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FOUR GENERATIONS TOGETHER

PREPARING FOR GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY



Miriam, a recent MBA graduate has been promoted to Director of New Client Services at a local cable provider company. Her previous role at the company was Customer Service Representative for which she held for two and half years.

While it is expected that Miriam will do well in her new role as leader, the greatest challenge anticipated is managing her staff of 14, which spans three generations. She is aware that while there are some similarities and generalities, there are also differences and variations to managing her staff effectively.

Many managers today are finding themselves in similar situations; challenged with managing this diversity while remaining focused on driving business performance.

For the first time in history we have four generations working together. The next group of leaders will soon be dominated by the Generation X (age 30-41) population who will be managing these four generations for which the majority will baby boomers (age 42-60), at least for the next five to ten years as they retire.

Smart leaders and organizations are embracing this diversity and preparing for it through education and training, effective workforce strategies and collaborative team development initiatives.

FIRST SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

Differences in philosophy and approach to work do exist among the generations based on, to a great extent, the culture they've experienced.

Traditionalist's: Born before 1946
7% of U.S. Workforce

- "Work for the same company."
- Great Depression & WWII.
- Mass production of Motor vehicles & telephones.

Baby Boomers: 1946-1964

40% of U.S. Workforce

- "Live to work."
- Vietnam War.
- Entry of the TV.

Generation X: 1965-1976

30% of U.S. Workforce

- "Work to live."
- Huge increase in parents divorce rate & unemployment.
- Corporate downsizing.

Generation Y: 1977-1994

23% of U.S. Workforce

- "Work my way."
- Terrorism: 911 and Olympic bombings.
- Digital natives (Gaming, Google).

AGING WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that between 2004 and 2014 the number of employees ages 55 to 64 is expected to grow 42 percent, compared with a 5 percent increase in workers ages 45 to 54 and an 8 percent decline in workers ages 35 to 44. At the same time, the percentage of workers over 65 is expected to grow 74 percent.

44% of HR leaders say the ageing workforce will have a major impact on the organization.

- Workers aged 55+ may increase by half between 2002 and 2012.
- Insufficient savings means working into retirement.

- Baby Boomer retirement, loss of executives.
- Impact on pension plans, retiree health costs.
- Employees stretched with care of children/parents.

With baby boomers quickly approaching retirement and as the war for talent and the highly skilled heats up, strong organizations are preparing to meet the challenges through creative and non-standard initiatives and not just a *one-size-fits-all approach*. For example; creating and leveraging a network of former employees or rehiring retirees indirectly on a per-project basis to name a few.

“A majority of respondents (65%) agreed that generation gaps make it hard to get things done at work.”

MANAGING THE GENERATIONS TOGETHER

With a solid understanding of what drives the generations and their approach to work, the next step is to manage and integrate the workforce for performance optimization.

One key component to successfully preparing for and managing the different workforces is education and collaboration.

Fast Fact

One out of five (20%) HR professionals report that they frequently hear employees state that coworkers of different generations do not respect them.

SHRM® Generational Differences Survey Report, 2004.

Managers who learn different strategies for coaching, motivating and developing employees from different generations will be able to:

1. Bridge competing values.
2. Demonstrate leadership by bringing generations together for a common purpose.
3. Prevent misunderstandings that may develop between generations.
4. Reduce turnover by creating a work environment conducive for all generations.
5. Communicate effectively with different generations.

It is important to note that generational characteristics are not absolute and may be interchangeable between generations. Likewise, it is necessary to consider generalities to understand different viewpoints, attitudes, needs and expectations brought by different generations to the workplace.

DRIVING PERFORMANCE

ARE WE READY?

The need to retain top talent while bringing in new talent and increasing levels of engagement is a concern for all organizations; adding four different generations to the mix will prove to be a great challenge. Some organizations have begun to move forward slowly, others aggressively.

This will in large depend on the dynamics of the organization; industry, size, region and its specific employee demographic and workforce plans. Easing the journey involves preparation and planning and timely execution of new initiatives and changes.

