

# Why our Mindset Regarding Boomers in the Workforce Needs To Change.

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**The answer is:** “Labor force demographics”

**The question:** What is the train wreck coming our way that few businesses are doing anything about it?

You may have seen some of this before but here are a few \*demographics.

- 10,000 Boomers per day turning 65 until 2020
- Life expectancy at age 65 is +/- 83
- Growth of the labor force for 16-24 years is projected to DECLINE by 2024
- This means that the percentage of people 55 and older is INCREASING in that time frame!!

**\*\*While many of these Boomers are thinking about LEAVING the labor force!**

*\*Data from [bls.gov](https://www.bls.gov)*

**Let me use Maine as an example of the labor shortage coming in many states and countries around the world.** Let's just look at this one piece of information regarding our labor force projections.

700,000 = Maine's total labor force  
-411,000 = Next 20 years, this is how many people will be "leaving" the labor force  
289,000 = If they all leave, this is what we are left with  
+302,000 = This is how many younger people are under the age of 20...the "entrants"  
591,000 = This will be the size of our labor force in 20 years!!

**109,000 people SHORT!** \*Obviously this depends upon lots of things, but as you can see, this is a large number of people to replace.

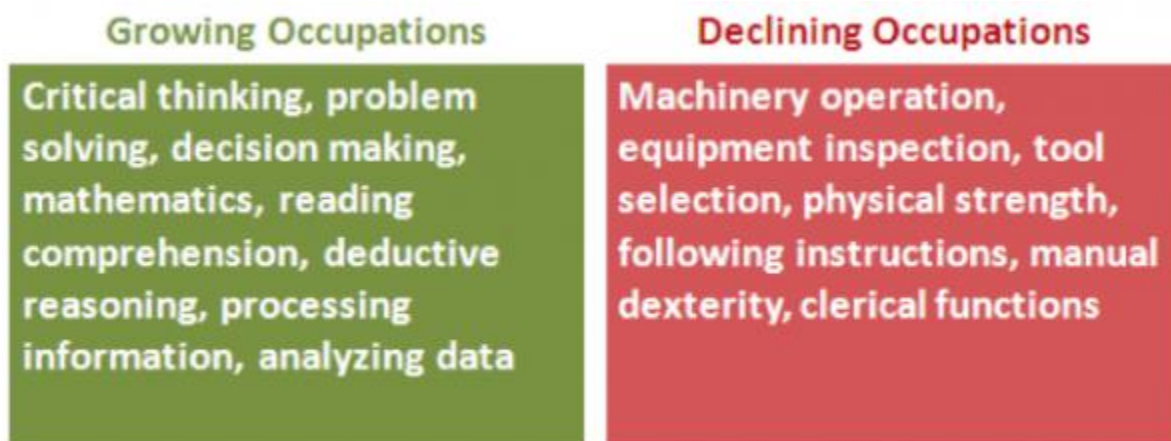
**This my friends is a crisis and we KNOW it is coming.** It may not be this large but here are some suggestions on what we should be doing as career practitioners / professionals.

### **BUSINESSES MUST CHANGE THEIR MINDSET**

People in their 60's **can** do the work required. The world of work has changed so much in the past few decades. For 100's of years, a 60 year would have difficulty doing the manual labor required in manufacturing, agricultural, and construction. Today, so many jobs require "thinking" skills over manual labor that people in their 60's can keep working and adding value to the workplace.

Look at this graphic below from the Maine Department of Labor showing the skills required in the growing occupations for the next decade in our state (I am sure many states are similar).

**Critical thinking, problem solving, deductive reasoning, etc... a 60 year old can do all of these.**



Businesses and society at large need to look at people in their 60's (Boomers) as being capable of doing the skills required in these growing occupations and find ways to keep them engaged in the labor force.

Also with the addition of *'universal design'* changes in a workplace, a number of companies found that ALL their workers improved productivity, not just the Boomers. Simple changes in the physical aspects can make a big difference, but a bigger change is needed in 'perception' of this age group.

As Geoff Pearman, Managing Director of [Partners in Change](#), states, "*Creating a workplace where we can all succeed, regardless of race, gender, age, sexuality, or ability, is the right thing to do and also makes good business sense.*"

Businesses need to look at people in their 60's as being

capable of doing the skills required [CLICK TO TWEET](#)

**BOOMERS HAVE CHANGED THEIR MINDSET ALREADY  
(compared to many in this age group in the 1900-60's)**

\*Many Boomers are healthier and more highly educated than their parents and grandparents at this time in their lives. (43% are college graduates when you include 2 year degrees).

\*Many families have adult children or parents living with them. And many have taken out parent loans for their children...at a time they should have been saving for retirement.

\*There are many who want to leave a legacy as well for their grandchildren, (could be time, money, inheritance, etc...) with nearly 80% of these Boomers with grandchildren.

\*From a 2010 MetLife Report on Early Boomers

This "push / pull" for many Boomers is keeping them interested in staying in the labor force.

- *"I feel good"*
- *"I'd still like to make a difference"*
- *"I need the money to make ends meet"*
- *"I would like the money to help my kids and grandkids"*

## WHAT DO BOOMERS BRING TO THE LABOR FORCE?

We already have a multi-generational workforce at many companies. So why not take some of the **historical knowledge** in a company and put it to good use? Keep some of these Boomers in the workforce by offering **flexible scheduling, part-time opportunities, and time off**, which will help delay this impending labor shortage.

What about **mentoring some of these younger workers** to groom them for future leadership positions. How about **consulting or contract work? Job sharing?** There are so many things a company can do to engage and entice Boomers to stay in the labor force.

AARP is recognizing employers who are doing some of these things now in their Employer Pledge Program

- Believe in equal opportunity for all workers, regardless of age
- Believe that 50+ workers should have a level playing field in their ability to compete for and obtain jobs
- Recognize the value of experienced workers
- Recruit across diverse age groups and consider all applicants on an equal basis.

[Learn more](#)

## WHAT CAN WE DO AS CAREER PRACTITIONERS TO HELP?

Our job is to help our clients in this age group to be able to **articulate their value in the labor force**. Career practitioners could help clients see their strengths as possibly:

- understanding company culture
- ability to mentor young people to grow into leadership positions
- bring a skill set that is still needed such as critical thinking or analyzing data
- maturity and experience in difficult situations

We also need to help these folks realize the **importance of networking** and making personal connections in order to secure work opportunities. This could be attending networking events, doing informational interviews, volunteering, using social media to enhance their professional online presence, and more.

**Each client is different and our job is to help them identify their skills, passions, and values** so they can articulate them to employers to solve company problems efficiently and effectively.

We need to help people in the “**pre-retirement**” stage to look at what is coming, understand they can indeed play a role, then articulate that to their supervisors and key people in their company.

Five things you can do now

- Recognize the issues
- Challenge your beliefs and attitudes regarding age
- Help your organization understand the risks and develop practical strategies and action plans
- Ensure your employment practices are age-friendly
- Talk with older workers about the contribution they want to make and what would make your company a great place to continue working

*From Geoff Pearman Partners in Change – New Zealand.*

*\*\*Look for my interview with Geoff Pearman and Marc Miller of Career Pivot next week.*

**If you work with this age group** (or would like to), check out our 5 week online, discussion-based seminar with other career practitioners, focused on working with