

The modern elder: Re-thinking roles and preparing for action.

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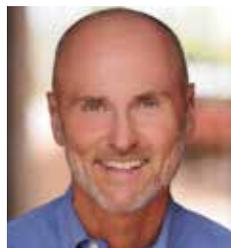


The ICAA Forum is an annual think tank that brings together thought leaders from many private and public organizations to develop strategies to turn the challenges facing wellness providers into meaningful opportunities. Launched in 2005, the Forum forges connections among industry leaders while promoting understanding and cohesive action around the ultimate goal: health, wellness and quality of life for all.



*Dr. Ken
Dychtwald*

Dr. Dychtwald is the founding CEO of Age Wave, a psychologist, gerontologist and documentary filmmaker. He advises companies and government groups globally on product and service development for adults 50+. He is also a best-selling author of 16 books on longevity and aging-related issues, including *Bodymind*, *Age Wave*, *Age Power: How the 21st Century Will Be Ruled by the New Old*, *Workforce Crisis*, *Gideon's Dream: A Tale of New Beginnings* and *A New Purpose: Redefining Money, Family, Work, Retirement and Success*. Dychtwald served as a fellow of the World Economic Forum and received the American Society on Aging Award for outstanding national leadership. Among his most recent honors Dychtwald received the 2018 ICAA INSPIRE Award for his exceptional and lasting contributions to the active-aging industry and for his efforts to make a difference in the lives of older adults globally.



*Chip
Conley*

Hospitality entrepreneur and New York Times bestselling author Chip Conley is a leader in the sharing economy. At age 26, he founded Joie de Vivre Hospitality, transforming one San Francisco hotel into the second-largest boutique hotel brand in the world. After serving as CEO of his company for 24 years, he joined the young founders of Airbnb as head of Global Hospitality and Strategy, and helped transform their start-up into the world's leading hospitality brand presently in 192 countries. Conley is a recipient of the hospitality industry's highest award, the Pioneer Award. He currently serves on the boards of the Burning Man Project and the Esalen Institute, where the Conley Library bears his name. Conley holds a BA and an MBA from Stanford University.

Executive Summary:

The ICAA Forum 2018 provided a unique opportunity for industry leaders to join best-selling authors and visionaries, Dr. Ken Dychtwald and Chip Conley, in a fireside chat and a brainstorming session to discuss ways to re-think the roles of the modern elder and to develop innovative action plans to meet the demands of the aging population. The Forum, divided into two different sessions, took place during the ICAA Conference and Tradeshow in Long Beach, California. The creation of the “Modern Elder” and the challenges of midlife and retirement to aging workers were the focus of Chip Conley’s fireside chat. Dr. Ken Dychtwald targeted the increase in the numbers of aging adults, including the needs of their families and caregivers. A number of ideas were generated by the group and a call to action was conveyed by Dychtwald.

Perhaps the most consistent messages that emerged during the ICAA Forum Fall 2018 are to understand the value and potential of the Modern Elder at work and in society and to devise innovative ways to meet the needs and desires of the aging population and their families.

The fireside chat: Dr. Ken Dychtwald and Chip Conley

Retiring at age 49, Chip Conley experienced incredible success creating, growing, and managing a hospitality company. After retiring, several young executives approached him and asked him to join their team to help expand their hospitality company, Airbnb. Conley agreed, and by working together, Airbnb achieved tremendous growth and financial strength. In his latest book the lessons learned from this experience are documented. Throughout the fireside chat, Dr. Ken Dychtwald shared his insight, interviewed Chip Conley and took the opportunity to discuss Conley’s recent book, *Wisdom @ Work: The making of a modern elder* (September, 2018: New York, Currency Books).

Dr. Ken Dychtwald prompted Conley to share several important concepts during the fireside chat.

The grand ambivalence of age

In a world that adores everything new and faster, many older people feel left out, left behind, or obscure. Employers, specifically, are ambivalent about older

workers and believe that these workers are less valuable and less useful. These ideas are not founded in evidenced-based research but come from ageist stereotypes and myths. This doubt about the capability of older workers rests on the industrial model that assesses productivity in volume and quantifiable measures. Chip Conley suggested that, as a society, we are shortchanging the work environment by not acknowledging the significance of the “invisible productivity”¹ which offers wisdom, emotional intelligence and experience. Conley advised those in leadership roles work to reverse ageism in the workplace. This change can occur by celebrating older workers, adopting and modeling practices that value older workers. In his book, Conley outlined ten practices focusing on an intergenerational workforce that employers can use to create a competitive advantage. Creating a culture of respect, value, and inclusion strengthens the entire company.

