

One can scarcely hear the news today without feeling depressed about the economy. But if we look at the chaos, not through the lens of economics and finance, but through the lens of human resources and organizational learning - we can already see some indications of positive changes that the chaos has wrought.

Read on for some good news, as well as:

- **ADVICE FOR EXPERTS:** Q&A with futurist Andy Hines, an expert on the workforce of the future.
- **BOOKS FOR LEADERS:** "Retire Retirement," by Tamara Erickson.
- **WORKSHOPS 2009:** Sign up for the ELITE HeliosHR 6-month program.



Happy Holidays!  
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## AGING IN THE WORKPLACE: 2009 & beyond

Perhaps the most glaring result of the economic downturn is that predictions about labor shortages may not come to fruition. Why? Boomers who once planned to retire in their early 60s are changing their plans because their invested savings have lost up to 30% of their value in the stock market. Consequently, I believe that we will need to extend the upper range of the age of the workforce by about a decade.

To prepare for this age-diverse workforce, we will need to broaden our definition of "diversity" beyond the traditional categories of age, race, and religion - and add diversity of values and beliefs.

Most of the current literature about generational differences proscribes homogenous values and beliefs to each of the generations currently in the workforce. (All boomers are technologically challenged, for example).

Smart business leaders realize that human beings rarely fit neatly into such tidy bundles. Successful organizations will create organizational cultures that treat everyone as individuals and create a workplace culture that is flexible and adaptive to a wide range of work and lifestyle needs. One size fits all policies for dress, work hours, and health benefits need to be replaced with various menus of choices on how to incorporate life with work, for instance.



### Stay ahead of the curve: Ideas for staying flexible and adaptive

- **Prepare for potential physical limitations of aging workers.** Employers will need to be proactive on implementing healthy workplace programs that allow younger workers to age without injury.
- **Stave off the rising cost of health insurance.** One concern about an aging workforce is that their aging may increase health coverage costs. Proactive changes to make workstations more

- ergonomically sensitive to stiffening joints or poorer eyesight will allow workers to be healthier and more productive longer.
- **Create flexible employment opportunities.** Some people are motivated by challenging work and less interested in climbing the corporate ladder. Project work lends itself nicely to contractor status, freeing senior workers to take periodic time off between projects. Full-time status, with its required 50-plus hour workweek and fixed vacation time, does not fit the values or lifestyle of later career workers - nor some younger Generation Y employees.
  - **Bridge the age-values gap.** Age-based mentoring programs are a great way to get older and younger workers to share ideas. Some organizations call it "reverse" mentoring," and it works by having younger workers mentor older staff on what makes them tick, discussing how to communicate across the generational divides, and how to transfer knowledge and lessons learned from the workplace. Rather than letting the differences create roadblocks, mentoring relationships can become the cement that bonds employees together.

**The bottom line: Help older workers feel included, not just tolerated**

The ultimate driver of any of these practices is talent attraction and retention. Thus, the ultimate measure of success is low turnover and employee engagement. The good news is that the current economic chaos can allow business leaders to make some lemonade out of lemons by retaining key personnel and their vast knowledge base - something we worried we would lose when they retired. The key now is to make sure those older workers who remain in the workforce longer stay engaged, productive, and feel included and not just tolerated.

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## ADVICE FOR EXPERTS

### **The Workforce of the Future: A Q&A with futurist Andy Hines**

I recently interviewed futurist Andy Hines, who since 2006 has been the director of custom projects at the DC-based research and consulting firm Social Technologies. He also currently serves as an adjunct professor at the University of Houston MS Program in Futures Studies, a program from which he graduated in 1990. Previously, he established the Global Trends Program for Kellogg Company, and served as futurist and senior ideation leader at Dow Chemical.

Andy has a passion for understanding the future of the workforce. In fact, last year he led a futures project for Social Technologies that helped the leaders at MTV determine what makes 12- to 24-year-olds happy. He called it, The Future of Youth Happiness, and more information can be found here: [www.socialtechnologies.com/mtv.aspx](http://www.socialtechnologies.com/mtv.aspx).



**Here's what he told me about the Workforce of the Future:**

**Alice: What are the key drivers of change in the world of work?**

**Andy:** To make sure we don't overlook the obvious, the shift to knowledge-based work is the over-arching driver behind the changes in the world of work. A big way that is showing up, finally (we futurists can be impatient at times), is that working with digital information frees us from the tyranny of sitting at a desk. No longer do we work only where we need to work - but increasingly we are working where we want to work.

Of course, we know people and organizations tend to not like to change. Inertia is a strong force. But it no longer makes any sense to force people to battle a congested commute to travel downtown, head up to the 35th floor, and spend their whole day working on a phone and computer in an office. That can be done from home, at a coffee shop, or one of the emerging co-working collectives for telecommuters from

different organizations. Going to what I call the "glass tube" downtown simply wastes time, energy (gasoline and the emotional sort), and doesn't help the environment.

