



Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

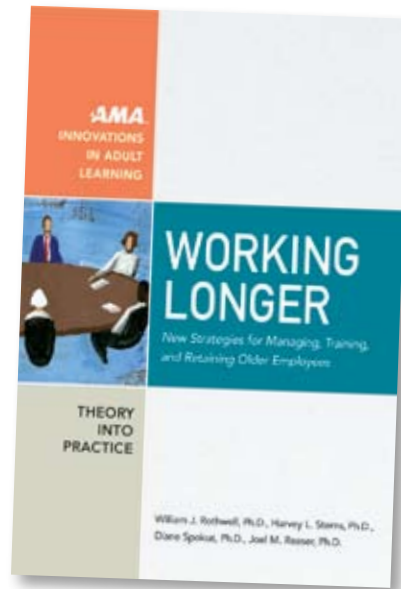
There's nothing like 'book-ending' an issue. Since our jobs cannot be done without people, enjoy the insightful analysis of Suzanne Drew and her assessment of two books about managing people. As you take advantage of summer conferences or a vacation, or as you prepare for the return to students to your campus in the fall, these books will teach you a little more about managing people – *TW*

Reviewed by Suzanne Drew

WORKING LONGER: NEW STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING, TRAINING, AND RETAINING OLDER EMPLOYEES

By William J. Rothwell, Ph.D., Harvey L. Sterns, Ph.D., Diane Spokus, Ph.D., Joel M. Reaser, Ph.D. Published by AMACOM, New York, 2008. 244 pages, softcover, \$29.95.

At the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, a quick demographic review of our nearly 450 full-time facilities employees shows that nearly 75 percent are at least 40 years of age, and nearly 50 percent have already celebrated their 50th birthdays. Assuming our workforce is fairly representative of many other higher education facilities groups across the country, it seems likely that the aging of the baby boomer generation, while having a material impact across all sectors and industries, may be having a disproportionate effect on facilities-related professions and jobs. Interestingly, not only are our current, long-term employees becoming “older workers” but many of our new hires fall into this category as well. The same quick analysis shows that 40 percent of our employees aged 60 to 69, and 33 percent of our employees aged 50 to 59, were hired within the last five years. Given the economy and other factors, it appears a safe bet



that the average age of our workforces and applicant pools will continue to climb into the future.


These workforce changes provide the context for *Working Longer*. The authors present research and information on adult development and the effect aging has on an individual's ability to learn, change, innovate, and work; they provide research-based, practical recommendations to accommodate these changes, and ways to take advantage of them.

For example, the authors point out that if you control for disease, aging has little effect on physical, intellectual, and mental abilities as they come into play in the workplace (with the exception of the most physically strenuous and demanding jobs). It is true that eyesight and hearing fade, but that can be accommodated with good lighting, contrasting print, larger fonts, and looking at people when you speak to them. Some older workers may process new information slower than they once did and may benefit from a greater emphasis during the learning process on application and

how it relates to things they already know well, but once the knowledge or skill is learned, their accuracy and reliability in applying it is often higher than that of their younger colleagues.

The greatest challenge, conclude the authors – to both older workers and employers – is the erroneous common knowledge that one can be “too old” to learn and change, especially when it comes to new technologies and skills. When working under this mistaken belief, employers can often fail to train and engage their older workers, and older workers themselves may limit their ambitions, their willingness to grow and take on new challenges, and often, their willingness to continue working.


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Older workers, the authors tell us, want to work to earn money, retain benefits, to make meaningful contributions, do interesting work, and maintain meaningful social contacts. Employers of older workers benefit from fewer voluntary absences, less turnover, fewer accidents, higher productivity rates, and years of expertise and knowledge. Given the very real changing demographics of our workforce and the potential benefits to all in the very practical and accessible recommendations set forth, the concepts and ideas presented in *Working Longer* are sure to spark some interesting and valuable organizational conversations.