Treat age as any other type of diversity.

Many companies have diversity and inclusion policies in place. According to Conley, a 2015 survey showed that 64% of employers in the U.S. have formal diversity policies and, of these, 85% of employers think their formal diversity strategies have aided in their success. This survey also showed that of the 64%, only 8% included age as a measurement of diversity.¹ Age is often overlooked as an essential element of a rich and diverse workforce.

“But we workers “of a certain age” are in fact less like a carton of spoiled milk and more like a bottle of fine wine of an especially valuable vintage.” Chip Conley, Wisdom@ Work: The making of a modern elder.

Wisdom defined.

The acceleration of innovation and new technology can make an older worker less relevant but the wise person has some doubt in their abilities but also the confidence to reach out and learn from others.

Conley moved on to discuss the importance of having pattern recognition to become wise. He shares that pattern recognition is the ability to recognize patterns, relationships, or models that are critical to systems thinking and the bigger picture. Conley shared that with more time and more experience, there is an increased ability to recognize patterns.



Having good judgment is the final component of Conley's definition of wisdom. He suggested that good judgment comes from learning from your mistakes. Mistakes help you make better decisions and use better judgment regarding future decisions.

Elder: the word

Dr. Dychtwald explained the lack of continuity when defining a person over a certain age. Terms such as elderly, older adult, and senior are used with very little consistency. He discussed the "baggage" and interpretations given to these words, positive and negative. He asked Chip Conley why he chooses to use "elder." Conley said that colleagues started calling him the modern elder when he first began at Airbnb. He went on to share that he thought elder was a relative term. It's relative when you are surrounded by younger people because there is a generational difference. There

is excellent value in cross-generational connections at work and the community, according to Conley.

What is a Modern Elder?

Conley believes that the qualities of a Modern Elder are: having good judgment, unvarnished insight, emotional intelligence, holistic thinking, and displaying stewardship.² Through their experiences in living, a Modern Elder gains insight into their own needs, desires, and strengths. They demonstrate an interest in sharing their gifts of knowledge, skills and perspective while being open to receiving these gifts with appreciation and respect.

There are four pillars² or lessons to becoming a Modern Elder, according to Conley. The first is learning how to evolve. This lesson is about discovering ways to edit your historic identity strategically. The first lesson

urges you to identify who you were and to bring to the surface those skills that you do well. Conley states, “Evolving means to mine your mastery.”

Lesson two is to learn new skills and knowledge and never stop learning. Strive for a beginner’s mind that allows you to be a mentor and intern. Conley calls this “serial mastery” or creating new and unique competencies. Being open to novel, unexpected change and having the ability to remain flexible are outcomes of learning.

The third lesson, is to learn to use your emotional intelligence and team-building skills to create more successful partnerships. Demonstrating the ability to collaborate, is crucial in today’s workplace. Conley shared that there are five generations of workers now and crossing the generational borders is imperative to accomplish innovative change. We all can learn in any environment, with anyone, and from anyone. We all have a story to tell and lessons to share. There is a reciprocal power to intergenerational learning through collaboration, declared Conley.

The final lesson to becoming a Modern Elder is to counsel. Conley believes that to counsel means to tap into your “know-how” and “know-who” while you develop your role as a confidant and coach. Listening, advising, and building the self-confidence of co-workers are the main activities of lesson four.

Conley moved on to discuss the importance of mindset. He explains that a fixed mindset is one that is stagnant and not interested in change. If you have a fixed mindset, you are happy where you are in life and feel successful. A growth mindset is you are willing to become an intern and to move out of your comfort zone to experience new things. You do not focus on proving yourself, you concentrate on improving yourself.

Modern Elder Academy

In November, 2018 the Modern Elder Academy opened in Mexico. Chip Conley created the Modern Elder Academy (MEA) as a place for people in midlife to repurpose themselves and to navigate midlife transitions. The MEA provides the environment and the tools for people to start reframing their lifetime of experiences to grow whole and not “old.”² “It is the first school of its kind to help people in midlife

to repurpose their knowledge and embrace their mastery, value, and the roles of wisdom keeper and seeker.”² Conley believes that one way to battle ageism in the workplace is to start by improving ourselves. Society’s three-stage model of “learn, earn, and retire” is outdated and the graduates of MEA are equipped to begin the process of societal change. Graduates receive a certificate in “Mindset Management” and tools to reduce stress, increase resiliency and adaptability as they move through midlife.

