MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE: CHALLENGE FOR MILLENNIUM MANAGERS

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Abstract:

Workplaces today are highly diversified with the employees coming from different countries, different age groups, religions, races, groups, colour and gender. This differentiation among the workforce is called workforce diversity. Handling such a complex diversity poses a challenge to Managers as he needs to handle the people having different work ethics, ambitions, views, mind-sets and work styles.

The objective of this exploratory study is to examine the comparison of work values for gaining of knowledge for management of the Multi-Generation workforce for increasing intergenerational perceptive, morale and improve efficiency. The word multi generation workforce includes individuals born around the same time who share distinctive social or historical life events during critical developmental periods (e.g., Schaie, 1965). Data for this study is collected through a self administered questionnaire. Findings suggest generational differences do exist and that managers can improve morale and productivity by understanding and incorporating these divergences. Appreciation and greater understanding of this generational diversity that exists within

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workplaces will enable us to leverage on the differences, giving individuals and organizations greater competitive advantages. Diverse teams create better solutions if well managed.

Keywords: Multi-Generation, Differentiation, Work Values, Diversity

Introduction

As the millennial generation is exponentially sensitive to the job market, the possibilities for vast change and innovation in the workplace are profuse. In order to plug into the potential of the fresh minds of the millennial employees while accommodating their specific needs, employers must make acquainted themselves with modern management techniques. Incorporating a new generation of workers with new ideas into an established workplace can prove challenging to an employer. It considers the expanding range of age among their employees who are working collectively as a group for professional corporate culture. There are differences in all the generations which have individual opinions, behavior patterns, fear or worries. The differences are pedestal of their life experiences and different time periods which formulate their beliefs, world views, prospects and morals separately and are reflected in their communicating behaviour and work culture putting massive pressures on HR departments to strategise policies in this regard (Hobbs & Stoops 2002; Dencker, Joshi & Martocchio, 2007 and Martocchio, 2008). Generation is defined as a coherent group, in which all the members are born among limited period of time, around 22 years, and have generational qualities established and identified by common age, location, perceptions and behavioural outlook (Strauss and Howe, 1992). Members of all generations define the events as they experienced in their fundamental/elementary years among 5 to 18 years, which influence their attitude on personal and professional life differently. Due to the different maturity time, it is noteworthy to understand the diverse generational characteristics by considering the classified age groups. As per the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2004), in the US, there are four demographic groups present in the workplace. These age groups break down as follows:

- Veterans – born among 1925-1940 (10%);
- Baby boomers – born among 1941-1960 (44%);
- Generation X – born among 1961-1976 (34%);

- Millennials – born among 1977-1992 (12% & increasing)

Each generational group has exclusive descriptors that gives real insights in "explaining" why its members perform the way they do. Of these groups, the Baby Boomer generation makes up the majority of workers in the workplace today. As this generation continues to age and approach retirement, there is a growing need for organizations to harness and utilize their knowledge effectively within the workforce. But keeping baby boomers long in the organization is very challenging for the organization as this can cause conflict when a younger person manages a boomer. Older workers may feel insulted by specific instructions, where the millennial would feel uneasy or lost without enough guidance. Without detailed communication with one another, this potential conflict can get out of hand – resulting in an unproductive office filled with an atmosphere of hostility. Despite the differences between each generation, people in all age groups can learn from one another. Being more open-minded about possible generational influencers is a lot like diversity training. Everyone needs to have empathy for one another; being direct, honest and sensitive, is key which can be well addressed by internal training programs and can solve this to a great extent.

Veterans comprise of those who were born prior to World War II, and are generally seen as civic minded due to their military service and upbringing during the Great Depression. Baby Boomers were raised in overcrowded public schools in the late 1950s and 1960s, and television provided them graphic delineation of all events. The Baby Boomers are the largest percentage of workers and the most prominent at this time. Their stereotypes include independence, being known for working long hours, having good multi-tasking skills and also being seen as overachievers (Buhler, 2008). These hard work ethics rolled over into Boomers careers (Bartley et al., 2007). Generation X has the second greatest number of workers in the workforce at this time. They have forged a culture that is quite different and largely in opposition to that of earlier generations. Born in 60 s and '70s this generation saw the national debt rise and their families experience unprecedented divorce rates as a result of which they dislike taking orders and can very easily challenge authority.

