The Multi-Generational Workplace: Navigating the Generation Gap

July 10, 2014

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Multi-Generational Workplace

- The Generations
- Generational Characteristics
  - Personal and Lifestyle
  - Workplace
  - Communications
- The Millennials
  - Educating and Recruiting
  - Leading and Retaining
Why Is the “Generation Gap” Important?

- *Four* generations working together
- Different values, ideas, ways of doing things, and communicating
- Distinct attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits, and motivational buttons
- Common life-shaping, historical experiences
- Influences on company culture

- EX: How and where did Kennedy die??
Why Is the “Generation Gap” Unimportant?

- Unique life experiences, family situations, and career goals of individuals
- Individuals comprise teams
- Teams comprise depts and divisions
- Depts and divisions comprise an entity
- Key: Recognize the generation gap, adjust when needed, and approach with open mind, curiosity, and humor
Traditionalists – before 1946

- AKA: Veterans
- 2010: All over the age of 64
- 2020: Some still will be in the workplace
- Events: WWII, Korean War, the military draft
- Characteristics: Diligent, loyal, patriotic, dependable, dedicated, and sacrificial
- Experienced
Baby Boomers – 1946 - 1964

- 2010: Mid 40’s to early 60’s
- 2020: Still will be in the workplace
- Events: Vietnam War, Cold War, civil rights, growing economy, growth of TV, introduction of computers
- Characteristics: Hard-working, competitive, yet team player
- Optimistic
Generation X – 1965 - 1980

- 2010: 30’s and early 40’s
- 2020: Expected to mentor and lead Gen Y
- Events: AIDS, Persian Gulf War, 1987 stock market crash, laptops
- Characteristics: Hop off the merry-go-round of status, money, and social climbing; seeking free-time, self-reliance, independence and balance; respect for individuality
- Cynical
Millennials – 1981 - 2000

- AKA: Gen Y, Echo Boomers
- 2010: Teens and 20’s
- 2020: Emerging leaders
- Events: Bill Clinton scandal, 9/11, mobile devices, social media
- Characteristics: Philanthropic; making a difference in the world; respecting diversity
- Ambitious
Generation 2020 – after 2000

- AKA: iGen
- 2010: 11 years old
- 2020: Entering the workplace as college graduates
- Events: Current financial crisis, international wars, today
- Characteristics: Mobile access to everything, instantaneous results
- Connected
### Personal & Lifestyle Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Values</th>
<th>Traditionalist</th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect for authority; conformers; discipline</td>
<td>Optimism; involvement</td>
<td>Skepticism; fun; informality</td>
<td>Realism; confidence; extreme fun; social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Traditional; nuclear</td>
<td>Disintegrating</td>
<td>Latch-key kids</td>
<td>Merged families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>A dream</td>
<td>A birthright</td>
<td>A way to get there</td>
<td>An incredible expense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Put it away; pay cash</td>
<td>Buy now, pay later</td>
<td>Cautious; conservative; save, save, save</td>
<td>Earn to spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Media</td>
<td>Rotary phones</td>
<td>Touch-tone phones</td>
<td>Cell phones</td>
<td>Internet; picture phones</td>
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</table>
# Workplace Characteristics

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<tr>
<td><strong>Work Ethic and Values</strong></td>
<td>Hard work; respect authority; sacrifice; duty before fun; adhere to rules</td>
<td>Workaholics; work efficiently; desire quality; question authority</td>
<td>Eliminate the task; self-reliance; structure and direction; skeptical</td>
<td>What’s next; multi-tasking; tenacity; entrepreneurial; tolerant; goal-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications</strong></td>
<td>Formal memo</td>
<td>In person, anytime</td>
<td>Email or voicemail, work only</td>
<td>Text; IM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback and Rewards</strong></td>
<td><strong>No news is good news; satisfaction in a job well done</strong></td>
<td>Don’t appreciate it; money; title recognition</td>
<td>Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?; freedom is the best reward</td>
<td>Whenever I want it, at the push of a button; meaningful work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Messages that Motivate</strong></td>
<td>Your experience is respected</td>
<td>You are value; you are needed</td>
<td>Do it your way; forget the rules</td>
<td>You will work with other bright, creative people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work and Family Life</strong></td>
<td>Ne’er the twain shall meet</td>
<td>No balance; work to live</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>The same; interchangeable</td>
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## Communicating Across Generations in the Workplace

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<tr>
<td><strong>Style</strong></td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Semiformal</td>
<td>Not so serious; irreverent</td>
<td>Eye-catching; fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Detail; prose-style writing</td>
<td>Chunk it down but give me everything</td>
<td>Get to the point, what do I need to know?</td>
<td>If and when I need it, I’ll find it online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Relevance to my security; historical perspective</td>
<td>Relevance to the bottom line and my rewards</td>
<td>Relevance to what matters to me</td>
<td>Relevance to now, today, and my role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude</strong></td>
<td>Accepting and trusting of authority and hierarchy</td>
<td>Accept the “rules” as created by the Traditionalists</td>
<td>Openly question authority; often branded as cynics and skeptics</td>
<td>Ok with authority that earns their respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>In digestible amounts</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Whenever</td>
<td>Constant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Negative Perceptions

- Veterans: Out of touch
- Baby Boomers: Self-absorbed workaholics
- Gen X: Bunch of whiners
- Gen Y: Arrogant and entitled, high maintenance

How do generational differences affect your work team? Customer interactions?
Greatest Worry

- Veterans: Affording retirement
- Baby Boomers: Supporting parents and children
- Gen X: Financial and family security
- Gen Y: Secondary school debt
Educating & Recruiting Millennials

- Three case studies
  1. Resume Wonder
  2. Momma’s Boy
  3. Texting While Interviewing
- Diagnosis: Millennial Issues at Play
- Prescription: How are We Addressing the Issues?
The Career Services Perspective on Working with Millennials
James sends his resume via email to a Career Counselor for a resume critique at 5:10pm. At 10:00am the very next day, he emails the Counselor (clearly frustrated) to learn why his resume has not been “corrected” for him yet.
Millennial Issues at Play

- 24/7 Access
- Immediacy
- Technology Centric
How are We Addressing the Issues?

- Encouraging face-to-face resume review sessions
- Providing technology options for our students to meet career development needs
Case Study #2

John has a job interview with a very reputable government agency. To prepare for the interview, he brings his mother into the mock interview with the Career Counselor. He also elects to have her accompany him to the interview and allows her to sit in the waiting room during the actual interview.
Millennial Issues at Play

- Helicopter Parents
- Self-Esteem (Need for Validation)
- Sheltered
How are We Addressing the Issues?

- Parent Orientation Session
- Parental Information on College Student Career Development (online resources)
- Providing students with feedback
Case Study #3

Sarah has obtained an Externship with a top Accounting Firm. During the Informational Interview portion of the experience, she proceeds to text on her phone during the meeting with the Employer.
Millennial Issues at Play

- Cell-Phone as Lifestyle Management Tool
- All communication has become informal for this generation
- Confidence to Excess (Entitlement)
How are We Addressing the Issues?

- Professional Etiquette Workshop Series
- One-on-One Feedback Sessions
- Social Media Professional Etiquette Tips
Retaining & Leading Millennials

- Match strengths to business needs – networking, teamwork, community involvement
- Communicate expectations and boundaries
- Provide timely and relevant feedback
- Partner with a Gen X mentor
- Outline career path(s)
- Adopt job rotation program
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