

# How experienced workers can strengthen your talent pool in a shrinking labor market





A whole wave of baby boomers are preparing to retire, and this exodus could leave a skills chasm that leads to a [permanent labor shortage](#). And it's not just a U.S. problem — this [global workforce shortage](#) will impact countries around the world, especially throughout Europe and China.

For years, organizations have clung to biases against older workers when recruiting. But now, necessity is kicking ageism to the curb, pushing businesses to reevaluate hiring strategies and perceptions when it comes to this essential part of any workforce.

In a strange twist, the looming labor shortage may be the kick that's needed to shift the narrative on age and employment. As the supply of workers tightens, organizations are finding themselves in a bind, and they must take a closer look at experienced workers, those with a lifetime of skills and wisdom to offer.

If you're picturing the over-55 crowd as out of touch and reluctant to learn new skills, think again. In the age of artificial intelligence and automation, the uniquely human "power skills" that experienced workers excel in are more valuable than ever. Their ability to lead, effectively communicate, and navigate the human side of work is becoming increasingly important.

So, let's take a moment to bust the myths surrounding older workers and shine a spotlight on what they truly bring to the table. It's time to explore how organizations can tap into their potential and foster a thriving, diverse, and powerful multigenerational workforce.





## Common misconceptions: Setting the record straight on workers over 55

We've all heard the tired stereotypes about workers 55 and older: they're set in their ways, can't get their heads around new tech, and maybe they're not as sharp as they used to be. Plus – the myth goes – they cost a fortune in health care and salaries, and they're hogging roles that younger, “hungrier” folks could be filling.

Retirement is often painted as the finish line, with workers hitting their mid-50s supposedly counting down the days until they can hang up their hats. There's this mistaken belief that once people reach a certain age, they're more interested in polishing their golf clubs than their résumés or performance at work.

But let's shed some light on these outdated ideas. Years of research from the [Stanford Center on Longevity](#) tell us that older workers are very reliable, ace stress management, and are every bit as productive as their younger colleagues. Their deep industry knowledge and life experience make them pivotal players in decision-making and problem-solving. Plus, their commitment and low turnover can boost team morale and underpin a strong company culture.

But it doesn't end there. Representing a significant part of the [U.S. workforce at 23%](#), the government [expects](#) this part of the workforce (55+) to only grow. Older workers also report being happier in their roles. “They are among the most satisfied with their job overall and with various aspects of their job, such as their relationships with their co-workers and their manager,” [Kim Parker](#), Pew Research Center's director of social trends research, said in an [interview with Yahoo Finance](#). “They're more likely to find work enjoyable and fulfilling, and less likely to find it stressful or overwhelming, compared with younger workers.”

Tech-wise, while it's true that older workers weren't born with a smartphone in their hands, it's way off the mark to tag them as tech laggards. Many are eager to learn and adopt new tech tools, often merging time-honored and modern methods to bring fresh and useful insights to their teams. In fact, many of today's top leaders in technology fall into this key 55+ demographic themselves.





And about retirement — not everyone over 55 dreams about endless days on the beach. Many experienced workers like the idea of “gradual retirement,” keeping their hand in with [flexible or part-time roles](#). Some even relish the idea of trying something new within their current organization or diving into an entirely new career path. Their mix of experience and thirst for meaningful work makes them a formidable player in today’s labor market.

### **53% of employers believe that many of their employees expect to work past the age of 65 or do not plan to retire.**

– [“Stepping Into the Future: Employers, Workers, and the Multigenerational Workforce,” Transamerica Institute](#)

So, it’s time for organizations to ditch the stereotypes and start appreciating the huge value and potential that experienced workers offer. With their potent blend of skills, experience, and unique insights, they’re ready to power innovation and growth and help instill a competitive edge in today’s fast-paced business world.

