article, written by Dr. Ken Dychtwald and David Baxter of Age Wave—an organization that has been a leading and original force on the implications of an aging workforce and population—addresses how important it is for employers and HR professionals to understand these trends and to prepare for capitalizing on the new mature workforce.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been very proactive in confronting this issue from the perspective of a large governmental organization. Kimberly Helton and Robert Jackson, in their article, discuss the experiences and challenges faced by the commonwealth with regard to the longstanding and continuing commitment to workforce and succession planning in Pennsylvania.

It is important as well to understand the impact that an aging workforce will have on other generations that make up our workforce. Authors Martha Crumpacker D.B.A., and Jill Crumpacker, J.D., L.L.M., SPHR, have provided deep insight into the challenges of addressing the generational stereotypes that organizations must confront when implementing a succession planning strategy.

John Lavelle, recently retired from the World Bank as a senior advisor on HR strategy and policy, has contributed a very thoughtful article on why workforce planning, while readily acknowledged as important, is in reality often an unaddressed and underappreciated HR process.

Finally, I have contributed an article based on my own research. My research demonstrates the importance of the psychosocial challenges associated with aging that need to be understood and incorporated into any organizational strategy for addressing an aging workforce.

The contributors to this special issue and I hope that our articles will provide you with insight and guidance in better understanding and confronting these demographic workforce challenges. Our success will be measured by the degree of dialogue that results from the articles in this special issue. I invite you to contact me, or any of the authors, with your comments and perspectives.

I thank IPMA-HR for the opportunity to serve as special editor for this issue of *Public Personnel Management*. Special thanks are due to the authors and organizations who contributed their insights and experiences to this important dialogue. My hope is that all who read these articles will be better informed and inspired to begin the adventure of helping to create history.

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