Millennials generation, also known as Generation Y, is the youngest in the employees. Due to the sturdy number of them entering the workforce, their numbers are increasing at a very rapid rate (Glass, 2007). They are the offspring of the Baby Boomers and many of the early Generation X members. This generation is very hard working, more prone to anticipate structure, freedom to do what they want, very important having a well-paying job, not trusting the permanence of the workplace (Bartley et al., 2007), high-tech skills, neo-optimistic times, fastest learners, familiarity with the Internet and cell phones and always trying to develop a close rapport with their boss. They tend to outshine and be an achiever in life, performing even better than then their managers who act as teachers, and mentors.

It is remarkably consistent presence of the four generations now in today's workforce. On the whole, it describes the coexistence of age-diverse workers in a transitioning workplace once characterized by long-term, mutually loyal, employer-employee relations that produced work through command and control management. That workforce is moving toward a 21" century workplace characterized by free agency. When organizations will have a clear understanding of these differences, it will be much easier for them to develop environments that promote: flexible schedules for older Workers, less stressful responsibilities for women, diversity enriched environments to encourage the minority workers to stay longer in the workplace.

Besides enabling an accommodative workplace for older workers, it is vital for organizations to help older workers to continue to be successful. This is especially challenging in a constantly dynamic business environment that is very different now than in the bulk of the time than these older workers were in the workplace. A wide range of studies were reviewed, and all have revealed the methods to recognize the key motivators for each generation. By understanding and appreciating each age group's work style and personality traits, existing resistance and friction can be minimized and the assets of managing – and coexisting within – a multigenerational workforce are maximized. There are inadequate studies in developing countries in general and India in particular to give a comprehensive answer as to how increasing globalization impacts generational groups in different countries.

The purpose of this paper is to study the challenges and opportunities of diversity in of today's work place focusing on character traits of workers in each generation and identifying the types of conflict that can result. Managers can better understand these characteristics and work ethics and can influence them to manage the opinion of different generations and enhance both team and organizational success. The paper is divided into five sections. First section i.e. the present section gives the theoretical insights on generational differences explaining the characteristics of each generation. Section 2 gives extensive review of literature of studies done in India and overseas. Section 3 elaborates Data and Methodology used in the paper to achieve the objectives of the paper. Section 4 exhibits analysis and interpretation of results. Section 5 entails the conclusion of the study and provides suggestions for the managerial utilization.

Literature Review

In the current working scenario, generational diversity is becoming an interesting and upcoming theme for researchers. There are growing trend of generational diversity in the present working scenario which is a crucial challenge to the management (Mannheim, 1972; Rousseau, 1990; Maurer, 2001; Noble & Schewe, 2003 and Collins et al., 2009). Studies found that there are high discrepancies among all generations working together which originate complications and conflicts within workplace (Lawrence, 1988; Gedde & Jackson, 2002; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Griffin, 2004 and Bush et al., 2008). Conflict creates ambiguity, hostility and friction among employees belongs to different generational groups (Zemke et al, 1999; Patota et al., 2007 and Stevens 2010). Generations differ on every aspect of personal and professional life (Rousseau & Greller, 1994; Morgan & Ribbens, 2006 and Macky, Gardner & Forsyth, 2008), and also regarding their work ethics (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Sessa et al., 2007 and Crawford & Hubbard, 2008).

Some studies defined generation as a group which has similar attitude due to analogous life events (Mannheim, 1972; Organ, 1990; Kupperschmidt, 2000; and Dencker, Joshi & Martocchio, 2008) which provide a foundation to separate it from other generational group (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998 and Crampton & Hodge, 2007). While other studies focused on the generational cohort theory, like, Costa and McCrae, 1999; Arsenault, 2004 and McGuire et al., 2007. Existing

studies which are analyzed mainly group-wise impact are separated on the bases of its focus. Studies focused on *traditionalists or senior generation* which is known as *Baby Boomers*, considered as, Lucero & Allen, 1994; Forgas & George, 2001; Garavan et al., 2002; Jorgensen, 2003 and Slagter, 2007. Considering Gen X by some studies are cited as, Bova & Kroth, 1999; Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002; Beaver & Hutchings, 2005; Yu & Miller, 2005. Explanations for *Gen Y* are Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996; Amar, 2004; and Lewis, 2005. Researches discovered that Gen Y was socialized in a digital world as it is more than technically literate that multitasking is a habit it takes into the workplace; where it tends to instant message its contacts while doing work (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Martin, 2005 and Cennamo & Gardener, 2008). Many studies based on the managerial complications due to diversified workforce e.g., Robinson, 1996; Wade-Benzoni, 2002; Cappelli, 2003; Westerman & Yamamura, 2007; Streb et al., 2008 and Earle et al., 2011. Generations can be differentiating on a base of values, as intrinsic and extrinsic (Bird & Fisher, 1986; McFarlane et al., 1994; Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000 and DeLong, 2004) or on the aspect of work values (Hill, 2002; Allwin & McCammon, 2003; Avery et al., 2007 and Salkowitz, 2008).