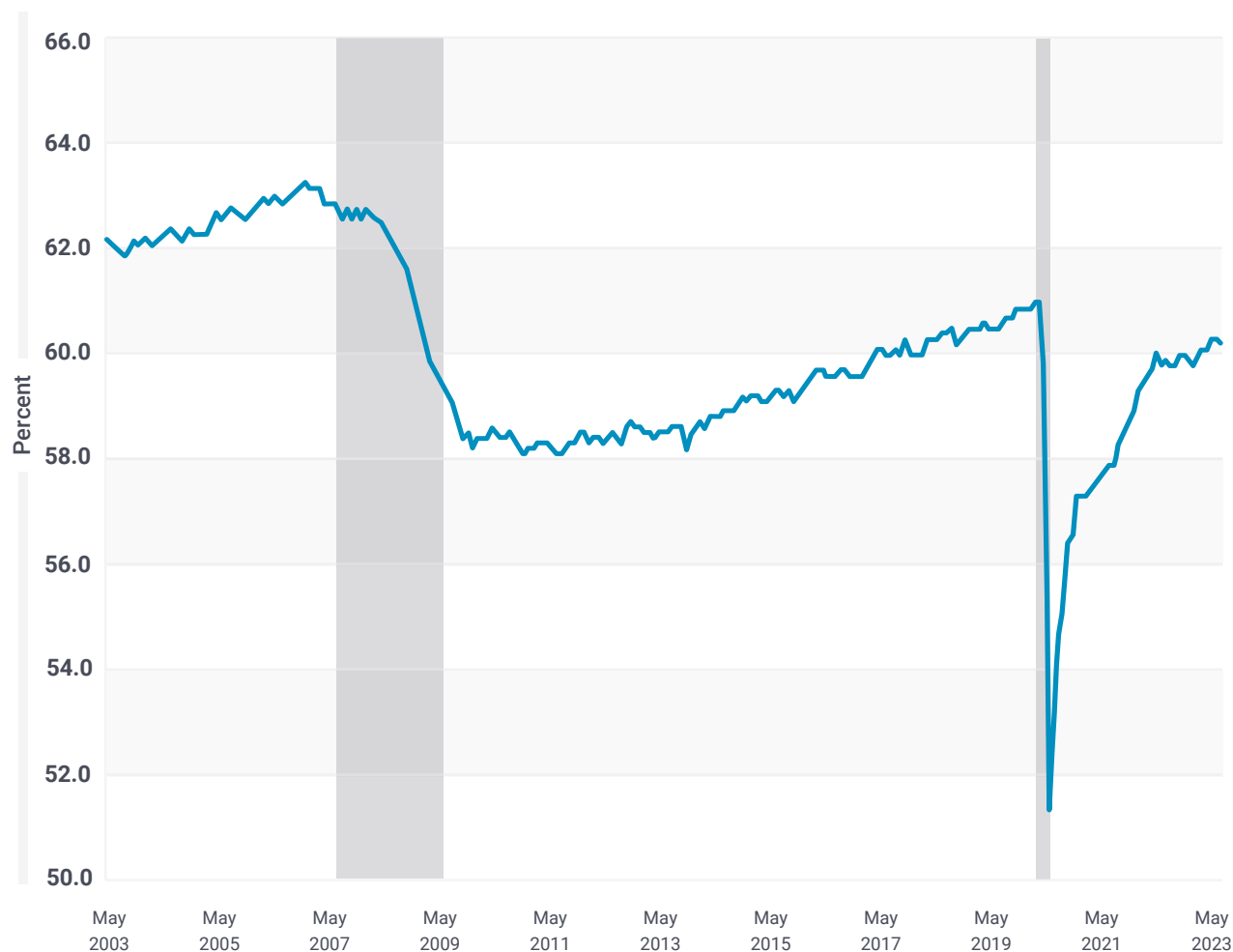
### **A closer look at a shrinking labor supply**

If you’ve ever listened to an economic discussion, you’ve probably heard about the “employment-to-population ratio,” but what does it really mean? This ratio compares the number of people employed to the total working-age population of a country. It provides a snapshot of how much of the population is employed and actively participating in the labor market.

Over the past few years, this ratio has been on a [slow but steady decline](#) — peaking at 63.4% in 2006 and dropping to 60.4% in April 2023. So, what’s the big deal about this? Well, it indicates that a lower proportion of the working-age population is employed now than in previous years.



## Employment - population ratio, seasonally adjusted



Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](https://www.bls.gov)

Now, throw the retirement of baby boomers into this mix and the result is a rapidly shrinking labor pool. **According to calculations by Eightfold AI, if the U.S. wishes to maintain the current employment-to-population ratios, labor force participation by those over 55 will need to increase by about 25%.**

This isn't just a U.S. issue. Other countries, including the UK, Germany, and France, are wrestling with similar challenges related to their aging populations. France's employment-to-population ratio is particularly low at 52%, significantly lower than the others, which hover around 60%.