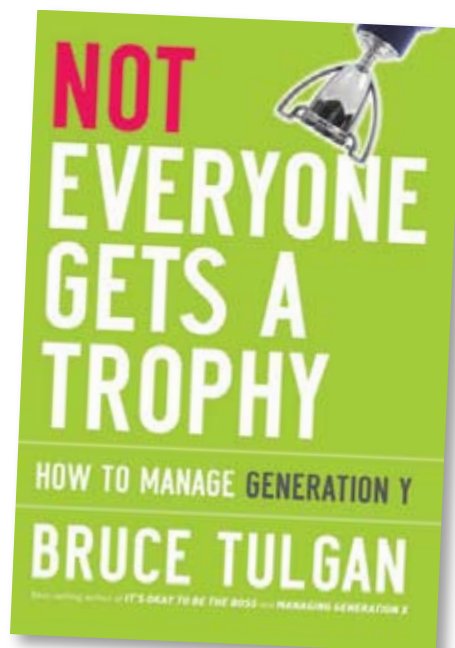
Reviewed by Suzanne Drew
**NOT EVERYONE GETS A TROPHY:
HOW TO MANAGE GENERATION Y**

By Bruce Tulgan, Published by Jossey-Bass, New York, 2009. 182 pages, hardcover, \$24.95.

While reading *Not Everyone Wins a Trophy*, I kept thinking of the famous optical illusion that appears to be a picture of a vase, until you just slightly shift your focus, and the picture clearly becomes two people looking nose-to-nose. Bruce Tulgan begins by acknowledging some of the commonly held, and not necessarily complimentary, perceptions of members of the Y Generation, those born between 1978 and 1990.

Among them: they won't do grunt work and want the top job day one; they need work to be fun; they don't respect their elders or authority; they don't care about climbing the proverbial career ladder; and they will never make good managers because they are so self-focused. While acknowledging that many Gen Y behaviors can be perceived that way, he shifts the focus to show how these very traits and characteristics, with the right management and support, can also make this generation of workers one of the most productive and committed.

This generation, he points out, was reared during the self-esteem-based Decade of the Child. They were given options and a voice since early childhood and taught to be proud of their differences and uniqueness. They were born to the Internet and take for granted the ability to research and become "expert" on any subject at any time. They have had the greatest buying power at a younger age than any generation before them, and have come to demand good customer service in



pretty much all of their interactions. Because they have seen so much change in their lifetimes, they don't find it at all threatening and have developed an expectation for short-term and direct returns on investments of their time, attentions, and energies. Unlike many generations before them, because of their histories, they view authority figures, such as parents, teachers, and eventually employers, not as audiences to please, fear, or rebel against, but as equals with slightly different perspectives who have a responsibility to and an interest in helping them succeed.

Tulgan presents a series of specific and usable recommendations to recruit, select, manage, train, develop, correct,

reward, motivate, and engage these employees. Best of all however, his recommendations to get the most out of these employees are likely to get the best out of any employees regardless of age. For decades, management literature has preached that to get the most commitment and creativity out of a workforce, management should provide clear expectations on work performance, work habits and work culture. They should provide ongoing and accessible support and feedback. They should provide employees both with the context of their work and managements decisions, as well as opportunities for meaningful input, contribution, growth, and development of skills and abilities.

It turns out, that while these "high maintenance" management strategies have traditionally been considered an option for organizations seeking increased creativity, productivity, and engagement, this new generation considers them basic expectations...at least if you want them to stick around for a while.

Because Tulgan's practical and accessible recommendations run the gamut from recruiting and selection, to preparing new employees for success, to how to give effective feedback, to how to motivate and build commitment and engagement, *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy* is a good and usable management book regardless of the age of workforce. The book is an easy and fun read, provides truly good and useful information for any workforce – and Tulgan's many anecdotes will either make you laugh or shudder, depending on when your birthday is. ☺

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