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Crisis is such an ominous word, yet for years many in the human resources industry have applied this moniker to the inevitable wave of baby boomers who may soon depart our nation's workforce. Choosing a more metaphorical approach, Director Linda Springer of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management refers to this as a "retirement tsunami," with the federal government expecting a full 50 percent of their workforce to be retirement eligible by 2010.

Some argue that these types of cyclical patterns are nothing new. They say that cries of workers leaving in droves, resulting shortages of critical talent and organizational "brain drain" should simply be proportionately factored into overall strategic planning for human capital management. It is this debate that adds a question mark to the urgency of this issue's theme and sparks the solutions offered by this issue's contributors.

In his compelling piece "Deficits Abound – A Worker and Workplace Dilemma," Rick Lee, president of Employer Solutions for Magellan Health Services, addresses the most commonly asked retiree questions while demystifying health care costs among aging workers. He also spotlights the often-overlooked issues of eldercare and caregiving, including the hard costs of lost productivity. And true to form, Rick reminds us of the importance of retirement planning for employees and employers alike.

Twenty years of benefits operations experience factored into the writing of "Planning for the Golden Years Requires Education" by Greg Brooks, Convergys Employee Care. He argues that employers have an obligation to improve the communication of total rewards through the application of decision support tools. With life expectancy increasing at an unprecedented rate, Greg demonstrates that employees require an entirely new set of metrics, modeling and projection solutions to adequately plan for the future.

Kristina Gribovskaja of Runzheimer International offers a fresh perspective on stemming the retirement tide in, "Addressing Labor Shortage through Virtual Office and Telework Arrangements." She sees thought-leading organizations successfully competing for these high-value, experienced strategic thinkers by emphasizing the attractive nature of flexible work environments. Kristina's demographic analysis covers several generations and presents a convincing case for virtual office programs.

To address the changing financial planning needs of today's complex employee environment, the dynamic duo of Tim Phoenix and Joseph Rosalie of Deloitte Consulting's Human Capital practice were called upon for "401(k) Plans – In a Multi-Generational Workforce." They beseech employers to recognize that one size no longer fits all. From plan design to measuring effectiveness, they cite the material progression of

thinking and deployment necessary in a retirement world significantly more complex than prior generations.

Our department editor, Michael McLaughlin, has assembled some top talent to delve further into issues facing retirees and their employers. In Function Focus, elder care expert Dr. Marion Somers offers a five-step checklist to caregiving challenges. In Talking With, Bernadette Kenny, Chief Career Officer of Adecco USA offers five keys to capitalizing on the mature workforce. Ron Carucci draws upon his book *Leadership Divided* for the Inner Circle column, discussing how HR executives must adapt to a changing workforce and what must be done now to retain older workers. In Tech Notes, Dr. Barbara Bowen of Sound Knowledge Strategies describes concept mapping as a means of representing and sharing expert knowledge. And finally, in Service Delivery Alignment, Steve Zaleznick of Longevity Alliance (and former president of AARP Services) provides solutions to closing the gap between perception and retirement reality.

As our experts will attest, there is no denying the fundamental shift occurring in today's workplace, with retirees having a profound impact on organizations of all shapes and sizes. Employers have both the opportunity and obligation to shape this experience across a wide continuum. Whether or not you and your organization experience a "retirement crisis" is, in many ways, in your hands.