Although concerns for generational dynamics have lead to important findings on the effects of age and age related workplace outcomes (Lawrence, 1988), and on how intergenerational conflict can be minimized due to reciprocity in relationships between incumbents and their future replacements (Wade-Benzoni, 2002), many critical questions surrounding research on generations remain unanswered. This lack of research on generational dynamics traces primarily to considerable disagreement about how to define a generation—with scholars often debating about the relative merits of factors determining a generation such as cohorts, the life-cycle, historical periods, and kinship relations (Kertzer, 1983; Troll, 1970)—and challenges in specifying how generational dynamics influence organizational and employment outcomes. Hence, this present study will be an attempt in this regard empirically. This review calls attention to the need for further research into generational diversity and its influence on the preceptor-ship experience. It also highlights the limited research that currently exists on the topic of the inter-generational workforce.

Research Objectives, Data and Methodology

Research Objectives

It is the most difficult task to manage people with diversity in their age groups and to provide a comfortable and determined atmosphere to attain the equilibrium in the workplace. Management needs to utilize the strength seized from each generation for improving the efficiency and productivity of the organization. Managers should acknowledge the intensions and traits of all age groups; appreciate their inputs, celebrate diversity and incorporate theses vital considerations in decision making process. To avoid all fall outs among generations because of the differences mentioned above, requirements of every generation must be properly identified to attain equilibrium in the work place. Hence, this paper is a modest attempt in this direction to address present winning strategies for managing intergenerational diversity in the workplace. It is very clear and evident that managerial implications of multi-generational differences to the workplace are complex in nature and there is a need to address these differences to manage the conflicts emerging from this scenario.

The objectives of the study are as:

1. What are the challenges and opportunities emerging from multigenerational workforce?
2. What management strategies are likely to be most effective for achieving high performance in today's diverse workplace?

Data and Methodology:

The purpose of this study is to analyze generational differences in the banking **sector** operating in India. Records of each age group were examined in the study to analyze difference in traits of each generation. In this paper, total 150 respondents are participated fairly with the age group of 18-68. Participants, which included males (90 or 60%) and females (60 or 40%), are varying from matures to Gen Z highlight the diversity of the survey. A survey was conducted by using a

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carefully developed questionnaire. A combination of both open-ended and close-ended questions was asked to analysis the pre-determined objectives. The responses were made on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). To re-establish the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire, a principal component analysis and an internal consistency test, *Cronbach's alpha,* was conducted and found to be significant with a value of 0.7.

Result and Analysis

The results reveal important differences among the different workforce which are discussed below and shown in table 1:

Veterans:

It is commonly accepted that workers from the veteran group are loyal to their organization. Our study commensurate with the studies reviewed in India and abroad. Results exhibit that 70% responses are of this opinion that this class of work group is a mature class and is very loyal to the organization. Results exhibit that managers are of this opinion that veterans are a group of workforce which is loyal, regular in work, not a problem creator, hardworking, gives more attention to quality than quantity of work (Crampton & Hodge, 2007). The people from this group have deep respect for dos and don'ts of the company and want to live a disciplined life (Gedde & Jackson, 2002). Managers also rated Veterans' performance above average during the training period and highest in dependability, attitude, emotional maturity, guest relations and quality of work produced (DeMicco & Reid, 1988). The current trend of their re-entering in the working culture is sure to gain momentum as Baby boomers are now themselves in retirement ages. This generational cohort represents a dream employee of the supervisors' and mangers' expectations but their obligation towards work (DiCecco, 2006 and Crampton & Hodge, 2007).

Baby Boomers

Analysis defined that 85% Baby boomers are loyal, passionate, concerned and have participative spirit in the organization with high work ethics (see table 1). They respect authority and hierarchy

of the work and living as financially driven which make them happy even to abide by the rules. Technology is a big issue for them because they are resistant to change. Baby boomers are the largest generation cohort in the existing workforce. These employees consider job security and recommended stable mutual working environment derived from participation and involvement (Hammill, 2005; Crampton & Hodge, 2007 and Wong, et al., 2008). More meticulous group which prefers to be treated as equals and socially established attitude (Yu & Miller, 2003).

