

EAWOP Small Group Meeting

Age Cohorts in the Workplace: Understanding and Building Strength through Differences

11-13 November 2011, Rovereto (Trento), Italy

ANNOUNCEMENT and CALL FOR PAPERS

Small Group Meeting Theme

The age composition of the workforce in many industrialized countries is changing. In 2001 at the Stockholm Summit, the European Commission set a goal of obtaining a 50 percent employment rate for workers age 55-64 by 2010 (von Nordheim, 2004). Simultaneously, the number of people in the EU aged 20-29 is expected to decrease by 20% over the next two decades, which will result in relatively fewer workers in this age range. In the United States it is estimated that the number of workers over age 55 will grow at nearly four times the rate of the overall labor force by 2012 (Alley & Crimmins, 2007). By 2015, workers over age 55 will occupy approximately 20% of the workforce (U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001).

These shifts in age composition are likely to heighten the salience of age differences in the workplace. Given this increased salience, it is important to obtain a greater understanding, both theoretically and practically, of the role of age in the workplace. The academic literature has begun to address the issue of age in the workplace in various respects, although it may be criticized as still lacking the coherence necessary to advance this field of research. Because the aging workforce is a pertinent and timely issue for so many countries, particularly the EU and the United States, many researchers across the globe are working in parallel but not necessarily coordinating their efforts. This is particularly important because it is necessary to understand these generational differences across countries, given the cross-national operations of large organizations. Thus, one of the major goals of this small group meeting is to understand the research programs taking place in various countries, and from this to develop a broader research agenda. This research agenda will revolve around the following themes:

- ✓ **STEREOTYPES.** What is the nature of age stereotyping in the workplace? How do individuals of different ages perceive colleagues who are in their same age group, or older/younger? How are mid-career workers perceived? How do workers in each age group perceive themselves relative to workers in different age groups? Although the literature indicates that there may be stereotypes or biases against older workers (e.g., Finkelstein & Farrell, 2007; Posthuma & Campion, 2009), are there also biases against younger workers? If so, what is the nature of this bias? And what can be done to overcome age stereotyping at work?
- ✓ **MOTIVATION.** Does age play a role in work motivation and work engagement (e.g., Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004)? Are younger versus older workers motivated by different aspects of their work environment? Are different tactics necessary for increasing motivation and engagement among younger versus older workers? What factors attract older and younger workers to jobs? What can be done to best retain older workers?
- ✓ **GENERATIONAL CONFLICT.** What is the role of generational differences in the work environment? Do generational differences cause tensions among people of different generations who work together?

If so, what can be done to help alleviate those tensions and promote successful collaboration among people of different age groups?

- ✓ **ORGANIZATIONAL AGE CLIMATE AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.** How can we measure the impact of age and age differences within organizations? Do organizations have an 'age culture' or an 'age climate' that can be assessed to obtain a better understanding of the role that age plays in specific environments? Do age climates favor older or younger workers? How do age climates affect the performance, attitudes, and well-being of workers in each age group? What predicts an organization's age climate, and is there a way to define a healthy or positive age climate? Which are the best human resources policies for the management of age differences in organizations? Which organizational solutions could be applied for the management of the late career?
- ✓ **CAREERS PATTERNS OF OLDER WORKERS.** What are the career patterns of older workers? What factors (economic, motivational) drive these patterns of employment? How can these best be leveraged to the advantage of both workers and organizations?

References

- Alley, D. & Crimmins, E. (2007). The demography of aging and work. In K.S. Shultz & G.A. Adams (Eds.), *Aging and Work in the 21st Century* (pp. 7-23). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Finkelstein, L. M., & Farrell, S. K. (2007). An expanded view of age bias in the workplace. In K. S. Schultz & G. A. Adams (Eds), *Aging and Work in the 21st Century* (pp. 73-108). Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kanfer, R., & Ackerman, P. L. (2004). Aging, adult development, and work motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, 29, 440-458.
- Posthuma, R. A., & Campion, M. A. (2009). Age stereotypes in the workplace: Common stereotypes, moderators, and future research directions. *Journal of Management*, 35, 158-188.
- U.S. General of accounting office (2001). Older workers, Demographic Trends, Pose Challenges for Employers and Workers. Retrieved from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0285.pdf>
- von Nordheim, F. (2004). Responding well to the challenge of an ageing and shrinking workforce. European Union policies in support of Member State efforts to Retain, Reinforce & Re-integrate Older Workers in employment. *Social Policy and Society*, 3, 145-153.

Keynote Speakers

Keynote speakers chosen among top-level researchers on the different topics, with attention to balance the presence of European and US specialists will be invited to contribute to the meeting.

Format

This meeting will be a small scale workshop taking place over three days beginning Friday afternoon and lasting through Sunday morning (Friday 2-6 pm; Saturday 9 am-1 pm and 2-6 pm; Sunday 9 am-12 pm). Approximately 30 oral presentations (lasting 20 minutes plus time for discussion) will take place over the course of the weekend.

Submission of Papers

Abstracts of papers (max. 500 words) should be submitted by March 1th of 2011 to Franco Fraccaroli (franco.fraccaroli@unitn.it). After the review process each author will be notified about the acceptance of the submitted abstract by 30th of May 2011. Full papers must be submitted before 1st of September 2011. Maximum paper length: 5.000 words (tables, figures and references not included).

Papers will be made available on a website for all participants, so that all information can be studied before the small group meeting takes place.

Publication of Papers

The outcomes of the meeting will appear in the form of a position paper submitted to EJWOP. In addition, the organizers seek to publish selected papers (that can also be revised after the discussion on the conference) in a special issue of an academic journal.

Date and Place of the Meeting

The small group meeting will take place 11-13 November 2011 in Rovereto-Trento, Italy at the University of Trento, Department of Cognitive Sciences and Education. Rovereto is a small city accessed by way of Verona International Airport or Venice International Airport.

Fees

150 euros (including welcome party, coffee breaks, two lunches and the conference dinner). Doctoral students can benefit of a special fees of 100 euros.

Organizing Committee

Professor Franco Fraccaroli, University of Trento, Italy
Professor Jose Maria Peiro, University of Valencia, Spain
Professor Donald Truxillo, Portland State University, USA
Professor Marco Depolo, University of Bologna, Italy
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