

SCRIPT COVER SHEET

JOE PERKINS

DCN: 52

EVENT

Description: American Management Association 8th Annual Multicultural Forum
(nationwide, live televised speech)

Theme: "Beyond Ethnic and Gender Dimensions"

Key Participants: In addition to you, there will be two other speakers, Liz Winfeld, consultant on diversity issues, and, John Kemp, United Cerebral Palsey, Association, Inc.

Sponsor: American Management Association

Date: February 28, 1996

Time: 1:00 pm

Location: Home Team Sports Studio (Discovery Channel), Bethesda, MD

AUDIENCE

Size/Demographics: AMA estimates that up to 4,000 people will have access to watch this satellite-delivered event. There is no studio audience, however.

Comments:

SPEECH

Length/Format: 20 minute Teleprompter speech with graphics

Subject: The Future for Older Workers

Comments:

CONTACTS

Sponsor: Joan Milczarski, Director,
AMA by Satellite

Phone: 212-586-8100

Writer: Woody Goulart

Phone: 202-434-2654

AARP Specialist: Marty Sicker

Phone: 202-434-2043

**Joseph Perkins
Vice President
American Association of Retired Persons**

“The Future For Older Workers”

**8th Annual Multicultural Forum
American Management Association
Bethesda, MD
February 28, 1996, 1:00 p.m.**

NOT LONG AGO, THE FUTURE SEEMED FARTHER AWAY FROM US THAN NOW. IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE A PARADOX, THINK ABOUT IT. OF COURSE, WE KNOW THAT THE FUTURE IS PRECISELY AS FAR OR AS NEAR AS IT EVER WAS. BUT, HOW WE LOOK AT THE FUTURE, AND HOW WE THINK ABOUT IT HAS BROUGHT IT MUCH CLOSER TO OUR NORMAL THOUGHTS AND OUR EVERYDAY LIVES THAN IT EVER HAS BEEN BEFORE.

COME BACK IN TIME WITH ME JUST A FEW DECADES AND YOU'LL SEE WHAT I MEAN. FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE LATE 1960'S, IF WE LOOKED AHEAD AT ALL TO THE 21ST CENTURY, WE USUALLY HAD TO RELY UPON SCIENCE FICTION. THIS WAS BECAUSE BACK THEN, THE NEW CENTURY SEEMED AS IMPOSSIBLY DISTANT FROM OUR DAILY LIVES AS SATURN AND JUPITER ARE.

REMEMBER THE MOVIE CALLED *2001, A SPACE ODYSSEY*. WE MARVELED AT ITS BREATHTAKING VIEW OF THE 21ST CENTURY. IT SEEMED SO FANTASTICALLY REAL ON THE SILVER SCREEN. WE SAW A VIVID WORLD IN WHICH TECHNOLOGY WAS HARNESSSED TO SERVE HUMANITY.

IT SEEMED INCREDIBLE TO US IN 1968 THAT COMPUTERS COULD TALK WITH, AND LISTEN TO PEOPLE AS DEPICTED IN THAT MOVIE. BUT, IRONICALLY, ALL THAT HIGH TECH CAN FALL REAL SHORT WHEN IT COMES TO HELPING PEOPLE MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR WORK AND THEIR LIVES.

IN OTHER WORDS, HIGH TECHNOLOGY MAY NOT NECESSARILY PROMOTE HIGH INTELLIGENCE OR GOOD JUDGEMENT.

WELL, FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH, EVEN THOUGH IT'S NOT QUITE 2001 YET, WE'VE FINALLY TAUGHT COMPUTERS HOW TO TALK AND LISTEN TO US. BUT, YOU'VE GOT TO WONDER:

IS ANY OF THIS HIGH TECH STUFF GOING TO HELP US MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS ABOUT WORK OR ABOUT OUR LIVES?

I SEE US FACING REAL SERIOUS PEOPLE ISSUES -- NOT TECHNOLOGY ISSUES -- PEOPLE ISSUES -- OVER THE NEXT FEW DECADES. LOOK BACK A HUNDRED YEARS, AND YOU'LL SEE HOW MOST AMERICANS DIED BEFORE THEY EVER GOT TO CELEBRATE THEIR 50TH BIRTHDAY. THERE WERE ONLY ABOUT 3 MILLION AMERICANS AGE 65 AND OLDER.

