The Challenges of a Multi-Generational Workforce

WHY DISCUSS GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE?

Three Crucial Reasons Organizations are addressing Generational Issues

1. Competition for Talent is Escalating
2. More Generations are Working Side-by-Side
3. Productivity and Business Results Linked to Work Environment

Impact of Different Generations at Work

In organizations with more than 500 employees, 58% reported conflict between older and younger workers
60% of companies report conflict at work due to generational differences
49 percent of HR professionals surveyed see generational differences as a barrier to effective collaboration between employees
The Business Case for Addressing Generational Issues

- Educating employees boosts understanding, respect and productivity
- Age discrimination claims are reduced
- Engagement supports financial stability
- Educating staff about different generations impacts sales, marketing and customer service

Discussion Question

What are the challenges of employing multiple generations in the workforce?

Traditionalists (1900-1945)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
<th>Likes</th>
<th>Dislikes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Loyal, Command and control style, Self-sacrifice, 50% ex-military, The &quot;Greatest Generation&quot;</td>
<td>• Respect them, Be accountable, Honor chain of command, Be courteous</td>
<td>• Use slang or be vulgar, Be late, Change appointment times</td>
<td>• Community involvement, Family togetherness, Suit, tie, and proper dress, Respect for authority</td>
<td>• Waste, Credit cards, Technology</td>
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Baby Boomers (1946-1965)

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<tr>
<td>• Optimistic, Collegial style, Workaholic, Social Reformers, The &quot;Me Generation&quot;</td>
<td>• Value their experience, Give them credit, Give them perks, Redefine retirement</td>
<td>• Ignore their contributions, Be politically correct, Tell them - ask them!</td>
<td>• Responsibility, Serious work ethic, “Can do” attitude, Competitiveness</td>
<td>• Laziness, Improper business etiquette, Turning 50</td>
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## Generation X (1966-1980)

**Attributes**
- Independent, Self-command style, Suspicious of authority, Skeptical, The “Latchkey Generation”

**Do**
- Help with social skills, Give fast feedback, Groom for management, Allow to multi-task

**Don’t**
- Micromanage, Talk too much, Treat them like slackers

**Likes**
- Freedom, Up to date technology, Multi-tasking, Work/life balance

**Dislikes**
- Micro-managers, Political red tape, Hype


**Attributes**
- Hopeful, Participative style, Determined, The Internet Generation

**Do**
- Provide orientation training, Keep them busy, Allow to multi-task, Assign mentors

**Don’t**
- Ignore their security, Treat them like children, Work too much, ”chill out”

**Likes**
- The latest technology, To ask questions, Their parents and grandparents, Public activism

**Dislikes**
- Promiscuity, Negativity, Anything slow

## Generation Z (1997-Present)

**Attributes**
- Collaborative, Multi-tasking, Short attention span, Seek knowledge, the Homeland Generation

**Do**
- Talk to them as adults, Collaborate with them and help them collaborate with others, be brief

**Don’t**
- Give too much information, Be impersonal

**Likes**
- Learning opportunities, “Bite sized” information, Actively volunteering, Making things

**Dislikes**
- Lots of direction, Formal communication

## “Generation Clash” Areas

- Work style
- Authority/Leadership
- Communication
- Recognition/Reward
- Work/Family
- Loyalty
- Technology
Case Study
A boomer manager is leading a multi-generational team meeting. The 28 year old is texting while the 35 year old is fidgeting waiting for the meeting to end. The boomer is frustrated by the lack of commitment of the group.

What should this manager do?
### Who’s on Your Team???

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Issues</th>
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### Solutions
- Understand yourself and how you fit in
- Be aware of generation clashes among your staff
- Adjust your approach (titanium rule)
- Capitalize on the strengths of each generation

### Solutions
- Develop “value propositions” between employer and employee
- Develop tailored messages and strategies
- Create programs to foster generational trust
  - Mixed generation mentoring programs
  - Inter-generational teams
  - Challenge each generation with appropriate responsibilities

### Conclusion

“Harnessing the strengths of the inter-generational workforce is the most important people strategy in the new workplace.”

Jay Jargon, Executive Director of Research, Human Research Institute