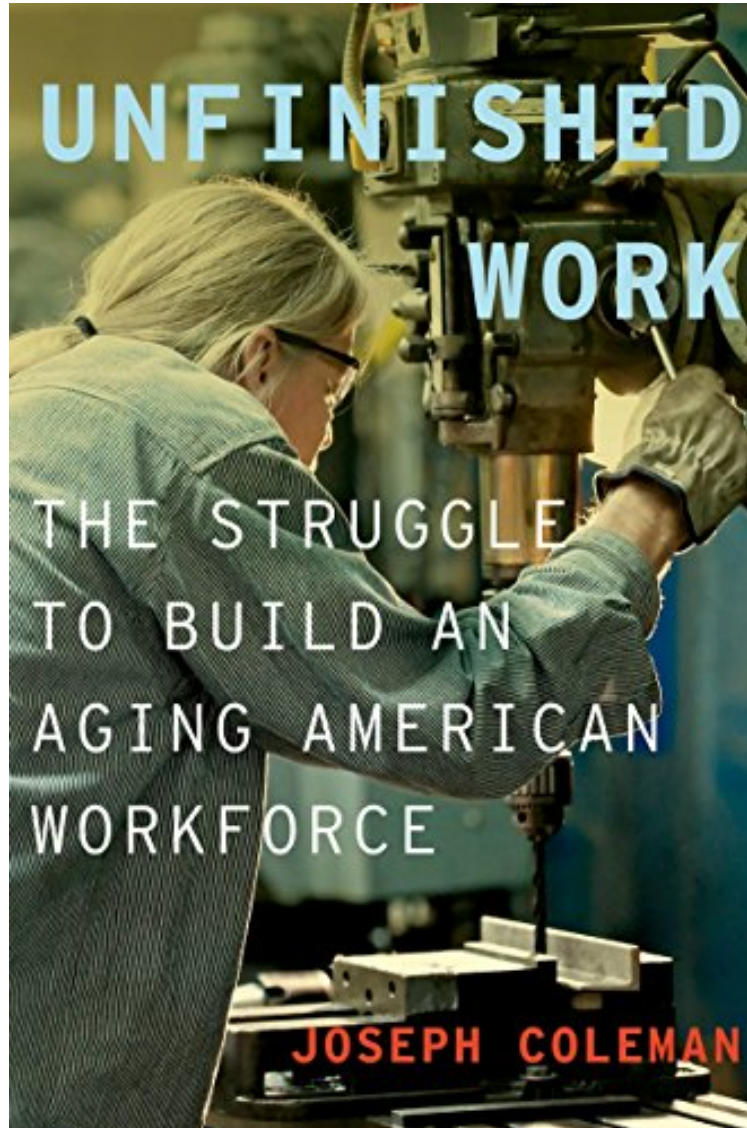


[E-BOOK] Unfinished Work: The Struggle to Build an Aging American Workforce

Unfinished Work: The Struggle to Build an Aging American Workforce

Joseph Coleman

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the topic1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wake up, turn off X-Factor and Facebook for an evening or two, and read this! It is fairly essential reading for society!By DarrenIngram_dot_comNews that America and many other countries face a demographic time bomb is not news. However the problems facing an ever-aging population in the world, already depressed by a global economic crisis and technological change seemingly is less in focus. This book seeks to change this.What a fascinating read! The author has certainly crammed a lot of great information into a relatively small, well researched, academically sound book. Politicians and leaders of companies should read this and start to engage their brain cells. Older workers are not going to go away in a hurry, structural change is necessary. Yet different approaches taken from around the world might help mitigate the problem, even if they cannot entirely solve it. Standing still and doing nothing is no option in any case.This book is U.S.-centric although it does draw in experiences from around the world. Yet the problems are not restricted to one country. Some countries have a little more breathing space before their own demographic time bomb explodes; many others are not so fortunate. The author has looked at other countries to see how they are handling their own demographic problems. A mixture of cultures, backed up with portraits of many older workers really brings matters into focus. Improving conditions for older workers is critical for ensuring individual success and prosperity and that, of course, in turn will impact society. Something has to be done!The book astutely records that older employees and job seekers increasingly feel that their age is being held against them. This is undeniable. A job market that fails to take full advantage of their talents frustrates trained and energetic older workers and, naturally, the younger workforce is also disenfranchised. The older generation have so much to give, both to society but also to the next generation of workers. Both groups need each other.Reading the following paragraph really highlights the situation we are in today and how we got there: "Two powerful engines are behind the aging trend. One is the unprecedented extension of lifetimes in the 20th century, abetted by the dramatic reduction in infant mortality, particularly in the industrialized countries of Europe, North America and East Asia. Between 1970 and 2010, global male life expectancy soared from 56.4 years to 67.5 years, a gain of more than 11 years, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010, published in The Lancet, a leading medical journal. Women gained even more, increasing from 61.2 to 73.3 in the same time frame. Lifetimes in industrialized countries far outstrip those global averages, reaching their pinnacle in Japan, where women live until they're 86, men until they're 80. What that means, simply, is more old people. And this is a great achievement; as never before, the average citizen in wealthy nations—and even not-so-wealthy nations."Many believe that researchers have drastically underestimated or underappreciated the scope of the problem. Can things get worse? Possibly, who has considered China? As the book notes: "In a generation - or perhaps less than a generation - the burgeoning economies of China and India will face their own quandaries of aging and work. Thanks largely to its one-child policy, China risks becoming the first major economy in modern times to become old before it becomes rich, with potential consequences for the global economy."This reviewer is neither young nor old: a balanced 40-something. Yet so many of the problems being described are not unfamiliar or far-fetched, irrespective of the country you are based in. Take the description of a worker: "He had two major strikes against him as he ventured out into the job market for the first time in more than a decade. First, he had never gone to college. As many in the United States in the Great Recession have found, that fact alone would exclude him from many jobs, and those without a university degree have a higher unemployment rate than college grads."Of course, the younger group of jobseekers, armed with degrees and student debt, complain about the lack of opportunities, the lack of experience and often "degree inflation" where many jobs that previously didn't demand and probably don't need a degree-level education now routinely do so.How did society as a whole get into this mess? It is more than a question of demographics.Despite this book being clearly aimed at an academic, professional audience — with a mass of bibliographic references and notes at its disposal — it still manages to tug at the heartstrings and get the reader really thinking about things. The experiences taken from around the world add a lot of colour and value to the central argument and it is interesting to note the different approaches being taken to try and solve the problem. Some of the changes may be transplantable into other countries with relative ease. Some, however, might need political and cultural shifts and could that be a step too far?Put bluntly, it would be great if a book like this didn't exist because the problem didn't exist. This is a great book that sensitively, honestly, modestly and powerfully looks at a worldwide problem. It doesn't claim to have all of the answers, it is not an instant solution in waiting. Yet it might just add a few more pieces to the puzzle and possibly help lead towards a solution being found. It deserves a much wider audience than what it probably will attract. It is essential reading.

