

Aging, adult development, and work motivation



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Aging, Adult Development, and Work Motivation Loss: This is mostly attributed to the decline in fluid intellectual abilities with age and the increased cognitive "cost" of exerting the same quantity of cognitive resources (Kanfer & Ackerman 443). A good example of this is seen in the typical growth curve that occurs at consulting firms. A new associate, often in his twenties, is assigned diverse assignments that toss him from one industry to another. For the new associate to survive at a consulting firm therefore requires constant learning, abstract reasoning, and ability to rapidly process novel information. This intense working environment coupled with the constant travelling involved appeals more to the youthful than the older workers. On the other hand, as a consulting associate grows older there is less motivation in encountering novel challenges and moving from analyzing a diverse range of industries. This could probably be the reason why older associates prefer moving away from consulting because neither the task at hand nor the motivations are suited for them. Growth: this theme emphasizes a positive trajectory with age (Kanfer & Ackerman 443). A good example here is the management restructuring that venture capital investors pegged on their decision to invest in Google at startup. Inasmuch as the Google startup duo was at the peak of their fluid intellectual abilities they lacked the broad experiential knowledge required to run a business successfully. Managing is different from leadership because it requires a broader conceptualization of knowledge, emotional maturity and other soft skills. Management requires decision making which is best executed by those who have experienced or have learnt about a range of options and can therefore draw from these the best alternative. A good analogy here would be comparing it to a predator's capability to catch a prey as it grows older.

Reorganization: the idea here is that as we grow older our goals in life change and therefore that which motivates us at work changes to reflect these new goals. For example young adults can be motivated to work harder by being promised rewards such as graduate school education. Young adults are more focused on building networks and acquiring resources for future opportunities. Young adults are more futuristic and therefore the factors that will motivate them reflect this. On the other hand, older adults will be more motivated by rewards such as promotions to a higher status which can elevate their identity within their community and probably assure them of better pension. Carstensen postulates that in late adulthood individuals focus on the "time left" and therefore what motivates them will reflect that (Kanfer & Ackerman 444). Exchange: it is argued that across adulthood there occurs an exchange in the primacy of motives which is evident through personality, self-concept, interests, and values. Under personality it is evident that as we grow older we become more conscientious and agreeable and therefore roles that require these skills are bound to be a better fit. Going back to the example of associates in consulting firms, we find that youthful associates are driven by a need to achieve, to win, to do the big jobs in a range of sectors. However as the associates grow older this drive is replaced by a need to maintain status, consolidate gains, and planning for a successful endgame. Older associates therefore prefer specializing in sectors where they are highly familiar with and in which there are few demands for new learning. As such they can hold their jobs and leverage their experience against the youthful vigor of younger associates. Works Cited Kanfer, Ruth, and Phillip Ackerman. "Aging, Adult Development, and Work Motivation." *Academy of Management Review* 29. 3 (2004): 440 - 458. Print.

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