Graphic 1:

**Bar graph comparisons on age 65+ groups
in 1895, 2001, and 2030**

TODAY IT'S ALMOST THE TURN OF THE NEW CENTURY AND AGE AMERICANS 65 AND OVER NOW NUMBER AROUND 30 MILLION. IN 2030, THAT NUMBER WILL REACH 70 MILLION. WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS A VERY DIFFERENT AMERICA THAN THE AMERICA ANY OF US KNEW AS CHILDREN -- NO MATTER WHAT AGE WE ARE TODAY.

CERTAINLY THE TECHNOLOGY HAS ADVANCED. MORE IMPORTANTLY, LONGEVITY HAS EDGED AHEAD THANKS, IN PART, TO TECHNOLOGY, MEDICAL ADVANCES, AND LIFESTYLE IMPROVEMENTS THAT WERE NOT AVAILABLE IN THE 19TH CENTURY.

MORE OLDER PEOPLE THAN EVER BEFORE IN HISTORY WILL BE ALIVE IN THE 21ST CENTURY, AND MANY OLDER WORKERS WILL WANT -- AND NEED -- TO KEEP SUPPORTING THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES BY WORKING.

BUT, TO KEEP ON WORKING WILL BE FAIRLY TOUGH BECAUSE OF MAJOR CHANGES THAT WE KNOW ARE COMING. FOR ONE THING, THERE ARE ROUGHLY 76 MILLION “BABY BOOMERS” OUT THERE WHO ARE NOW REACHING MIDDLE AGE. IN THE FIRST DECADES OF THE NEW CENTURY, THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE BOOMERS WILL START REACHING 65.

MEANWHILE, THE SHARP DROP IN BIRTH RATES BACK IN THE 1960’S AND 1970’S PRODUCED THE MUCH-SMALLER “GENERATION X” JUST BEHIND THE BABY BOOMERS. THE COMBINED EFFECT WILL MEAN STARTING THE NEW CENTURY WITH FEWER PEOPLE TO FILL THE NEED FOR EMPLOYEES IN AMERICAN BUSINESS.

Graphic 2: (text)

2001

- **fewer qualified employees**

AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE ALREADY SEEING TODAY
THAT THERE ARE FEWER FULL-TIME, FULL-BENEFITS
JOBS,

Graphic 3: (text)

2001

- **fewer qualified employees**
- **fewer full-time, full-benefits jobs**

AND WHOLE CATEGORIES OF JOBS -- AT EVERY SKILL
LEVEL AND EVERY SALARY RANGE -- HAVE BEEN
PERMANENTLY ELIMINATED BY COMPANIES.

Graphic 4 (text):

2001

- **fewer qualified employees**
- **fewer full-time, full-benefits jobs**
- **permanently eliminated jobs**

IT'S CALLED RUNNING LEANER AND BECOMING MORE
PRODUCTIVE, OR SO THEY TELL US ANYWAY. THESE
TRENDS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE THROUGH THE
NEXT SEVERAL DECADES.

EMPLOYERS ARE BECOMING LESS PATERNALISTIC THESE DAYS, ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO TWO AND THREE DECADES AGO. MANY MORE OF THE CRITICAL DECISIONS ABOUT CAREER PLANNING, BENEFITS, PENSIONS, AND RETIREMENT PROGRAMS HAVE BEEN SHIFTED ONTO THE SHOULDERS OF THE EMPLOYEES FROM THEIR EMPLOYERS.

THE UNITED STATES CANNOT HOPE TO RETAIN A WORLD LEADERSHIP POSITION IN THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE GLOBAL ECONOMY UNLESS WE START PREPARING NOW. WE NEED TO PLAN FOR HOW TO DEAL WITH EXTENSIVE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND THOSE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT TRENDS I JUST SPOKE OF.

AND THIS IS NOT SCIENCE FICTION. THIS IS REAL LIFE. AND THIS IS COMING, JUST AROUND THE CORNER.

LET ME TRY TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES, AND SUGGEST SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO TO RESPOND.

FOR ONE THING, IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY, OUR NATION CAN EXPECT TO HAVE 2 MILLION FEWER WORKERS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 25 THAN WE HAVE RIGHT NOW.

STUDIES SHOW THAT NEARLY ONE-FOURTH OF TODAY'S YOUTH ARE FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE. ONE IN FOUR DROPS OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL BEFORE GRADUATING. OF THOSE WHO DO GRADUATE, SIX OUT OF TEN ARE NOT PREPARED FOR EVEN AN ENTRY-LEVEL JOB.