Questions to ask leaders and Human Resource professional are:

1. Do we have an existing diversity and inclusion strategy to build on?
2. Is there precise data on the demographic of our workforce?
3. Have we conducted an intention to stay survey in the last 12-18 months across the organization?
4. Have our managers and leaders been fully trained on attracting, retaining and engaging the different generations?
5. Has technology been evaluated for the next generation of workers?
6. Are there goals to change the culture and behaviors from competitive to collaborative across the corporate workforce?
7. Do we have a strong workforce strategy for growth and retention?
8. Are there flexible work arrangements for the soon to retire workforce?
9. Do we have a plan for merging the work environment to reflect the expectations of the next generation of workers as needed for impact on recruitment, retention, productivity, and ultimately on the organization's ability to achieve its business strategy?

While Human Resources and the Senior Leaders of the organization are the primary force for merging the generations, all employees will play a key role in shaping an organization of success and sustainability.

"A high correlation exists between developing high-potential talent from within and the ability to retain that talent".



Elizabeth Jende

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Jende brings over 18 years of practical business experience and industry knowledge in Talent Management. She has been responsible for planning, organizing and implementing staffing and recruitment strategies for exempt, non-exempt, college, and contingent workforces. She has also led major projects in strategic staffing and planning, which supports the organizations short-term and long-term business needs, both domestically and internationally.

She has managed full cycle talent management activities from acquisition to the development of several thousand regular and contingent workers at a given time.

Elizabeth has a strong concentration in Talent Acquisition and Retention and has designed and implemented programs around the following:

- Effective Recruitment and Selection Techniques
- Internal Mobility
- Generational Impact to Business
- Retention and Engagement
- Workforce Planning
- Process Efficiency in Talent Management

She holds a Bachelor degree in Psychology from Florida State University.

Today, she is a member of the Human Capitol Institute, and Society for Human Resources Management. She also serves on Workforce Planning Initiatives in Greenville, South Carolina.

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Applying Generational Diversity

PPS International supports Generational Impact today through:

- Forecasting Staffing Levels by conducting staffing trend analysis for divisions and groups as well as aligning recruitment targets with business plans.
- Developing Selection and On Boarding Systems by designing selection activities including pre-screening procedures and standards, phone screens, and pre-employment tests and assessments; developing interview guides and evaluation criteria; training managers in use of systems, creating or enhancing Orientation programs at the organizational and departmental levels.
- Designing HR Return on Investment System by developing programs to measure the impact of human capital cost to the bottom line of the organization. We do this through HR activities in planning, hiring, supporting, developing and retaining talent.



SyNet is a global network of independent HR and LD consultants. We collaborate to create, deliver, and facilitate world-class consulting services, programs, tools, and business opportunities.

SyNet is what it appears to be. We are a truly global learning and development consultancy providing business professionals worldwide with the personal and professional skills needed to be highly effective in their organizational roles and personal lives. Our affiliated consultants, instructional designers, trainers and coaches throughout the world are experts in their field. Our team works to help clients effectively address strategic and tactical challenges in critical-to-success areas. SyNet's proven track record of success comprises an extensive list of industry leaders who rely on a globally present, fast and flexible partner to meet their specific learning and development needs in line with their business objectives.

SyNet operates from a 100% client-centric perspective – we listen and we meet the unique needs of each individual client. We do not just manage client relationships, but make them inspiring and real– which leads to a lasting shared success. It's a winning experience.

As a global organization with locally operating units, we are proud to say, that wherever you meet us you will get:

- New and best-in-class interventions and solutions to address performance-limiting problems/issues
- Senior consultants with in-depth knowledge and experience
- Complete turnkey capabilities to address your needs from start to finish
- Interactive training methodology vs. conceptual learning and lecture
- Transformative learning experiences

We value learning above all. When dealing with new initiatives, we always consider the degree to which we think we can make a lasting business and social difference while learning alongside our clients.

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