The era of the aging worker is here. The forces driving the first decades of the 21st century -- globalization, technology, societal aging, and jarring economic instability -- have made later retirement a necessity for many, but those who choose to stay in the workforce are frustrated by a job market that fails to take advantage of their talents. As government's ability to finance retirement and health care declines, making space for older workers in the labor force has emerged as a chief challenge for the coming century.Veteran international correspondent Joseph Coleman spent three years traveling to various places in Japan, France, Sweden, and across the United States to profile this aging global workforce. From the rice paddies of Japan to the heart of the American rust-belt, Coleman takes readers inside

the lives of older workers. Clear-eyed portraits of individuals illuminate the aging of the world labor force and introduce readers to the factories, offices, and fields where older workers toil and the societies in which they live. *Unfinished Work* explores a world in the midst of a revolution that will have far-reaching consequences for present and coming generations. Coleman maps out the problems we confront, shows us avenues forward, and illustrates the dangers of inaction. The engaging narrative reveals how accommodating our aging workforce can usher in humane policies that benefit workers across the spectrum of age. Improving conditions for older workers is critical for ensuring success and prosperity for society as a whole for years to come.

"*Unfinished Work* is a jewel of insightful reporting that illuminates the human heart of the global economy. In a sweeping narrative that takes the reader from a mountain village in Japan to unemployment lines in the U.S., Joseph Coleman shows us the dignity and desperation of older workers, doing their best to survive and lead lives of purpose and meaning in a world that is rushing to leave them behind. It's a beautiful, urgent book that raises crucial questions about our future, both as countries and as individuals." --Thomas French, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of *Zoo Story: Life in the Garden of Captives*"The storytelling is engrossing, the character studies wonderfully rich, the information solid, and the writing superb. Coleman has produced an enjoyable, important, highly readable report from our future." --Charles Hanley, Special Correspondent at the Associated Press, winner of the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting, and author of *The Bridge at No Gun Ri*"Joseph Coleman presents a creative and informative approach to later life work in *Unfinished Work*. Using international examples, there are engaging representations of challenging employment situations and outcomes. Major theories, policies, and authorities are worked into the text in interesting ways. Profiles of real workers, company practices, and programs are relevant and impactful." --Harvey L. Sterns, Ph.D. Director, Institute for Life-Span Development and Gerontology, The University of Akron"A significant and timely contribution to the field. Joseph Coleman demonstrates great skill in guiding the reader through the complexities of the issues, from the need to re-fashion work for ageing societies that devalue age, to how older workers who are at the vanguard of modern employment practices may be treated as anachronisms, to the emergence of innovative public and employer policies against a background of a profound reconfiguration of economies which may limit their effectiveness. Informative and often inspiring, *Unfinished Work* is recommended as an invaluable resource for scholars, public policymakers and practitioners internationally." --Philip Taylor, Professor of Human Resource Management, Federation University Australia

About the Author Joseph Coleman has been a journalist for more than two decades, spending most of that time as a foreign correspondent for Associated Press, including 11 years in Japan. He's reported from more than 20 countries throughout Asia, Europe, and Latin America, covering stories ranging from the Colombian government's battle with the Medellin drug cartel to the Kobe earthquake, the Asian tsunami, and global warming. A graduate of Vassar College and Columbia University, Coleman is the Roy W. Howard Professor of Practice in the Indiana University Media School.