This means that the need for experienced workers isn't just an option — it's a necessity. To maintain current employment levels and continue driving economies, organizations must tap into the skills and knowledge of experienced workers. Let's take a closer look at how you can do just that.



## The rising value of power skills and experienced workers

As we zoom into a future shaped by AI and technology, one thing becomes clear – the real heroes are still human, particularly those seasoned with experience. The [rising value of power skills and experienced workers](#) in today's job market is a testament to this fact, proving once again that there's much more to work than algorithms and data.

### Why AI can't beat a human touch

AI has advanced in leaps and bounds. From managing intricate data to handling mundane chores, it's a game-changer. But despite all its computational prowess, there's one area where AI hasn't quite cracked the code – emotions. Regarding empathy, communication, critical thinking, and leadership – skills often termed “power skills” – humans remain unbeatable. And experienced workers? Well, they're the masters of the game.

### How experience nurtures power skills

Experience can't be simulated or fast-tracked. It results from years spent navigating complex work scenarios, human dynamics, and countless challenges. This time-honed wisdom gives experienced workers a valuable set of skills – empathy, communication, and leadership – all of which AI is far from replicating.

In today's world, these skills are more valuable than ever. They're the glue that binds teams together, the catalyst that sparks innovation, and the compass that leads the way through tricky situations. While technical skills can often be taught, power skills are usually developed over time, making them a priceless asset in the workforce.

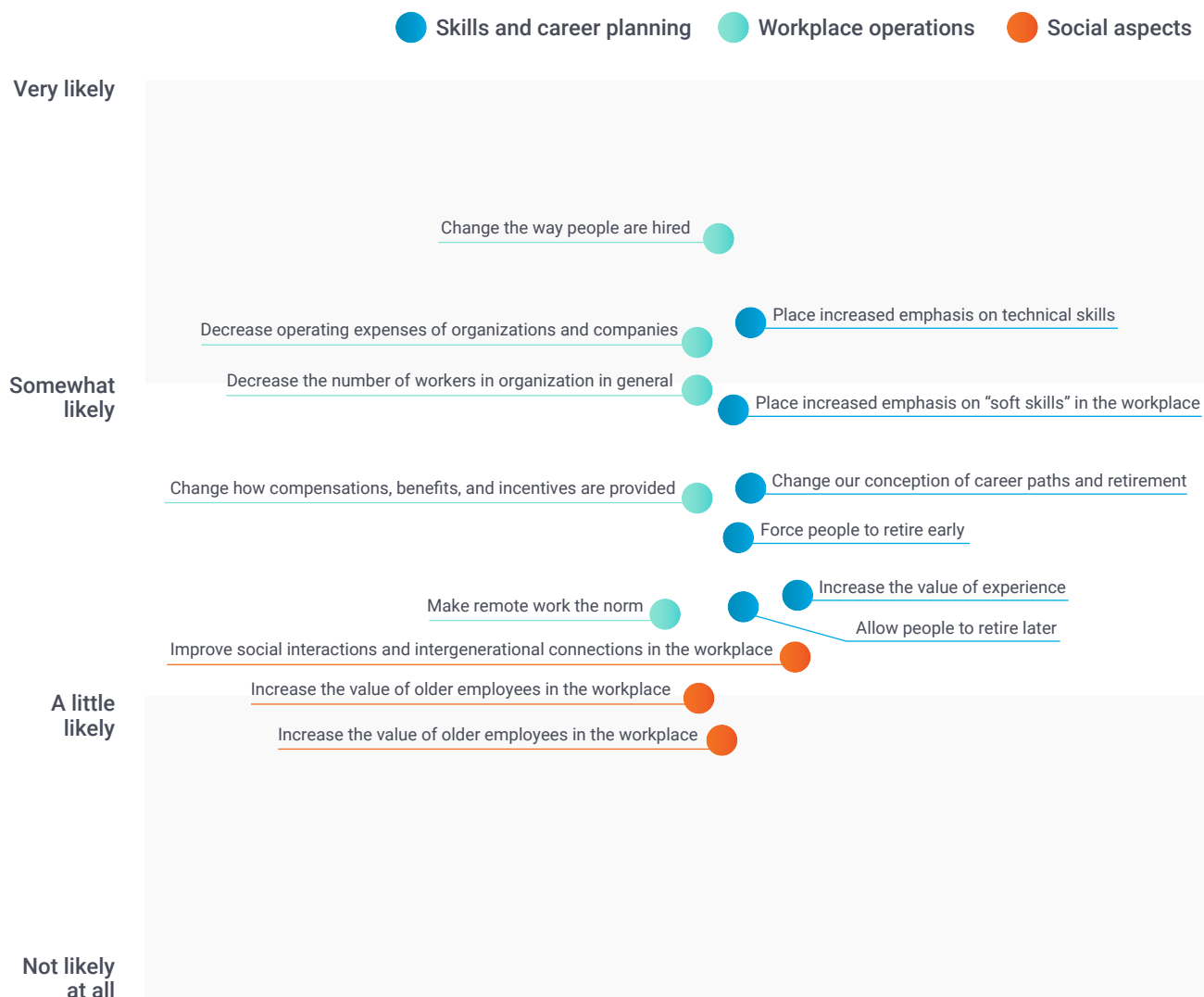
### How AI can enhance the value of experience

