

Globe Careers

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III GENERATION FLAP

Would a veteran have fumbled?

Older workers may hear footsteps as younger generations hit their stride. But, **GREG McMILLAN** writes, career experts say they still have a role. It's all in the attitude

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Veteran quarterbacks Drew Bledsoe (Dallas Cowboys), Jake Plummer (Denver Broncos), Kerry Collins (Tennessee Titans) and Kurt Warner (Arizona Cardinals) were struggling early in the National Football League season and were replaced by young guns, respectively, Tony Romo, Jay Cutler, Vince Young and Matt Leinart.

The changes were meant to breathe new life, new hope, into their NFL seasons. It was believed that the best days of the veterans were behind them, that an infusion of young blood would be the ticket to success. And at first, the moves seemed to work, with the replacements all enjoying varying degrees of success.

But as the season wound down, and the playoffs approached, the wheels started to fall off each replacement quarterback and only the Romo-led Cowboys made it into the postseason. Then, in a play that likely will be remembered for years to come, Mr. Romo dropped the snap on a last-minute field goal attempt in a 21-20 playoff loss to Seattle Seahawks.

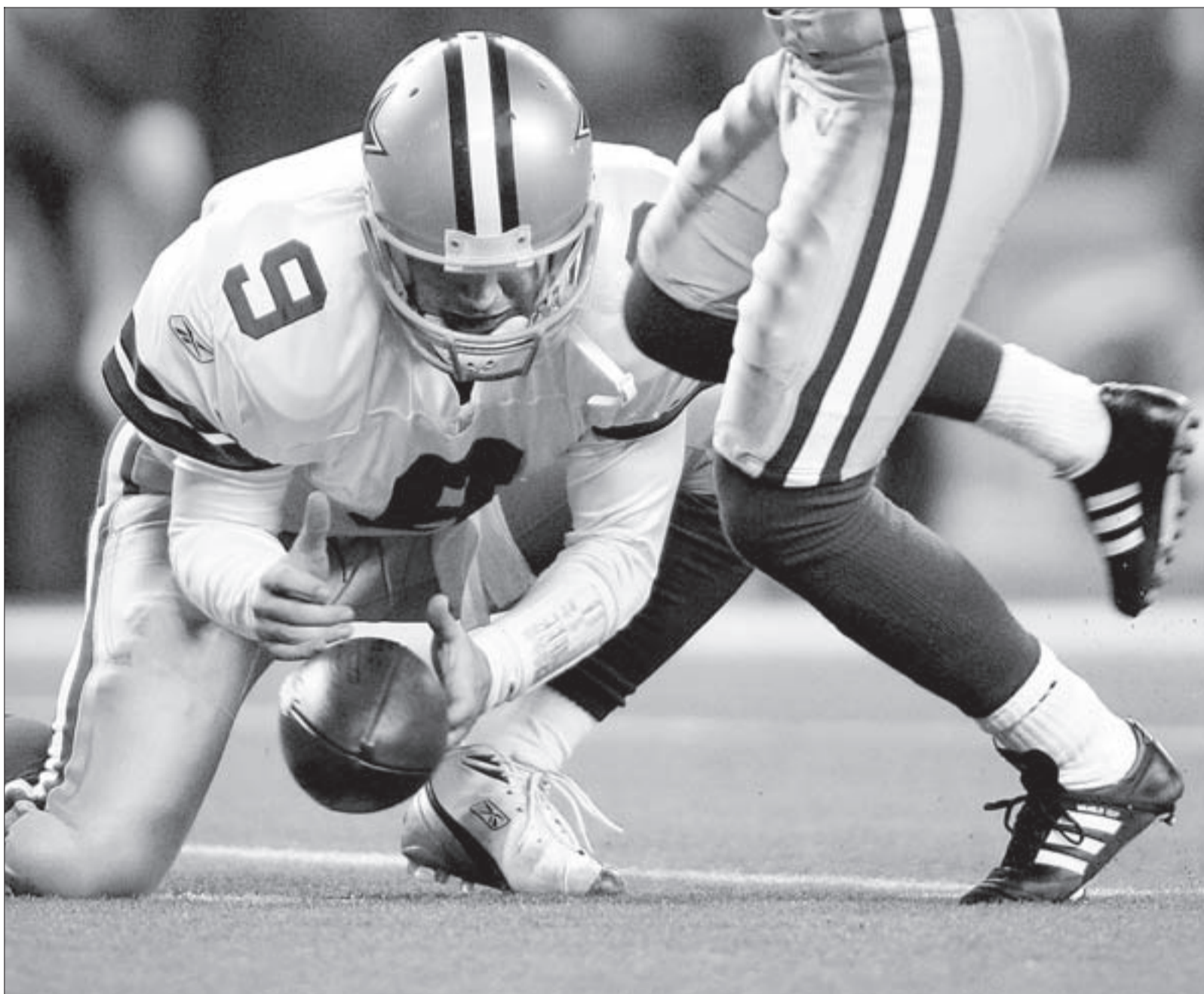
Would Mr. Bledsoe have fared better? Would his wisdom and on-the-job experience have meant more to the Cowboys at that crucial moment, perhaps landing the team a berth in Sunday's Super Bowl? Did the Cowboys, and the other teams that handed the ball to younger pivots, act in haste by dispatching veteran hands to the sidelines?