Generation X or Gen X

Results exhibit that Generation X is having a global orientation, multi-tasking skills and is desirous to manage their own schedules, as is exhibited in table 1. Seniority, teamwork, collaboration, quality of life and increasing human relationships are important values to them (McGuire et al., 2007). 78% respondents approve that Generation X tends to complain about everything and wants instant solutions and give due importance to work-home equilibrium and are independent in their outlook as stated by 95% of the respondents. There is an interesting observation confirmed by 81% respondents as regards their loyalty, embraced to an organization that they are less loyal in the current organization and welcome change with open arms at any point of time (Crampton & Hodge, 2007).

Millennials Generation or Gen Y

The study reveals that millennials are not interested in the corporate hierarchy. They are quick learners, good multi-taskers, better than others, but habitual to put question to every rule, they don't accept the things as they come and want logic for every corporative event. There is still a debate in relation to their reliability and attitude. Our study also doesn't confirm this fact and is also inconclusive in this regard as is evident from the responses of 96% respondents. Actually they think that there is no respect and appreciation for them because of their younger age. The study reveals that numerous millennials have lack of good interpersonal skills and no work ethic, presented in table 1. They are relatively undependable as their skeptical outlook to institutional relationships and readiness to change jobs after a very short span of time (Tulgan, 2000 and Bush et al., 2008). Therefore it is most imperative challenge for millennium managers to retain them in

the organization while there is a persistence of the view of live to work not work to live (Yu and Miller, 2005 and Crampton & Hodge, 2007). This generation considers social interface as an important tool of entertainment outside the work. Though, Millennials are goal oriented and superior team players because of their positive, hopeful and pleasant collaboration.

Table 1: Generational Differences Regarding various Characteristics

S. No.	Values	Veterans	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
1.	Level of trust	Respect authority	Self Confident, not reliant to authority	Less toward authority	High toward authority
2.	Loyalty to institutions	Commitment and scarify	Cynical attitude	Considered adolescent	Committed to work
3.	Most admire	Comfortable with managing style	Acceptance of Delightful charge	Creativity based operations	Follow a hero of reliability
4.	Career goals	Duty is prime	Stellar career	Portable career	Many careers
5.	Rewards	Quality of work	High recognition	Lack of restriction	Significant job
6.	Parent–child involvement	No involvement	Moving back	Isolated	Obtrusive
7.	Having children	Controlled	Parental Guidance	Separated	Confined
8.	Family life	Traditional	Pamper as children	Hesitant	Explicit
9.	Education	As per requirement	Freedom of expression	Pragmatic	Structure of accountability
10.	Retention	Lifetime	Security	Growth	Oppose it
11.	Evaluation	Not much	Once a year with	Fear of	Instant

		concerned	certifications	negative feedback	gratification
12.	The big question	Self- Esteem	Attack dominance	Unconcerned, Individual	Desire community
13.	Political orientation	Interested to participate	No interest	Confused	Pragmatic
14.	Responsibility of Career	Company's responsibility	Responsibility of both	Employee's responsibility	Big opportunist
15.	Changing Jobs	Not desired	Fright	Advancement	Excitement

Conclusion

It is identified that there are four distinct generational groups which are an inevitable part of the existing working population. Each generational group has its own distinct characteristics which help us knowing the perception, attitude and work culture traits of its member. Therefore, the study concluded that every generational group has its separate excellence which differentiates it from another group. Veterans and Baby boomers want performance-based rewards as money and promotion while, Generation X prefers employment-based rewards as workplace opportunities. On the other hand, Millennials desired the valuable work and recognition which come from responsibility and ownership kind of activities. This confident and motivated group is ready to do hard work and achievement within a reward-based system. They prefer groups and team work with a new outlook to the workplace. Active listening and moderate managing style generate conviction among them to maintain everything in positive and productive manner. Millennials have grown in abundance in the recent work-force and joining as managers are boon to the organization. They are valuable asset of the organization and they blossom when given the responsibility as this gives them a feeling of connectivity which is the essence of growth. They are given encouragement, guidance, enlightment and recognition from an early age which makes them very focused to become real stars of life.

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The findings of this study correspond with SHRM study (2004) which pointed out that generations differ mainly on work ethics, administering the change and the perception of organizational chain of command. Understanding the demographical and generational attributes of each group is essential for managers to guide, instruct and administer them efficiently (Douville, 2001). An open and explored atmosphere must be incorporated in the organization for expressing the ideas and views regarding the betterment of the organization. It is helpful to balance the values and necessities of each generation and the organization which are working together for common professional goals. Appreciation and greater understanding of this generational diversity that exists within workplaces will enable us to leverage on the differences, giving individuals and organizations greater competitive advantages. Diverse teams create better solutions if well managed.

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