

Book Review: The Multi-generational and Aging Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities by Ronald J. Burke, Cary L. Cooper, and Alexander-Stamatios G. Antoniou

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Burke, Ronald J., Cary L. Cooper, and Alexander-Stamatios G. Antoniou, eds. *The Multi-generational and Aging Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities*. Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2015. x + 432 pages. Hardcover, \$160.00.

The expansion of quality healthcare throughout the last century has resulted in dramatic increases in life expectancy, lower mortality rates, and a greater number of older-generation workers currently employed. More men and women are working later in life compared to previous generations, particularly given the economy and the increase in the requirement for the age of retirement. Simultaneously, employment shortages also exist, due to some choosing to retire early in specialized fields, leaving organizations to hire a broader age-range of employees. Workforces in advanced societies are facing both an older and more diverse workforce than ever before leaving Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X'ers and Generation Y'ers (Millennials) to work together. *The Multi-generational and Aging Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities* provides a broader context to these workforce challenges before focusing on understanding the needs of both older and younger employees. The final section of the book centers on leveraging this diversity through learning to create 'age-friendly' and improved workplaces.

Roland Burke, Cary Cooper, and Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou have compiled this collection from thirty-one contributors researching throughout the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and other developed workforce societies, with expertise across numerous fields including business, psychology, organizational psychology, and health. The book is organized into five sections. Part I is brief and provides an overview of themes important to understanding the changing demographics of the workforce. Such topics include understanding the relationship between age and workforce attitudes, why workers choose to retire, and detailed understandings of the four generational workforce groups, including how they perceive one another. Part II delves more deeply into major trends impacting the various generational workforce groups. For example, in chapter 2, Furnham discusses high unemployment rates and focuses on three major trends impacting the future of unemployment: dramatic changes in required skills as the work modality and space shift, the psychological effects of unemployment, and the increased diversity of employees with varying skill sets and demographics working together. Part III centers on younger employees. For instance, in chapter 6, Ng and McGinnis-Johnson note higher self-esteem for the Generation Y group and identify their common personality traits as impatience and dependence stemming from the generation's development during a period of constant technological change. More robust, Part IV aims to identify the needs of older employees. Throughout the six chapters, the topics vary widely from supporting workers that are caretakers of spouses or parents to understanding the motivational goals for reentry into the workforce, as well as from psychological and health resiliency to facing age discrimination and stereotypes. In each chapter the challenges are illustrated and tactical solutions provided either through policy approaches or support services. Part V, "Creating the Age-Friendly Workplace," advocates for life-long learning for all ages as professional development would encourage all employees to

keep pace with change. Also, in addition to identifying important skill types needed in growing economies, a quality of employment framework is presented in the final chapter as a way to assess how the needs of older employees are met.

The Multi-generational and Aging Workforce: Challenges and Opportunities provides a tremendous amount of descriptive information relevant to those aiming to understand the intersections of age and the workforce. The scope of topics is broad and the book provides a comprehensive overview of research in the field related to older generations. However, the book is unbalanced and could benefit from more extensive coverage of the research related to the needs of the younger labor force. In addition, the organization of some of the chapters could be improved. Nevertheless, given the relevance of such work, human resource and organizational effectiveness agencies such as the *Society for Human Resource Management* may find this book of value in their planning and strategizing efforts. Finally, the topics addressed are highly relevant and will appeal to both workforce practitioners and academic researchers.

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