

Editorial

Javier Bajer

Never too old to work

At the time of writing this editorial, I am finding myself in Day 50 of my first ever quarantine. The world around me is completely different to the one that we were living in when we came up with the theme for this issue of Strategic HR Review. Call it coincidence or serendipity, but having a whole issue of our journal address the topic of age is more relevant today than ever before. So, I am well pleased to be introducing this new edition of *SHR* with you, which comes in with incredible timing.

One of the reasons why the world took “old is bad and young is good” as gospel is likely to come from the assumption that as people grow up (and it is always “them”, not ‘me’) they will struggle to catch up with technology or resist changes. Many readers might be shocked to know how unquestionable mainstream research challenges this premise, suggesting that – in many cases – experience actually plays in people’s favour and not against it.

And here is another bit of uncomfortable information: “mature” workers are more engaged at work and – interestingly enough – they find their own ways of being engaged. On the contrary, millennials (who already took most of our attention during the past 5 years) need external reasons for being motivated. As I have mentioned in previous editorials and papers, this extrinsic motivation (career paths, changes of jobs and larger bonuses) ends up being rather expensive and, at times, futile.

My final point (I promise). As quality of life increases and people live healthier and longer lives, there is a fast growing pool of talent who would engage with work that makes sense for them, gives them a sense of belonging and identity and, very importantly, by keeping focussed on work, it allows them to remain healthy for a longer period.

Today’s catastrophic but rebooting reality is showing that age should not matter as much as we thought before. If we combine people’s attitude to work with the changes in the patterns around how and where work is performed, I think we might have a winner. Of course, we also love millennials and I believe we should engage with them as well, knowing that, at some point, they will also become “mature” workers and we would love for them to work with us, too.

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