



Doing it Differently: Life & Work After 50

GEOFF PEARMAN
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As a person in my late 30s, I was a bit curious as to what a book targeted for older workers might have to offer me. I was pleasantly surprised. This is an approachable, easy-to-read guide for not only those over 50, but possibly for everyone in the workforce who works alongside, manages or provides service to older members of the team.

Geoff Pearman makes the point early on that while retirement historically was the reward promised to workers after many years of work, the traditional retirement models no longer apply—65 is no longer the gateway to ‘old age’. The book provides research around the fact that people are living longer and that long after ‘retirement’ age may still have a whole other life stage waiting for them.

Doing it Differently suggests some ideas and new ways of thinking to help increase people’s willingness and preparedness for this next stage.

The book is broken into a number of chapters, with the first few devoted to defining the new reality for older workers. Being recently published, the data and surveys cited feel very relevant and fresh and provide a clear picture of the current state. Each chapter also provides a summary section and space for the reader to note insights and action points to take with them as they work through the remainder of the book.

Doing it Differently is peppered with anecdotes and stories taken from Pearman’s experiences working with people moving through this period of their lives. These support each of the chapters in a relevant and thought-provoking way.

The middle chapters work through ‘the transition’ and examine the psychological and emotional journey that occurs for some at this point. While the book acknowledges that for some these can be challenging times, there are also plenty of real-life examples of people embracing and thriving in the next stage.

While the book makes some serious points about age discrimination, and sets about debunking myths

and stereotypes in relation to older workers, it makes a great point that some of the biggest barriers in this arena are not the views held by employers, but the views held by workers themselves as they age.

This chapter is, once again, well linked to research and current thinking on topics such as workplace injury amongst older workers, productivity and the older worker, neuroplasticity and the ability to learn ‘new tricks’ as old dogs age, and it explodes the ‘lump of labour’ theory so readily bandied about in popular media.

The last couple of chapters drive home the need for planning and preparation. They look at the need for people to take personal responsibility for their own futures and not to accept that it’s something that will just happen. They also examine topics such as maintaining wellbeing, financial readiness and the importance of getting the right advice as people head into this new phase of their lives.

While the conversation has already begun about the challenges and opportunities that an ageing workforce represents, there is still much discussion to be had between policy makers, employers and employees themselves. This book is a great conversation starter, and hopefully helps open up a more honest and constructive discussion about how New Zealand and Australia can best harness the potential of our golden oldies.



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