Graphic 5 (text):

- 1 in 4 drops out before graduating
- 6 out of 10 graduates not prepared for entry level job

WE HAVE LEARNED HOW TO TEACH COMPUTERS TO TALK AND LISTEN, BUT WE STILL HAVE MANY IMPROVEMENTS TO MAKE IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM TO PRODUCE BETTER-QUALIFIED HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATES.

AND, AT THE SAME TIME, WE WILL SEE MILLIONS OF OLDER WORKERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY WHO WANT TO KEEP WORKING -- PEOPLE WHO WILL JUST NOT EMBRACE THE OLD-FASHIONED TRADITION OF RETIRING FROM THE WORKFORCE AT AROUND AGE 65.

RIGHT NOW IN THE WORKPLACE THERE IS A VERY REAL -- BUT OFTEN SUBTLE -- PREJUDICE AGAINST OLDER WORKERS. THIS NEEDS TO BE CORRECTED. THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT HELPED TREMENDOUSLY BY MAKING IT ILLEGAL TO DISCRIMINATE BASED ON AGE. BUT, MANY OF THE OLD ATTITUDES AND STEREOTYPES REMAIN.

I'M HAPPY TO SEE NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES BEING SHOT DOWN BY ON-THE-JOB SUCCESSES OF MANY OLDER WORKERS IN A VARIETY OF WORK SETTINGS. BUT, AS A NATION, I'M CONVINCED THAT WE REALLY HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TO MAXIMIZE HUMAN RESOURCES THROUGH SUCH THINGS AS BETTER EDUCATION.

AT AARP, WE'VE BEEN HARD AT WORK FOR YEARS TO BRING ABOUT WHAT WE CALL AN "AGE-NEUTRAL" WORKPLACE.

Graphic 6 (text):

"age-neutral" workplace

WHAT THIS MEANS IS: AARP IS TRYING TO BRING ABOUT THE DAY WHEN HOW OLD YOU ARE DOESN'T MATTER TO EMPLOYERS. IT WILL ALSO BE A DAY WHEN ANYONE WILL BE ABLE TO WORK TO ANY AGE THEY WANT. SO, WE HAVE A FOCUS ON YOUTH IN OUR CULTURE. BUT, MUST THAT FOCUS BE AN INSTITUTIONALIZED PREJUDICE THROUGHOUT THE NATIONAL WORKPLACE?

OLDER WORKERS CAN SERVE THE UNIQUE ROLE OF MENTORS IN THE WORKPLACE TO YOUNGER WORKERS. THIS IS PUTTING AN EMPHASIS WHERE IT REALLY WORKS WELL.

BUT, AS YOU ALL KNOW, SOMETIMES IN THE WORKPLACE THERE CAN BE PROBLEMS BETWEEN YOUNGER WORKERS AND OLDER WORKERS -- PROBLEMS THAT COME FROM THE SAME ROOT ISSUE OF PERCEPTION.

ON THE ONE HAND, IF A SUPERVISOR IS YOUNGER THAN AN EMPLOYEE, THIS CAN CAUSE DIFFICULTY. THIS IS WHERE HAVING AN "AGE-NEUTRAL" PERCEPTION IN THE WORKPLACE WOULD REALLY PAY OFF.

IT REALLY BOILS DOWN TO A QUESTION OF HOW EACH OF US ALLOWS OUR PERCEPTIONS TO INFLUENCE OUR BEHAVIORS IN THE WORKPLACE.

AND THEN, ON THE OTHER HAND, SOMETIMES OLDER EMPLOYEES ARE LOOKED UPON BY YOUNGER EMPLOYEES AS PARENTAL FIGURES. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THERE IS A BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEING A MENTOR AND BEING A SUBSTITUTE PARENT. BUT, THIS PROBLEM COMES FROM THE SAME ROOT ISSUE: PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE CAN BE TAUGHT -- OR TEACH THEMSELVES -- TO HAVE AN "AGE-NEUTRAL" PERCEPTION.

I RECENTLY RETIRED FROM POLAROID, WHERE I WAS
MANAGER OF THE COMPANY'S CORPORATE
RETIREMENT PROGRAM. AND SO, I'VE HAD AN INSIDER'S
VIEW OF THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE.

