



SENIORITY: ONLY THE PREJUDICE IS OLD

By Daniela Campos

In this article I will address SENIOR knowledge management. A true demographic revolution is underway. Through falling birth rates, advances in science and increasing life expectancy, humanity is getting older. This phenomenon has been observed across the world for a few decades, with the growth of the elderly population varying between countries, but leading to a reversal of the global age pyramid everywhere, with more seniors in the population than young people. For Brazil, the 21st century will be the century of aging and we

will see this process play out in an accelerated way. Currently, 14% of the population is over 60 years old in Brazil. In 2040, this age cohort will represent 24% according to the WHO (World Health Organization). In 25 years, the elderly population is estimated to double in size and jump from 31 million to 62.8 million people.

This age transformation raises a red flag concerning the urgency of changing the way we act with regard to aging and age prejudice - so-called Ageism. Stereotypes don't come close to defining this

population and talking about longevity is not evoking the past, but instead a thing of the present and a passport to the future.

According to projections from IPEA, half of the Brazilian workforce will be over 50 years old by 2040. Companies should therefore also address the issue strategically and transversely with regard to the different areas. In HR, the agenda involves reviewing recruitment & selection practices, integrating professionals from different generations, special career models and new working relationships.

Longevity is considered a characteristic of human progress, an evolution, and contemporary issues cannot be solved based on obsolete practices.

Senior has two meanings in the dictionary - 1. someone who is older in terms of age 2. someone who is the oldest and most experienced in a particular area or profession. Culturally, a more pejorative connotation seems to be given to one meaning and a more flattering one to the other. Just another one of our contradictions. We seek seniority for positions with a strategic scope and greater responsibility in decision-making, but age management practices put an increasingly short expiration date on this knowledge in companies. We lose productivity this way.

The paradigm of the industrial age that older professionals were less productive is no longer true today. We all know someone in their 60s, 70s, 80s who is very physically and intellectually active, whose work has enormous value for a company or society. My first reference is very close to me - my mother (to whom I dedicate this article), but so as not to stray too far from the empirical, a study done by the International Longevity Centre in 35 countries revealed a direct and positive relationship between longevity and productivity. Another study, with HR managers, recorded the perception that seniors stand out through their commitment, loyalty, cooperation, risk management, emotional balance, relationship and learning skills.

We can't say that we don't find these skills in young people. That would be the same prejudice, but in the other way. There are things that are usually only brought by maturity, however, since living diverse experiences in quantity

and complexity takes time. Let's consider the average age of CEOs or board members - the experiences, achievements and skills acquired over the course of their career qualify them to occupy these positions. By knowing the value of seniority, these are leaders who can take on the challenge of addressing the issues of longevity in the companies they run.

I have always talked about diversity as a wealth-generating marker for businesses - be it in terms of gender, ethnicity, social class, or region. And age diversity undoubtedly adds to the others, with much to contribute. As Chip Conley - entrepreneur, author of such best-sellers as *Wisdom at Work*, and founder of the Modern Elder Academy - put it: today for the first time, we have five generations in the workplace at the same time, involuntarily. We may need to be more intentional about the practices of how we work and learn collectively.



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Knowledge and learning are not inherent to one phase of life. We teach and learn forever and since forever. Creating an environment where different generations can share and integrate knowledge, values and skills, therefore, is of strategic importance and generates benefits for all.

The experience of intergenerationality teaches us that we have a lot to learn from each other. Each generation, faced with its context, has developed skills and intelligences (cognitive, social, emotional, digital) that must be shared. We need to bring strongholds together, building bridges between different ages and creating powerful teams. This exchange will not only produce wisdom, but also strengthen bonds and create relationships of empathy and reciprocity between the parties, minimizing prejudice and building a better world for our parents, ourselves and our children.