



Fellows Broadsheet

The Institute of Hospitality Fellows Broadsheet is a monthly thought-leadership article written by a member of our esteemed College of Fellows. Celebrating the wealth of professionalism, knowledge and expertise within our diverse, worldwide hospitality family. The Fellows Broadsheet is published on the first Sunday of every month, exclusively for members.

The Value of Lifelong Learning

Wendy Sutherland FIH became a member of the IoH at college, nearly 40 years ago. She transitioned to Fellow in July 2012 and joined the IoH Supervisory Board in 2019. Wendy is currently in her second term, first as Vice Chair and now Co-Vice Chair of the IoH Board.

In this month's Fellows Broadsheet Wendy explores **The Value of Lifelong Learning** and why a growth mindset is something that needs to be encouraged.

Background

Our expectation of when and how long we work is changing and this is happening on a global scale. According to a recent report produced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic and 'megatrends in the global economy' is shaping the way we work both now and in the future.

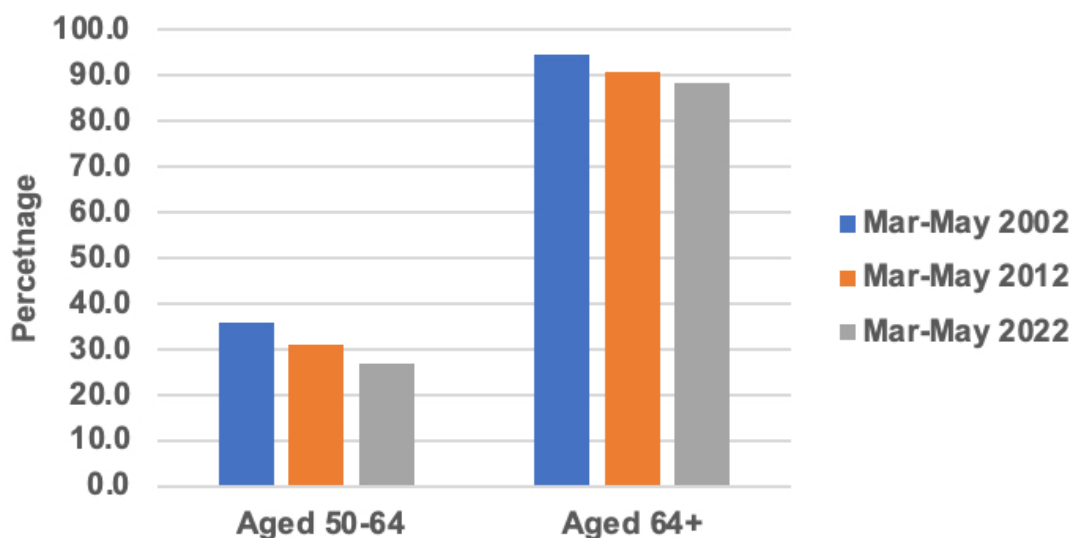
Their forecast is that people will work for longer creating a multigenerational workforce.

The UK data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) also suggests this may be the case, although the pandemic did temporarily distort the trends. The ONS use economic activity and inactivity as a measurement, which relates to those in employment and unemployed (active), and those not working or seeking employment (inactive). The inactive group includes students or those taking early retirement.

When comparing the percentage of inactive people above 55 over the last 30 years, there is a decreasing trend suggesting people are working for longer.

With the significant challenges being seen with recruitment, it's increasingly important to encourage and retain older workers both now and in the future.

30 Year Trend for Inactive UK Population by Percentage





The Value of Lifelong learning

Accepting that our working life may be extended, how do we cope with keeping up with what is going on around us and continue to be relevant?

According to Alexis Wnuk of BrainFacts.org, there are studies suggesting our working memory starts to decline in our 30s but fortunately there are compensating factors to help us with learning new things.

The National Institute of Aging describes how the brain changes with age and although it may take longer to learn new things, research has shown adults can learn at any age. There are some people in their 80s or 90s who are known as “Cognitive Super Agers” and have the memory capability of people 20 – 30 years their junior. The reason why has not yet been identified, but it is widely believed in the field of neuroscience that stimulating the brain to accept new information keeps our synapses firing, which helps our memory.

Lifelong learning means being open to new ideas, which can be achieved formally or informally. Undertaking a course of further education as a mature student can be very rewarding but is not for everyone. Learning a new skill or taking up a hobby has the same benefit. Taking an interest in current affairs or local politics also supports new learning.

In the workplace, older employees need to be supported with new ways of working, recognising that different learning styles may be required to create the right conditions. Regular opportunities to update or acquire new skills is preferable to having long periods with no learning.

