



**THE
AUTHORS
OF A
NEW BOOK
SHARE
THEIR
PREDICTIONS
FOR THE
COMING
WORLD
OF WORK.**

by
Jennifer
J. Salopek



iPad 6:36 PM 89%

The 2020 Workplace



Jeanne C. Meister



Karie Willyerd

The 2020 Workplace: How Innovative Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today, by Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd, has just been released by HarperCollins. The book paints a picture of a future that employs workplace tools that many of us have never heard of, let alone used, such as "microfeedback," which asks for instant feedback responses in Twitter-like 144-character segments.

The authors also discuss new twists on older tools, such as "reverse mentoring," in which experienced executives learn from younger employees or those from very different backgrounds. Public relations firm Burson-Marsteller, for example, recently reverse-mentored 19 executives on its U.S. leadership team, pairing them with younger or ethnically diverse employees. The assignments were made based on the greatest opportunity to understand another perspective.

The authors have firsthand experience with workplace innovation. Meister is the author of *Corporate Quality Universities* and *Corporate Universities*, and her original research has been profiled in numerous business publications. Willyerd is the former vice president and chief learning officer for Sun Microsystems and served as chief talent officer at Solectron. The authors have co-founded a consulting firm, Future Workplace, and they blog for *Harvard Business Review*. Meister's blog, *The New Learning Playbook*, is featured on *Workforce Management's* website, Workforce.com.

WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT: Why is human resource development important to you? Why have you made it your life's work?

JEANNE C. MEISTER: In my previous life, I worked in new product development, so I guess my life's work has really been about innovation. I think there is nothing more important than how companies invest in their people; it's the only true source of competitive advantage.

KARIE WILLYERD: For me, work has a mission: to help people to earn a living and support their families. Employees shouldn't be disposable, and I know that learning can help make them less so.

WM: Why did you decide to write this book?

MEISTER: Karie and I had worked together when I was at Accenture and she was at Solectron. A few years ago, while having dinner, we discovered a mutual interest in innovation and the ways social media was changing the world of business. We decided to collaborate on a book, and wanted to cover more than just learning. The field of corporate learning and development is ripe for innovation, so we took a broad talent management approach to the book.

WILLYERD: There weren't a lot of people playing in this space, and we felt that the marketplace was really calling for a book of this type.

WM: What were your goals in writing the book?

WILLYERD: To issue a wake-up call to learning and human resources [professionals] that they must take a leadership position on the shifts occurring in the workplace, or they will become irrelevant.

MEISTER: There is a lot of energy and movement in the workforce. We wanted to share with readers how globalization, social media and the mix of five generations of workers are affecting businesses of every size and type. Employees will work on global teams with people they will never meet, which drives the need for companies to be über-connected. Further, as more employees use social media tools in their personal lives, companies need to figure out how to harness those tools and leverage them within the enterprise.

WM: How did you make use of social media tools in writing this book?

MEISTER: We talked via Skype all the time. We created a collaboration space on Basecamp that allowed us to track our many, many iterations of the book. We used social media tools to conduct an online poll of 2,200 professionals about what they want from their next employer, and we used Twitter to connect with potential sources and find new people to interview.

“
**THERE
WILL BE
MEMBERS
OF FIVE
GENERATIONS
IN THE
WORKPLACE
IN 2020.
THEIR
VARIOUS
GENERATIONAL
WORKING AND
LEARNING
STYLES WILL
CHANGE THE
WAY WE DO
BUSINESS.**
”

WM: Has that experience changed the way you work now?

MEISTER: Yes! I am now a blogger and a heavy user of Twitter. Trying new things is how we learn and keep our thinking fresh. Twitter has helped me to become more creative.

WM: In one of your predictions, you say that blogging will be part of every CEO's job description in 2020. Why?

MEISTER: Blogging has become an incredibly important way to ensure corporate transparency. It helps others understand you and your company. Plus, every worker will be expected to contribute their collected knowledge; blogging is a great way to begin on a personal level.

WM: Why do you think the multiple generations will have such a major impact on the 2020 workplace?

MEISTER: That's a big takeaway from this book: that there will be members of five generations in the workplace in 2020. Their various generational working and learning styles will change the way we do business. Yet, we were surprised to find that it's not just younger people who are into social media; the usage and power of social media to connect and communicate is a multi-generational phenomenon. Social media can also facilitate companies' accommodation of generational preferences. For example, Millennials crave constant feedback; they don't want to wait until the annual review to see how they're doing. Social media makes on-demand mentoring and microfeedback possible; we see more companies reaching out to these platforms.

WILLYERD: The majority shapes any culture. As Baby Boomers give way to Millennials as the majority in the workforce, companies will really have to change the way work gets done. Although many still think of social media as a distraction, it will become ubiquitous; it is an illusion that companies can control employees' use of those tools.

WM: The book contains a number of very rich, detailed case studies. How did you find and select these practices?