According to the [MIT AgeLab survey](#), experts believe that AI will play a pivotal role in allowing people to retire later, thus increasing the value of their experience. But the relationship between AI and the value of experienced workers isn't straightforward.

Interestingly, the MIT researchers found that, contrary to some opinions, AI is not expected to place a higher emphasis on soft or technical skills in the workplace over the next decade. You might be scratching your head, wondering why. It might seem counterintuitive, given that we're arguing for the importance of power skills that AI lacks. The reason for this discrepancy isn't clear, and it raises an important question: Why did respondents respond this way, and what does this mean for the role of AI and power skills in the workplace? This is a question we're keen to explore further.



## In the next 10 years, how likely is it that AI helps us achieve the following?

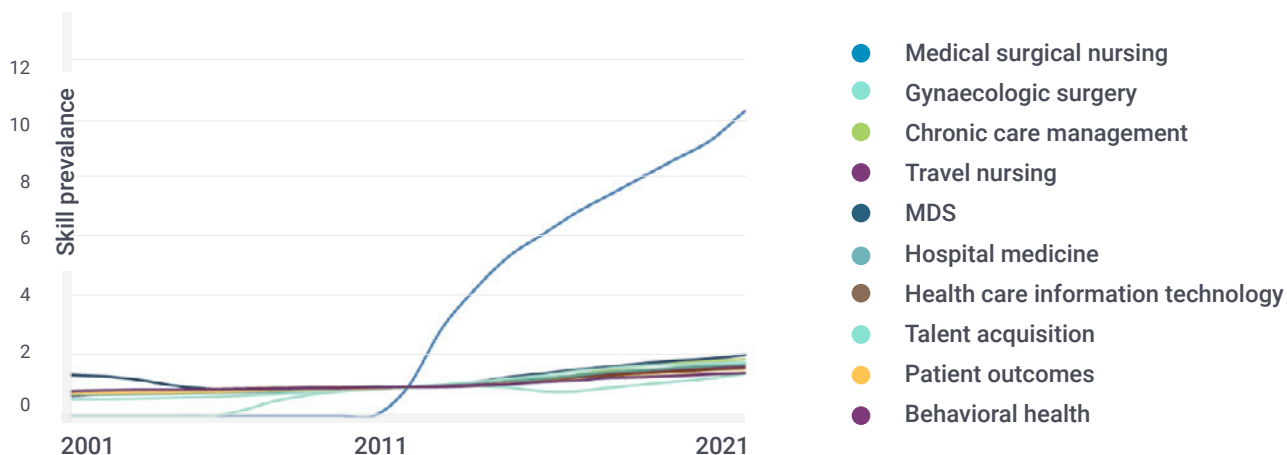


Source: [MIT AgeLab Survey](#)