Those are the kinds of dilemmas that confront management, not only in professional sports, but in the workplace. Indeed, employers face a delicate balancing act as they try to retain the wisdom and experience of the veteran employee while harnessing the fresh ideas and exuberance of the newcomer — all the while trying not to alienate either.

"There's no doubt that younger workers are taking many of the jobs of our older workers, but that doesn't have to be the case," says Cynthia Shapiro, a former human resources executive, in Los Angeles, now a career adviser and author of *Corporate Confidential: 50 Secrets Your Company Doesn't Want You to Know — And What to Do*.

"It is a little-known fact that it's not actually age that causes age discrimination, it's the employer's fear over age-related issues that triggers it," she says, citing medical issues, appearance and keeping up with technology.

"So if you learn what tends to scare employers about age, and avoid it, you can keep age from becoming a factor in your career."



JOHN FROSCHAUER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas Cowboys' young quarterback Tony Romo bobbled the snap as the kicker attempted a field goal, which, if successful, would have put the team ahead of Seattle Seahawks and on course for an appearance in Sunday's Super Bowl. Alas, what might have been . . .

From management's perspective, there are some strategies that can go a long way to accommodate all the generations in the workplace, career experts say.

"There should be openness and respect for each individual," says Stephen Phinney, senior vice-president of corporate services, including human resources, for Progestix-Solutions Inc. of Toronto. "Show both groups that their ideas are appreciated, provide learning and development opportunities, and create opportunities for work-related dialogue, specifically organizational goals and objectives."

"You can provide flexible hours and schedules, provide team opportunities, access to senior management, participation in planning matters, and broad contribution paths and salary grades."

Experts agree that older workers cannot rest on their laurels, but must be proactive in maintaining a positive image with employers. And they must watch for indications that their jobs may be in jeopardy.

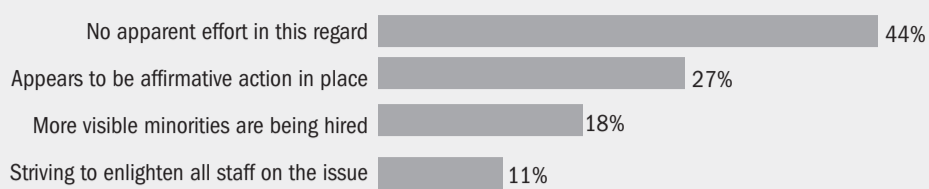
"The signs are usually there way before a mature worker is prepared to acknowledge them and that's the unfortunate thing," said Gail Jackson, director of TheSkillsMatch.ca, a Canadian age-neutral job board.

See VETERAN on page C2

The weekly web poll

LAST WEEK'S QUESTION:

How is your employer fostering diversity in the workplace?



THIS WEEK'S QUESTION:

Which family oriented policy at work is most important to you?

Vote at globeandmail.com/business

III HUMAN RESOURCES

Are you a right-sided thinker? Lucky for you

Logic alone will no longer cut it: expert

BY WALLACE IMMEN

Are you lucky? It's a question job candidates should be asked as a test of how likely they are to succeed on the job in an increasingly global and automated future, workplace theorist Daniel Pink told Canada's largest meeting of human resources professionals.

"In the past century, we moved from an economy built on people's backs to an economy built on people's left-brain, analytical knowledge. And now in one generation we are moving to a society in which career success will depend on thinking with your relational right-brain," Mr. Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*, told the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario conference in Toronto this week.

And what does luck have to do with it? A left-brain-oriented person thinks of every task in sequence and in detail, he says. That kind of person will say "no, my success is not luck, I worked hard for everything I've achieved."

But ask the question to someone who has a right-brain approach and the answer would look at the bigger picture. "That person would say: 'In many senses, I am lucky,'" Mr. Pink explained.

For instance: "I live in a free country, I've had an opportunity to get an education and I've been able to use my skills in a good paying job."

So how does this predict career success?

"The analytical skills of the left-side brain will still be necessary in the future, but they will no longer be sufficient," he says. That's because any job that is quantifiable and routine is becoming a commodity in the global wired world, he said.

"Routine is the scariest word in careers today. Any kind of work that can be reduced to numbers, formulas and repetitive steps is destined to be outsourced," Mr. Pink warned.

For instance, India alone has more skilled knowledge workers than the population of Canada, and with advanced telecommunications, the cost to shift routine jobs around the world where salaries are much lower is negligible.

And even if a job can't be moved, software is replacing left-side brain power. Tax programs and will-writing kits provide alternatives to expensive sessions with an accountant or a lawyer.

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Not quite out to pasture yet



KEVIN VAN PAASSEN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

The fastest growing demographic group in fitness/health club memberships or personal trainers includes the older worker. So much for this age group not having the energy to continue in their careers.

BARRY WITKIN, PRIME50.COM

Older workers often take steps to maintain a youthful image. Barry Witkin, head of Prime50.com, offers some popular examples:

- Colouring their hair
- Updating their clothes and dress, often with the help of image consultants
- Eating healthier and more nutritional food to reduce weight, lower cholesterol levels and reduce high blood pressure
- Not smoking and reducing alcohol intake
- Taking vitamins
- Getting regular medical and dental checkups
- Getting caps on their teeth or whitening them
- Acquiring and using BlackBerrys and other new technology to show that they are keeping pace with the younger generation
- Going to spas for a range or facials, massages and aerobics
- Upgrading their glasses, or getting laser eye treatment or contact lenses
- Socializing with younger employees from time to time
- Keeping on top of current trends and issues that are important to younger people

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