MEISTER: The second major piece of research we conducted involved interviews with 300 heads of human resources, asking what is innovative and real in their own organizations. Remember, we began this research more than two years ago, so those companies already working with social media were really forward-thinking. We uncovered a number of organizations that were really on the edge of talent management as a new way to work that would drive significant business results.

RECRUITING IN THE TWITTERSPHERE

At right is an excerpt from the book *The 2020 Workplace: How Companies Attract, Develop, and Keep Tomorrow's Employees Today*, by Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd.

Copyright ©2010 by Jeanne C. Meister and Karie Willyerd. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers.

TWITTER HAD A HUGE GROWTH SPURT IN 2008–2009, during which it grew a staggering 1,382 percent. Part of the appeal of Twitter is what the technology writer Clive Thompson calls "ambient awareness."

By following quick, abbreviated status reports from members of your extended social network, you get a strangely satisfying glimpse of their daily routines.

Additionally, according to a survey by the employment portal Job-Hunt, more than fifty companies are using Twitter to recruit new employees. The firms using Twitter for recruitment include the ones you would expect, such as Deloitte at @joindeloitteUSA and Ernst & Young at @Ernst_and_Young. But there are also traditional firms, such as Hershey Company at @Hershey Company, and even the U.S. Department of State at @DOScareers.

Interestingly, the story behind how and why the Department of State came to use Twitter is a good example of how organizations are beginning to migrate from Facebook and LinkedIn to Twitter in their recruitment strategies. According to Rachel Friedland, a recruitment marketing consultant with the Department of State, Twitter has been used as part of the department's recruitment efforts since 2006 as a way to build employer brand awareness, communicate specific details about career opportunities, and connect candidates directly with diplomats in residence located throughout the United States.

Friedland says, "In our efforts to reach potential job candidates with the right diversity (inclusive of diverse languages, skills, cultural and educational backgrounds, geographic locations, perspectives, ethnicities, thoughts, etc.), experience, and knowledge, we need to communicate on their terms and on their turf. We believe having a presence on Twitter is of central importance to sourcing the next generation of diplomats (Foreign Service generalists and specialists) and civil service professionals. In recruitment and outreach, we continuously have to answer the questions 'What does a Foreign Service Officer in the Economic career track do?' or 'What does a Foreign Service Security Engineering Officer work on?' or 'What's a day in the life of a diplomat like?' Using Twitter allows us to answer these questions in short bursts and in the process communicate the positive day-to-day realities of a range of careers at the U.S. Department of State."

The Department of State also uses Twitter to announce networking events it hosts across the country to recruit new hires for the U.S. Foreign Service (most are quickly sold out). Using Twitter to post links to articles on topics such as what the job of a head of a U.S. embassy is all about helps inform potential recruits.

Candidates can also follow Twitter links to interviews, including one with Luis Arreaga, the director of recruitment for the Department of State, explaining how employees at the Department of State work around the world. By using Twitter for recruitment, employers can readily view not only an individual's tweets but all the messages from prospective job candidates. Open, transparent and authentic, Twitter provides all of this in recruiting job candidates.

WILLYERD: We also asked vendors about innovative practices in talent management in their client companies, read extensively for hints in other publications, and reached out to our benchmarking networks. Fortunately, no one we contacted declined to be interviewed.

WM: *What is social recruiting, and how will companies use it?*

MEISTER: Social recruiting involves the leveraging of social technology to source candidates. This is a very cost-effective way to make an initial connection with prospects. This does not mean that you will never meet them face to face, but it does allow corporations to cast a wider net. You can be smarter and attract a more global audience, while watching the candidate demonstrate a facility with social technologies. However, it's important to navigate these waters in a responsible way. Companies need to understand the limitations of these tools and observe the mores of the virtual spaces. Corporate recruiters must be trained on how to conduct productive interviews using social technology, and policies and processes are necessary to guide their efforts.

WM: *What was the biggest surprise your research uncovered?*

“
**ALTHOUGH
MANY STILL
THINK OF
SOCIAL MEDIA
AS A
DISTRACTION,
IT WILL
BECOME
UBIQUITOUS.**
”

WILLYERD: I was incredibly impressed with Cisco and the work people there are doing to practice collaboration within an existing organizational structure. The company leadership decided that reorganizations were an old-fashioned way to meeting changing market needs, and instead created structures such as boards and councils that facilitate sideways collaboration.

WM: *Can these ideas and innovations be scaled down to smaller companies?*

WILLYERD: I think so. For example, we profiled a Canadian engineering firm that was innovative in its thoughtful career pathing process. Burson-Marsteller is using reverse mentoring, and we discussed a small software company that is using Rypple for microfeedback.

MEISTER: The key is for companies to ask themselves, "What are the business metrics we want to impact?" It isn't really about the tools or the technology you select, but about understanding the unique culture and business drivers of your organization.

JENNIFER J. SALOPEK is a freelance writer in McLean, Virginia. To comment, e-mail editors@workforce.com.

► **Workforce.com**
Generations reveal a lack of workplace interaction:
workforce.com/interaction

wfm