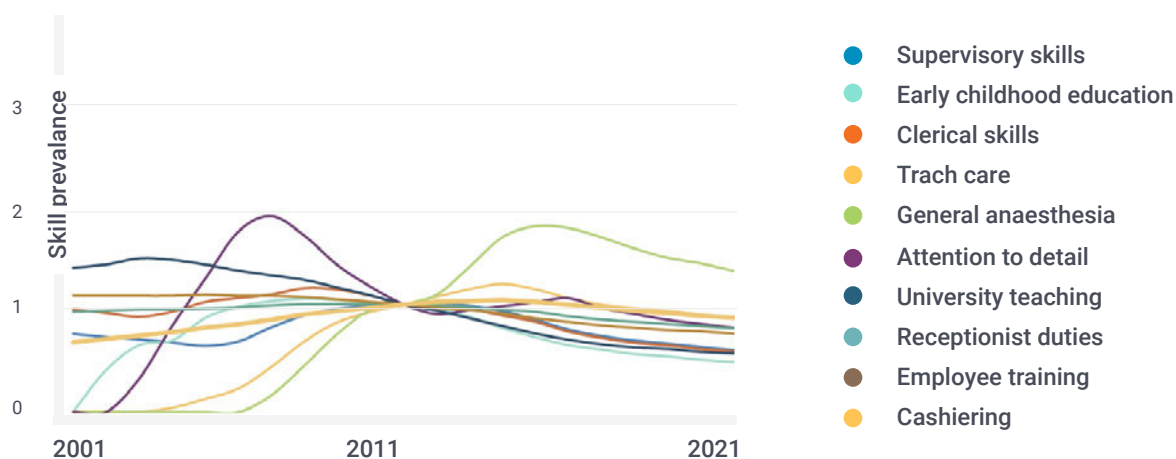
In addition, the survey people believe that AI will allow people to retire later over the next decade. Does this mean that AI's advancements in medicine will keep us healthier longer, thus extending our working lives? Or, is it because AI will take over tedious or repetitive tasks, allowing people to focus on more meaningful work and, as a result, make us want to stay employed longer, thereby enhancing the value of our work experience?



## Rising nursing skills in the global workforce



## Declining nursing skills in the global workforce



Source: Eightfold AI

### Experienced workers and the ever-evolving skill set

Certain skills are rapidly evolving, and those skills that are here to stay are ones that generative AI can enhance. Experienced workers are the seasoned pros behind many of these critical remaining skills.

The [nursing crisis](#) is an example. As AI and new technologies are introduced into the health care sector, the focus in nursing is shifting to integrate both core nursing skills and capabilities in working with new technologies.





In this case, it's not about replacing human nurses with robots. It's about augmenting the capabilities of our health care professionals with technology. For instance, AI can take over routine tasks and data analysis, freeing up nurses to concentrate on what they do best: providing empathetic, human care to their patients.

Who better to navigate this delicate balance of tech-enhanced care than experienced nurses? They're the ones with years of hands-on practice, a deep understanding of patient needs, and nuanced communication skills that can't be programmed into a machine. It's their unique combination of technical and power skills, amplified by AI, that will lead the way in solving the nursing crisis and other similar challenges across sectors.

And with an [expected 3.5 million](#) future job openings for health aides, health technicians, and wellness workers, and an additional 2 million health care professionals, the need for experienced workers will only grow.

### **The upside of hiring mature workers**

Much like a vintage Bordeaux wine, experienced workers bring depth and richness to the workplace that can't be imitated. Here, we dive into why employers should take notice of this golden opportunity to hire and promote experienced workers right under their noses.

#### **Multigenerational magic**

When it comes to building a team, mixing it up with a range of ages can do wonders for your company culture. A multigenerational workforce isn't just a melting pot of ideas and perspectives — it's a dynamic environment where innovation and productivity take center stage.

Different generations bring unique strengths and experiences to the table, fostering a culture of mutual learning and respect. The tech-savvy younger workforce learns from their older colleagues' rich reservoir of life and work experiences, while the mature workers get to stay in touch with the latest trends and innovations. It's a winning situation for everyone involved.

Organizations are recognizing these opportunities by implementing programs to foster this multigenerational experience. The most frequently cited programs include traditional and reverse mentorships, which [48%](#) of companies surveyed have implemented. Unfortunately, only 28% of employers offer specific training that addresses generational differences and helps prevent age discrimination.



### **Remote work mastery**

When offices worldwide shut their doors and work moved online, many might have thought that older workers would struggle. But guess what? They proved everyone wrong. Experienced workers took remote work in stride, adapting quickly to technology, virtual communication, and new work formats.

With years of experience under their belt, they're uniquely equipped to lead virtual teams. Their communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills are vital in managing teams remotely. They know how to foster a sense of unity even across screens, maintain productivity, and ensure everyone feels seen and heard. So, when it comes to remote work, experienced workers are not just surviving, they're thriving.