UNFORTUNATELY, RIGHT NOW WE COULD NEVER USE
THAT "AGE-NEUTRAL" PHRASE TO DESCRIBE MUCH OF
THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE.

BUT, LET ME TELL YOU WHY WE NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY
IN THAT "AGE NEUTRAL" DIRECTION. THE IMPENDING
CHANGES IN DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY
MIGHT BE SEEN AS THREATENING. FOR ONE THING,
AMERICA HAS A TENUOUS ROLE AS A WORLD ECONOMIC
LEADER. AND, SECOND, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT
AMERICAN BUSINESS WILL BE ABLE TO CHANGE
OVERNIGHT TO ACCEPT OLDER WORKERS ALONG WITH
YOUNGER ONES.

AS I HAVE SAID, WE'RE FACING PEOPLE ISSUES IN THE
NEW CENTURY IN SPITE OF ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY.
AS DIFFICULT AS IT MAY BE, WE NEED TO CHANGE HOW
OUR SOCIETY PERCEIVES OLDER WORKERS.

SOME 76 MILLION AMERICANS -- THE BABY BOOMERS --
ARE STARTING TO REACH THEIR 50S. MANY OF THESE
BOOMERS WILL CHOOSE NOT TO RETIRE FROM THE
WORKPLACE. WE CAN SEE THAT TREND EMERGING
TODAY.

AND, COMPANIES ARE ONLY NOW STARTING TO GIVE
THOUGHT TO THE FUTURE OF THEIR OLDER
EMPLOYEES. EVERYONE HAS PREVIOUSLY ASSUMED
OLDER EMPLOYEES RETIRE AND GET REPLACED BY
YOUNGER WORKERS -- FOLLOWING THE SO-CALLED
"NATURAL ORDER" OF THE AMERICAN WORKPLACE.

HERE'S THE MYTH THAT MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE: OLDER WORKERS RETIRE AND THEN HEAD OFF INTO THE SUNSET, DRIVING THOSE GIGANTIC RECREATION VEHICLES TO ARIZONA OR FLORIDA FOR NON-STOP GOLF AND TENNIS.

WELL, THAT TRADITIONAL RETIREMENT SCENARIO IS FADING AWAY FAST. TODAY, MANAGERS IN MANY COMPANIES ARE BEGINNING TO TAKE A HARD LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENS IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS WHEN OLDER WORKERS LEAVE, AND THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH YOUNGER WORKERS AROUND TO FILL THEIR SHOES.

YOU KNOW, SOME COMPANIES ARE USING A CONCEPT CALLED "GRADUAL RETIREMENT.

OR THEY CALL IT BY OTHER NAMES.

Graphic 7: (text)

"gradual retirement"

SOME EMPLOYERS ARE PHASING IN AN OLDER EMPLOYEE'S RETIREMENT BY SLOWLY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF HOURS THE PERSON WORKS EACH WEEK. I'VE SEEN THIS SUCCEED, AND I KNOW IT'S A WORKABLE IDEA THAT ANY COMPANY CAN START TO USE. I USED IT MYSELF AND ADVOCATED FOR IT WHEN I WAS AT POLAROID.

IF WE, AS A NATION, COULD GET RID OF THE PERCEPTION THAT OLDER WORKERS ARE "SUPPOSED" TO RETIRE FROM THE WORKPLACE AT AROUND AGE 65, WE COULD HAVE A FAR BETTER CHANCE AT MAINTAINING THAT WORLD ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP POSITION IN THE 21ST CENTURY THAT I FEEL WE DESERVE.

COMPANY HEALTH AND BENEFITS POLICIES THAT DO NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF AGE ARE ONE BIG ANSWER TO THIS PROBLEM. COMPANIES THAT PUT FORTH EARLY RETIREMENT INCENTIVES, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE, IN EFFECT, ENCOURAGING THE LOSS OF WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE COMPANY'S MOST VALUED RESOURCES.

COMPANY HEALTH INSURANCE WHOSE PREMIUMS ARE BASED UPON THE EXPERIENCE OF ALL MEMBERS OF THE EMPLOYMENT GROUP -- AND NOT INCREASED SPECIFICALLY FOR OLDER WORKERS -- CREATE A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD FOR EVERYONE.

LET ME SUMMARIZE THE EMERGING SITUATION OF THE
WORKPLACE: OLDER WORKERS TYPICALLY HAVE A
STRONGER WORK ETHIC.