Just to be clear, I'm not suggesting that there are not reasons for people to meet face-to-face. In fact, I'd argue that a face-to-face meeting becomes even more important in the future - but I think we need to be smarter about it and decide what chat, email, phone, or even a computer camera, can handle, and what really requires a face-to-face.

**Alice: How will the global economic crisis affect work in 2009 and beyond?**

**Andy:** Beyond the obvious impact, economic downturns tend to lead to belt-tightening and cost cutting, which often means cutting back on investments in new technologies and innovative approaches. Ultimately, it means a slow down in terms of change. Now, one could argue, and many do, that if an organization has been smart and planning, they will make such investments during this time when things are cheap so they will be well positioned when the economy recovers.

Unfortunately, that is often an element of wishful futurist thinking. That said some interesting innovations are likely to emerge out of necessity. Rather than cut people from the staff, for instance, organizations could experiment with work-sharing arrangements. So, while a crisis slows investment, it can also stimulate creativity and innovation.

**Alice: Our first generation of knowledge workers is approaching retirement age, but I don't think most of them will retire because their savings got fried. How do you see things playing out?**

**Andy:** I agree that I don't think most Boomers will actually retire. They will move from the jobs they had to do to make a living to the jobs they've wanted to do in terms of self-fulfillment. These knowledge workers will be well positioned to be choosy about whom they work with, how long, and for what purposes, and it won't be about the money. My hedge was that I do think there is a difference in the workplace because they will be moving out of positions of power and influence, even though they'll continue to work.

We will see the generational transfer, though. What's going to be really interesting, particularly for large organizations, is to what extent Gen X and Gen Y are going to be dedicated, loyal, long-work-week-working types of employees that the Boomers were. You're chuckling, too! Not bloody likely, right? Hard to see that same kind of work ethic - I am not suggesting they will not work hard, but I think they will pay a lot more attention to work-life balance. And thank goodness for that!

**Alice: What advice would you give business leaders who want to flourish in these tumultuous times?**

**Andy:** Don't be caught up in assuming tomorrow is going to be just like today. We will emerge from the current turmoil. In the meantime, be open to the creativity and innovation that is likely to emerge to deal with this difficulty. We all know that layoffs, cost-cutting and bad economic news can be de-motivating - so I hope employers combat that by encouraging creativity and innovation, and providing a vision of how we want to be in the future. That strategy will really help an organization weather the storm, and come through it stronger and poised for growth.

**Alice: What advice would you offer 20somethings just starting out in the working world?**

**Andy:** Be patient! They don't want to hear that, do they? But I want them to know that it will be their turn soon. They have the opportunity to make significant changes in the world of work that their descendants will be proud of. But it will probably take longer than they want. Again, people and organizations would rather not change - and inertia is strong. I hope they hang in there.

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## BOOKS FOR LEADERS

### **Retire Retirement: Career Strategies for the Boomer Generation**

By Tamara Erickson

Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press, 2008

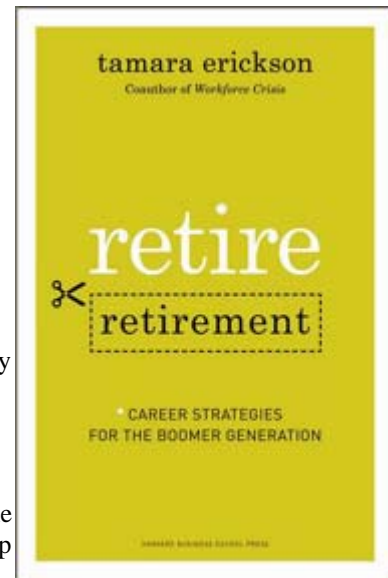
I love a book with a simple, relevant message. Such is the case with Tamara Erickson's new book, "Retire Retirement."

She explains that Boomers will live two or even three decades beyond the traditional retirement age of 65, and as a result will be able to find work more easily during the so-called third phase of their lives. Why? Because they will be able to negotiate the terms of their employment by providing employers with increased flexibility, experience, and wisdom. In a nutshell she tells Boomers: "Seize the day!"

The book is actually part of a trilogy Tamara is writing (the others are for Gen X and Millennials), and each is divided into two neat parts. The first three chapters describe the background and help the reader develop a plan for their next stage of employment. The final three chapters explain how to implement a plan using her pragmatic, concrete advice.

Unlike other career books for Boomers, the value Tamara brings is her extensive background in data collection and analysis, and her ability to write clearly and concisely. She does not tell the reader what to do, but presents "the facts" and allows readers to chart our own future path.

And the advice she does give is well-founded. After all, if we have the same number of work years between 30 and 50 as we have between 50 and 70, why dedicate the 20 years of your second career stage to leisure activities when these two decades can be rich and rewarding? Carpe diem!



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## ENROLL TODAY: ELITE WORKSHOP 2009

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- Learn rapidly from the experience of others
- Enjoy collaborating with others for mutual learning and support
- Hold themselves accountable for developing their management skills

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For more information contact: Becky Herring, [bherring@helioshr.com](mailto:bherring@helioshr.com) / 703-860-3882.

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