

## **Abstract**

Caspia is a fictional Central European country with an estimated population of 83 million people. As most industrialized countries, in the year 2006 it was considered to be in stage four in the DTM (Demographic Transition Model). The notorious decline in birth rate would have significant ramifications, especially in the business world. It was the beginning of an important change, so corporate leaders realized their enterprises needed to be prepared and adapt as this change ensued. Almost ten years later, some companies have achieved to capitalize on this situation by integrating two different layers of the workforce pool, the younger and the older members. This is an insight into how it was accomplished, and the consequences experienced by those who now live in an adapted society.

Word Count: 1.357

## **An adapted society**

Tuesday, 9.30 A.M. Victor woke up. After trudging to the bathroom and taking his morning shower, Camilla, his wife, had breakfast ready for both of them.

- I'm taking Erik to the zoo - Victor told her as he opened the newspaper. He was referring to their only grandson, who was turning five that same day.

- He likes it better than the museum - he continued as his eyes noticed another government funded scholarship program for undergraduate students. This was one approach the government used to stimulate population growth, their own way of "fighting" the demographic transition; raising a child had become an increasingly expensive endeavor, mainly due to education costs which had a negative impact on birth rates. "Too late for us" he thought in a glimpse of nostalgia.

- With all this government aid things might have been different - he told Camilla.

They had always dreamt of having a large family, but due to economic constraints could only afford to raise one child.

- We've been over this a hundred times Vic, you know there's nothing we can do now - she replied. He nodded, knowing that as usual, she was right.

The next step in his routine included checking his email, which he did while sipping the remains of his coffee. His eyes gazed upon one dated Monday 9<sup>th</sup>, August 2015. "That was yesterday" he told himself.

- I'm getting old - he confessed.

- Missed another email? - Camilla asked.

- Yeah - Victor responded.

The email was the weekly newsletter for the "advanced employees" of the Vectra Corporation<sup>1</sup>. They were clear and concise, carefully avoiding the excess of information, as well as written with subtleties and expressions perfectly suited to match Victor's age.

The concept of "advanced employee" was developed by corporations; a group of "excuses" that prevented their senior employees from going into retirement. At least, this is what corporate leaders had in mind 10 years before when they devised its creation. It didn't matter now, as the third age employees had been successfully incorporated into the workforce.

The email included the schedule for the entire week, including a field trip and formative meetings. Two times a month, the corporation would organize field trips filled with different sorts of activities with the sole purpose of giving the workers an environment where they could get acquainted even further. On the other hand, formative meetings were reunions between "advanced employees" and members from the rest of the workforce, where their different backgrounds could be put to a constructive use, by sharing insights, experiences and thoughts on their work in the corporation.

- You did call Matilda, right? - Camilla interrupted. She was making sure he had called his assistant and had let her know he was taking the day off.

- Yes, about three weeks ago - he replied.

"Advanced employees" of the Vectra Company, and from most Caspian smart ran companies, were allowed to take two days off per month, as long as they announced it at least two weeks before the dates they had chosen. This, alongside reduced working shifts

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<sup>1</sup> Caspia's N°1 steel manufacturer

with no salary consequences was one of many advantages of being an “advanced employee” of any company.

Victor finished reading the email, signed as usual “You are Vectra”. Despite having grown accustomed to the company’s motto, it still accomplished its objective of making him feel part of a larger whole. Leaving the cup in the table and kissing his wife goodbye, Victor left the house.

- I’m picking him up at the kindergarten, must hurry - he said as he closed the door.

The journey was short. Cedia<sup>2</sup> was flooded by highways which made car trips really brief experiences.

The kindergarten staff was already notified that Victor would be picking him up.

- Erik will be right up, Mr. Frank - a teacher said while greeting him.

- Yes, thank you - Victor responded cordially.

Five minutes later, Erik exited through the door.

- Hi grandpa - Erik said as he climbed into the car and hugged his grandfather.

- Hi there birthday boy, want to go to the zoo? - Victor asked Erik.

- Yes grandpa! - He responded obviously excited.

- So, 5 years, you’re getting big - Victor told him playfully.

- How old are you grandpa? - His grandson inquired.

- 71 next month – Victor responded.

- You’re old. Victor couldn’t avoid grinning. “Children are amazing” he thought. Victor didn’t consider himself an old person, mainly because in average he was still maintaining the same lifestyle he had decades before. Retiring, a marked symptom of becoming old was now being postponed much longer than ten years ago. In short, some changes were introduced in corporations’ dynamics so people in Victor’s situation would neither want nor need to retire.

- I’m not old, you’re just too young – Victor replied smiling.

They were in the zoo in no time. They headed directly to the elephants, Erik’s favorites because they “were big”.

- Can we go out tomorrow grandpa? – Erik inquired anxiously.

- I work tomorrow kid – Victor responded.

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<sup>2</sup> Caspia’s Capital City

- Daddy says you should stop, that you should rest – he replied fast.

Victor knew his son was worried for him. Yet there was an important difference in age and therefore in perspectives. He didn't see the faces of his younger co-workers when he shared his experience with them, he didn't understand that throughout this young individuals he could shape the future, that this was another way of leaving a mark upon the world, especially when it seemed the time for it was running out.

-You see Erik; work is like a second family. How much do you love your family? - Victor asked.

- I love them a lot – his grandson responded happily.

- See? That's exactly what I mean.

And Victor did mean it. Vectra had become much more than a job, it was a passion, but a healthy one, something he wanted to succeed, to do well, for he was Vectra and Vectra was him.

Truth is, it took the impending danger of the demographic transition to make corporate leaders realize that integrating older and younger workers was not only a necessity but also an advantage. Older workers provided loyalty to the enterprise and their most valuable years of experience. Younger workers, updated with today's standards, eager to do and to learn were like a breeze of fresh air to the company. By integrating, older workers obtained respect from their younger counterparts as well as continuity whereas the younger workers had the possibility of learning from those who had succeeded.

To ensure the process would be successful obstacles had to be overcome; both groups had to know and trust each other, understanding they had to work together and not against one another; just like a family.

- What do you do in that family? Are you their grandpa? – Erik wondered as they walked by the lion's den.

- I take care that our family doesn't hurt anyone – Victor responded making reference to the CSR department in Vectra. The importance of Corporate Social Responsibility had grown noticeably in companies and had become a department as important as Human Resources or Marketing. To consumers, the product was as important as the social impact it made.

- And no dear, I'm not their grandfather, in this family most of us are brothers – he continued, referring to the mainly horizontal structure most companies had started employing some time ago.

The next hour was spent touring almost frantically all specimens held in the facilities as Erik didn't want to miss any animal and they had his birthday party in a couple of hours.

The only person awake in the trip back to Erik's house was Victor. His grandson was visibly tired from the visit to the zoo, but as they arrived he seemed completely refreshed. All the family had gathered for the occasion, something that made Victor quite pleased. "Nothing like family" he thought. And that's probably what had been keeping him away from retirement; family had something special to it, and retiring meant losing one of those special things.

## **References**

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