Why Am I Still Here: The Experience of the Older Knowledge Worker

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The skilled “older worker” issue
- Skilled workers are retiring in historic numbers – too many!
- With more vitality and longer lives, an “anchor” retirement age 65 is an outmoded norm

Learning from In-depth Interviews
- A phenomenological study, using 15 older knowledge workers’ narratives of experiences as an older worker
- What influences them to stay or go?
- Fashioning an ideal work situation: would it make them stay?

Themes from the conversations
- Ideal situation: reduce hours, train others, give back, leverage expertise
- Little interest in major role changes
- Had moments when expertise felt dismissed, but feel value grew with age even if not recognized
- Generally not approached by leaders to fashion a role and work structure as encouragement to stay
- Agreement of some “older workers” images as valid
- Seems to be a “solo” experience

What more do we need to know?
- What does “older worker” mean?
- How can an employer engage skilled “older workers” to retain them?

What is in “older worker” research?
- “Age stratification” creates outmoded age norms, conflicting with needs
- Older workers feel socio-emotional pressures of “running out of time”
- Few studies of organizational influence on older workers experiences

Conclusions
- Older knowledge workers may be able to “cut a deal” and should ask
- Employers should use an incentive “toolkit” to key in on individuality
- Employers should match roles to accumulated skills, not new skills

By 2050, ONE OF EVERY FIVE people living in the United States will be aged 65 or older

2MM workers retire each year as the U.S. is 5MM workers short…