Being a lifelong learner will help when needing to work for longer, providing the skills to cope with a changing environment. By developing a growth mindset through learning, we avoid the potential stagnation and isolation associated with old age.

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It's not always the people who start out the smartest who end up the smartest.

CAROL DWECK





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What does a growth mindset look like?

A growth mindset is the opposite of a fixed mindset. Having a fixed mindset means we believe our intelligence, abilities or personality types are set and therefore will be resistant to trying new things.

A growth mindset accepts it's always possible to improve and actively seeks out resources to facilitate change. Having a growth mindset also means you're prepared to accept things won't always work and want to learn from both good and bad experiences. It's about attitude and behaviour but it's difficult to have a consistent growth mindset for everything.

The reality is that we move in and out of a fixed or growth mindset depending on the situation but we're likely to be inclined towards one or the other. The good news is that it is possible to work on developing a growth mindset.

What is the benefit to individuals and organisations?

Maintaining a positive, appreciative attitude to ourselves and those around us, leads to a reduction in stress and creates opportunities. If you need to work longer, find something that excites and interests you. With a growth mindset you won't be afraid to move out of your comfort zone and with the new things you are learning, you will gain more skills to impress your work colleagues, friends or family.

In the same way children learn by being curious, remaining curious throughout our lives makes us interested and interesting.

From an organisational perspective, building a collaborative, cohesive working environment will be essential with a multigenerational workforce. Creating a culture of lifelong learning for all employees will grow respect between co-workers and build a platform for shared knowledge. In a volatile labour market, developing and motivating teams is a crucial factor in both recruitment and retention.

Moving away from a sheep dip approach to learning and development and actively providing the means and recognition for self-development, supports lifelong learning and promotes a growth mindset.

Conclusion

"I don't divide the world into the weak and the strong, or the successes and the failures. I divide the world into the learners and the non-learners."
Benjamin Barber

The world is constantly changing and regardless of age, we need to change with it or get left behind. Maintaining our curiosity and wanting to learn throughout our lives will help us, and those around us, to adapt. Encouraging lifelong learning for ourselves and our organisations will never be more important, and it's never too late to start!

Fixed Mindset

*'It's just the way I am'
'There's no point in trying. I can't do it'
'I don't have the qualifications to do that'
'It didn't work last time, and it'll be the same next time'*



Growth Mindset

*I haven't learnt how to do this **YET**
I'm not sure how this works. Can you show me?'
I'm curious about why that happened'
How can we stop it happening' again'*





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References

OECD Report. Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce: Living, Learning and Earning Longer. December 2020
[click here](#)

Office for National Statistics. Labour Market Overview, UK: July 2022
[click here](#)

Brain facts Organisation; Alexis Wnuk
[click here](#)

National Institute of Aging
[click here](#)

Further Resources

Office of National Statistics. The over 50s and the world of work; What's happening and why
[click here](#)

TUC Report. Older workers after the pandemic: creating an inclusive labour market
[click here](#)

Centre for Ageing Better
[click here](#)

360Learning Article on Lifelong Learning
[click here](#)

Online Courses
[click here](#)

Test for Assessing your Mindset
[click here](#)

Develop Good Habits; 7 Growth Mindset Activities for Adults
[click here](#)

About the author

Wendy's career is based in the food service sector. Starting as a management trainee with Gardner Merchant Ltd, she worked for nearly 20 years in the City of London delivering workplace feeding at operational and leadership levels, to both small and large well known corporate institutions.

A further period working in East Anglia and the Southeast of England with business and industry, education, and manufacturing clients, cemented Wendy's knowledge of the food service sector.

In January 2013, Wendy set up her own catering consultancy business, Ramsay Todd Ltd, which saw her providing catering consultancy services to hospitals, colleges, police forces and charities. Executive coaching has recently been added to the services she provides following successful completion of a professional executive coaching certificate.

Wendy is a lifelong learner. She completed an MBA at Henley Business School in 2012 and quickly followed this with a PRINCE2 Practitioner qualification. She is currently at the second stage of an MSc in coaching for behavioural change, which should be completed in 2024.

Other non-academic activities Wendy has embraced over the years are learning to swim underwater and playing the piano (not together!!)

Besides her current role as Co-Vice Chair of the IoH Advisory Board, Wendy has been the Chair of the Institute of Workplace Facilities Management (IWFM) Procurement Special Interest Group (SIG), as well as the Catering and Hospitality SIG. She is a certified member of IWFM as well as being a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute.

Connect with Wendy on LinkedIn.