Graphic 8: (text)

- **stronger work ethic**

LESS ABSENTEEISM,

Graphic 9: (text)

- **stronger work ethic**
- **less absenteeism**

AND BETTER BASIC SKILLS THAN MOST ENTRY-LEVEL
WORKERS -- BECAUSE THEY'VE BEEN AROUND ON THE
JOB COMPARITIVELY LONGER.

Graphic 10: (text)

- **stronger work ethic**
- **less absenteeism**
- **better basic skills**

STUDIES HAVE SHOWN HOW CHRONOLOGICAL AGE IS A
POOR INDICATOR OF JOB PERFORMANCE. THIS IS A
FACT THAT IS PROVEN TIME AND AGAIN. AN OLDER
PERSON'S JOB PERFORMANCE RARELY DECLINES
BELOW THE LEVEL OF HIS OR HER YOUNGER YEARS
UNLESS THE PERSON GETS INJURED OR BECOMES ILL.

WHAT OLDER WORKERS MAY LACK IN PHYSICAL STAMINA, THEY MORE THAN MAKE UP FOR IN EXPERIENCE, WORK HABITS, AND EMOTIONAL MATURITY. OLDER WORKERS HAVE PROVEN TO BE A STABILIZING INFLUENCE. THEY PROVIDE A CONTINUUM OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES, AND OFTEN SERVE AS MENTORS TO NEW EMPLOYEES.

AND, LET'S LOOK AT ONE PERSISTENT MYTH.

I'M REFERRING TO THE BELIEF THAT OLDER WORKERS CAN'T OR WON'T LEARN NEWER TECHNOLOGY. THIS PERCEPTION IS SO OFF-BASE, IT MAKES ME WANT TO LAUGH.

HERE'S WHY:

WHENEVER I CALL ANY OF MY CHILDREN ON MY CELLULAR PHONE, IF THEY AREN'T AT HOME, I'LL LEAVE THEM A MESSAGE ON THEIR TAPELESS, DIGITAL VOICE MAIL. OR, I MIGHT JUST E-MAIL THEM ON THE INTERNET. THIS NEW TECHNOLOGY WAS INTRODUCED AFTER I TURNED 60, YET SOMEHOW I LEARNED HOW TO USE IT. AARP EVEN HAS AN ON-LINE SERVICE SO MEMBERS ARE ABLE TO CONNECT ELECTRONICALLY.

TWENTY-SIX YEARS AGO, I REMEMBER WATCHING NEIL ARMSTRONG SET FOOT ON THE SURFACE OF THE MOON -- TALK ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION COMING TO LIFE! I WATCHED THAT INCREDIBLE EVENT ON A TELEVISION -- A DEVICE THAT WASN'T EVEN AVAILABLE WHEN I WAS A KID.

AND, RIGHT THIS VERY SECOND, I'M IN A TELEVISION STUDIO JUST OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON, DC. YOU'RE HEARING MY VOICE, AND WATCHING MY IMAGE AFTER THEY'VE BOUNCED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF MILES BACK AND FORTH OFF OF SOME SATELLITE IN STATIONARY ORBIT AROUND THIS PLANET. NOT TOO BAD FOR SOMEONE SUPPOSED "NOT READY" TO USE NEW TECHNOLOGY!

I'M READY!

THE FUTURE IS COMING, AND WHAT AMERICA NEEDS IS SO SIMPLE. IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS, BUT IT'S NOT. WE NEED TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL PRIORITY. WE NEED TO START LOOKING AT OLDER WORKERS AS IF THEY WERE CHERISHED RESOURCES. AND THEY REALLY ARE! MOST COMPANIES JUST DON'T YET GET IT.

THE FUTURE IS OURS TO SHAPE OR ELSE BE SHAPED BY.

IT'S ALL ABOUT ADAPTING TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF
THE NEW CENTURY. IT'S ALL ABOUT ADVANCING
FORWARD TO NEW WAYS OF DOING BUSINESS. IT'S ALL
ABOUT ENSURING THAT THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA GETS ITS ACT TOGETHER AND EMERGES A
LEADER IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY OF THE 21ST
CENTURY.

THIS WON'T COME ABOUT JUST BECAUSE WE'VE GOT
HIGH TECH STUFF. AND BELIEVE ME, IT WON'T JUST
HAPPEN UNLESS WE ALL WORK VERY HARD TO MAKE IT
HAPPEN.

###