Dr. Dychtward concluded the fireside chat with a question posed to Conley, “What’s the one word that you hope to have more of in the next fifty years?” Conley replied, “joy.” He explained that the unexpected pleasures of aging have a great deal to do with the “editing” function. This editing includes getting clear about what’s essential and important to life and learning how to experience joy. You no longer compare yourself to others. Conley said, “You start to realize, okay, I’m in charge of this joy thing.”

Building the Future: A no-holds-barred brainstorm of the best opportunities to capitalize on the Age Wave: Dr. Ken Dychtward

Baby Boomers (Boomers) are the fastest growing aging group; over 10,000 people a day are turning 65 years old.³ By 2030, all Boomers will be older than 65, expanding the size of the older population significantly. This aging cohort will have a transformative impact on society resulting in 1 out of 5 people entering this second stage of life (post-65).⁴ The Boomer generation is not only a large group but they are unique. Their needs and desires are very different from previous generations. Boomers have altered the description of “normal” aging in every decade of their journey. “We are in the midst of an aging revolution and we are not ready”, according to Dr. Ken Dychtward. In this session, Dr. Dychtward led the group in imagining the emerging needs and demands of increasing longevity and the Age Wave demographic and their families.

Dr. Dychtward began by explaining that society is not ready for the influx of older adults, the Age Wave era. He revealed that we seem to be looking backward and not toward the future. Despite the current research, we

don't truly understand how the Age Wave will impact healthcare, the economy, and lifestyle. He posed the questions, "Who is to blame?" "What is being done?"

Dychtwald moved on to describe "gerontophobia" and how many do not value elders or experience discomfort being around them. He explained that historically elders in America were revered and influential. He mentioned the book, *Growing Old in America*, as one that describes the change in status for elders from admiration and respect to intolerance and contempt. Dychtwald cited the example of U.S. government funding providing five-times the money for HIV research compared with Alzheimer's disease.

Dychtwald shared that, to meet the challenges associated with the Age Wave, we must look at the impact aging has upon specific categories: finances, family, work, health, and fun and leisure. Innovative ideas and concrete solutions must be generated and policies put into place. He emphasized that those working in the aging industry have a clear responsibility to create ideas, create innovative change, develop answers, and provide leadership for the solutions. He broke the audience down into five groups, gave them a specific category, and challenged them to find solutions to aging issues under each category. Each group shared the highlights of their discussion with the entire group.

Finances:

This group focused on determining the impact that aging has on finances. They focused on four major issues in retirement, medication costs, end-of-life care and cognitive decline. The first was being financially secure during retirement. Eight-one percent of Americans don't know how much money they need to fund their retirement, according to Dychtwald. To solve this problem, there needs to be a national minimum income standard. This would involve all companies agreeing to pay a minimum wage. They also discussed instituting a forced savings requirement. Many decided that this is a terrific idea but voiced that this may be viewed as an infringement on personal rights and freedoms. The group also discussed creating free and mandatory financial coaching for everyone. Many believed that this should begin early in life.

The cost of medications was a target next. The group shared the fact that drugs and healthcare can prove

to be a financial drain on a family. Attention should be placed on managing and reviewing medications to avoid any that are unnecessary and could be substituted with a lower cost generic. Many people are overmedicated so a review is critical. The grand idea is to provide incentives to stay healthy and avoid medications in the first place, if possible.

The group shared that end-of-life care is expensive and can strain a family's finances. The discussion focused on hospice and end-of-life decisions and rights. In the United State, euthanasia and assisted suicide are illegal in most states but the group shared that many countries are supporting this. Assisted suicide is legal in some places including Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands and in the U.S. the states of Washington, Oregon, Colorado, Hawaii, Vermont, Montana, Washington D.C. and California.⁵ A more extended discussion followed on the moral, ethical and legal issues surrounding euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The issue of cognitive decline is at the forefront of many who are working with older adults. There are many issues to consider. Who determines who is the financial caregiver and when is that person needed? How much will the cost be over a long period? Currently, there is a caregiver shortage. What kind of new models of care can we create?

The group discussed the potential for abuse of the older adult, not only with cognitive decline but also issues such as loneliness or issues surrounding a lack of purpose. Telemarketers target older adults with cognitive, social, and emotional problems and have devastated the finances of many families. The "do not call" registry was one way to help solve this but emails and instant messaging are now new pathways for these villains. Regarding abuse, there is often a family interdependence around money and issues of family violence and fraud must be considered.

Family:

This group focused on the need to evolve the models associated with changing communities, the distance between family members that provide care, the need to develop varying ways to provide a connection for older adults, and the need to provide additional support for caregivers. The models around housing and living environments have changed and still need to evolve to meet current and future demands and interests.