### **Unleashing the wisdom of mature workers**

There's no substitute for experience. The knowledge and expertise of mature workers are invaluable assets that can help to bridge the labor gap in today's market. Yet, this talent pool often remains untapped, with employers favoring younger workers. The truth is older workers bring much more than their work experience to the table. Their ability to navigate complex situations with grace, their resilience, and their unique perspectives can bring a new dimension to problem-solving and decision-making at the workplace.

### **Employers' opportunity to lead change**

Beyond their business objectives, employers also have a critical societal role to play. By providing meaningful employment and support to older workers, they enhance their company's productivity and innovation and contribute to a more inclusive society. [Research from Gartner](#) indicates that organizations that value and promote diversity are more successful in the long run. Employers stand to gain a competitive edge in the market by stepping up their game and offering a welcoming environment for workers of all ages. Recognizing and harnessing the potential of experienced workers is not just the right thing to do – it's also good for business.



## 5 ways to harness the power of experience for organizational growth

Mature workers aren't just employees – they are deep wells of knowledge and wisdom that can enrich an organization in countless ways. Let's explore how employers can unlock this potential and set the stage for unprecedented growth and success.

- 1 Put the unbeatable competitive advantage of experience to work**  
The first step is to change the lens through which we view our mature workforce. Experience isn't just about how many years someone has worked – it's about the diverse challenges they've overcome, the unique insights they've gained, and the hard-earned wisdom they bring to roles. Recognizing and tapping into the [value of these experiences](#) can catapult an organization toward new heights of innovation and success.
- 2 Hire for potential, not age**  
Potential should be the guiding star when scouting for talent, not age. Hiring should be about identifying the value a person can bring to the table. The versatility, resilience, and vast professional networks mature workers often possess make them invaluable assets to any organization.
- 3 Promote lifelong learning and upskilling**  
Learning should never stop. Employers can promote a culture of continuous learning and upskilling among all employees, including older employees. Not only does this help experienced workers stay relevant in the evolving business landscape, but it also fosters a culture of personal growth and development that benefits the organization as a whole.
- 4 Make age a key consideration in DEI programs**  
It's time to expand our understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs to include age. Recognizing workers' unique challenges and experiences across different age groups can lead to a more inclusive and equitable workplace where everyone feels valued and heard.
- 5 Offer flexible work environments for mutual success**  
Finally, employers can further support their experienced workers by offering flexible work arrangements. This caters to their specific needs and leads to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, and, ultimately, greater organizational success. The future of work is flexible, and employers who recognize this will stay ahead of the curve.



## **Build the workforce of the future with experienced workers**

As we look toward a future teeming with new challenges and unprecedented opportunities, it's time to reevaluate our [perception of mature workers](#). Far from being sidelined, these seasoned professionals hold the key to bridging the looming labor shortage, enriching our workplaces with diverse perspectives, and driving our organizations to new heights.

Businesses today have a unique opportunity to leverage this largely untapped talent pool. By rethinking outdated stereotypes, focusing on lifelong learning and potential, making age a key consideration in DEI programs, and offering flexible work environments, employers can foster a more inclusive, dynamic, and innovative work environment and gain a competitive advantage.

This paradigm shift isn't just about filling roles — it's about creating a culture of mutual respect, growth, and learning where everyone — regardless of their age — feels valued and heard.

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talent  
visibility.

Extraordinary  
HR  
performance.

See  
**Greatness**  
Everywhere.



### **Ready to propel your organization into the future with a data-driven, strategic HR approach?**

Eightfold's AI-powered Talent Intelligence Platform is designed to help organizations understand, engage, and retain their workforce more effectively. With our platform, employers can eliminate unconscious bias in hiring and performance assessments, identify and nurture talent within the organization, and create personalized learning and career paths for employees of all ages.

Whether it's finding the right role for an experienced professional, recommending targeted upskilling opportunities, or providing insights to drive DEI initiatives, Eightfold is there to support every step of the journey.

Discover how we can assist you in building a future-ready workforce.

[Transform your workforce.](#)

### **About Eightfold AI**

Eightfold AI's market-leading Talent Intelligence Platform™ helps organizations retain top performers, upskill and reskill their workforce, recruit talent efficiently, and reach diversity goals. Eightfold's patented deep learning artificial intelligence platform is available in more than 155 countries and 24 languages, enabling cutting-edge enterprises to transform their talent into a competitive advantage. For more information, visit [www.eightfold.ai](http://www.eightfold.ai).