The group discussed the need for builders to become educated on the need for varying design. Builders need to include “mother-in-law” suites and additional space for the family to live together. The family was discussed as a changing term to include friends, much like the “Golden Girls.” Co-housing and shared housing were examined as viable ways to live with abundant benefits, socially and economically, for example. The discussion shifted to recognizing the “themed” living communities in which people that appreciate similar things are coming together to form villages.

Family members do not always live close to each other and this can create challenges regarding the need and interest in caring for older family members. Many family members live miles apart. The group discussed the ever-evolving field of technology and how it can help to promote family connection and closeness.

The continued development of programs like “Adopt-a-Grandparent” and international language tutoring programs can help develop a sense of family. These programs, as well as new programs, are needed to strengthen connection and purpose for the aging adult. These are not meant to replace the traditional family but to provide additional ways to thrive in older age.

Caregiving can be challenging. Many people have recognized the decreasing number of relatives available to care of their older family member. For those that have taken on the task of caregiving, support is needed to avoid burn-out and increasing stress. The group shared the idea of developing a “co-op” for caregivers. Co-ops would be designed to provide support, resources and to meet the needs of caregivers. The impending caregiver crisis is one that must move toward the forefront of new innovative thinking to generate solutions.



Work:

The group on work covered issues on re-training, the changing concept of retirement and interest in continuing to work, and ways to seek re-training and employment opportunities in retirement.

One concept was to assist people in finding work by creating an internet work-matching service specifically for those who retired from an organization. This service would match people with jobs that they desire and need to offset financial strain. Along this concept is to create a *talent agency*. This talent agency would match older adults with companies seeking employees with their specific skills and desires. Elder internships would help train those who wish to move into a different career. This model works to develop relationships with companies to create internships to help enhance the knowledge, skills and experiences of older adults while moving them toward a new career.

Health:

The group on health focused on three concepts, enhancing smart homes, vacation respites for caregivers, and the need to modify healthcare to help improve everyone's health. There is a need to continue to develop smart home technology and to make it affordable and accessible for all. Smart homes can provide safety, medication and other reminders, and the ability to communicate with family and healthcare providers. Smart homes may advance to provide even more services that can help safeguard and promote the health of older adults.

As stated by an earlier group, more attention should be paid to the needs of caregivers. This group discussed the need for vacation respites for caregivers. They suggested the creation of caregiver vacations and camps with the intent of providing needed rest, support, and additional education for caregivers.

There is a great need to shift the incentives in healthcare from tertiary care to the prevention of disease and wellness, according to this group. They discussed mandatory education for anyone prescribed a medication. The reason is so there is no mixing or sharing of medicines and side effects are understood by patients and their families. Due to the shortage of healthcare providers specializing in aging adults society needs to find ways to incentivize physicians who choose the specialty of Geriatrics. To further education and motivation this group suggested that we make health coaches affordable and available to all. Unused buildings should be used for health programs. One example they shared was to repurpose shopping malls as a one-stop shop for integrative medicine and to provide low to no cost rent for providers to make this happen.

Fun and Leisure:

This group focused on providing leisure activities and ways to increase “fun” in the lives of older adults. Apps, multigenerational activities and enhancing the travel experience was emphasized. One way to have more fun was to create Apps specifically for people to find nearby health and leisure groups that they may want to join. Finding ways to increase the number of multigenerational leisure activities was a way to achieve more fun and more leisure activities. This group suggested that a model is developed to coordinate safe and fun activities involving varying generations. Travel groups should be cultivated and travel should be designed for older adults. Also, travel through virtual reality technology is on the cusp of creating innovative change for everyone.

Dr. Dychtwald concluded the session by pointing out that innovative change is the responsibility of everyone. We all need to contribute to the improvement of life. Those in the active-aging industry must not sit back but move to the forefront and become the changemakers that are needed. Companies are eager to learn about the problems and challenges of older adults and their caregivers. These companies are ready to accept solutions from the leaders and innovators attending the ICAA Forum and to work together to meet these challenges. The senior marketplace is full of possibilities to make the lives of older adults safer and improved. As an active-aging industry, it is the time to prepare for action.

The ICAA Forum 2018 provided participants the opportunity to understand the challenges of midlife and retirement and to develop relevant, actionable ideas to meet the challenges facing families and aging adults. Chip Conley shared his insight into the development of a “Modern Elder” and the creation of the Modern Elder Academy. Dr. Ken Dychtwald energized participants to brainstorm together and develop new ideas and solutions to some of the most critical issues facing the aging industry.

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