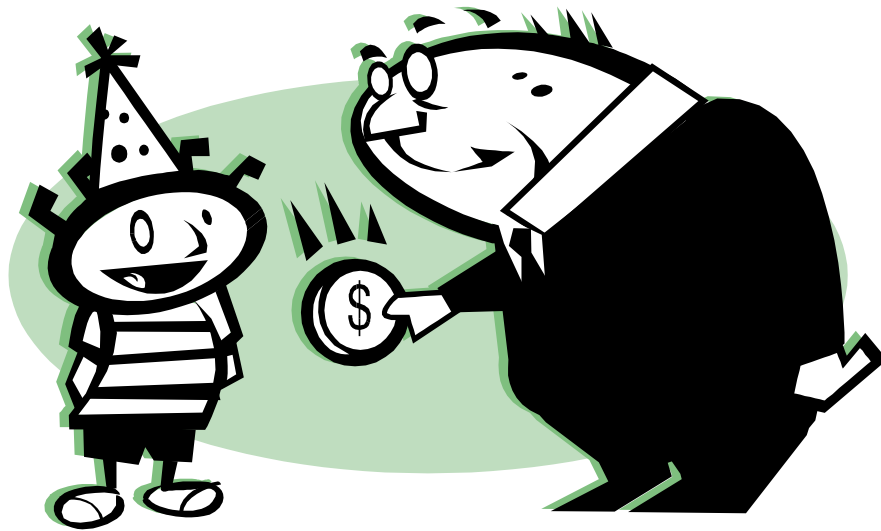


Supervision of Intergenerational Dynamics



What is Generational Diversity?

Generational Cohorts

- Intended to serve only as rough shorthand for particular age cohorts with significant common experiences.
- Need to distinguish between life cycle effects and generational change.
 - Source; Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, <http://www.jointcenter.org/publications/details/political/n-diverging-generations.html>
- Important to acknowledge the diversity *within* cohorts, as well as the diversity between them

Generational Cohort Groupings

- Silent Generation: 1922-1945 _____
- Baby Boomers: 1946-1964 _____
- Generation X: 1965-1980 _____
- Millennial Generation: 1981-2000 _____

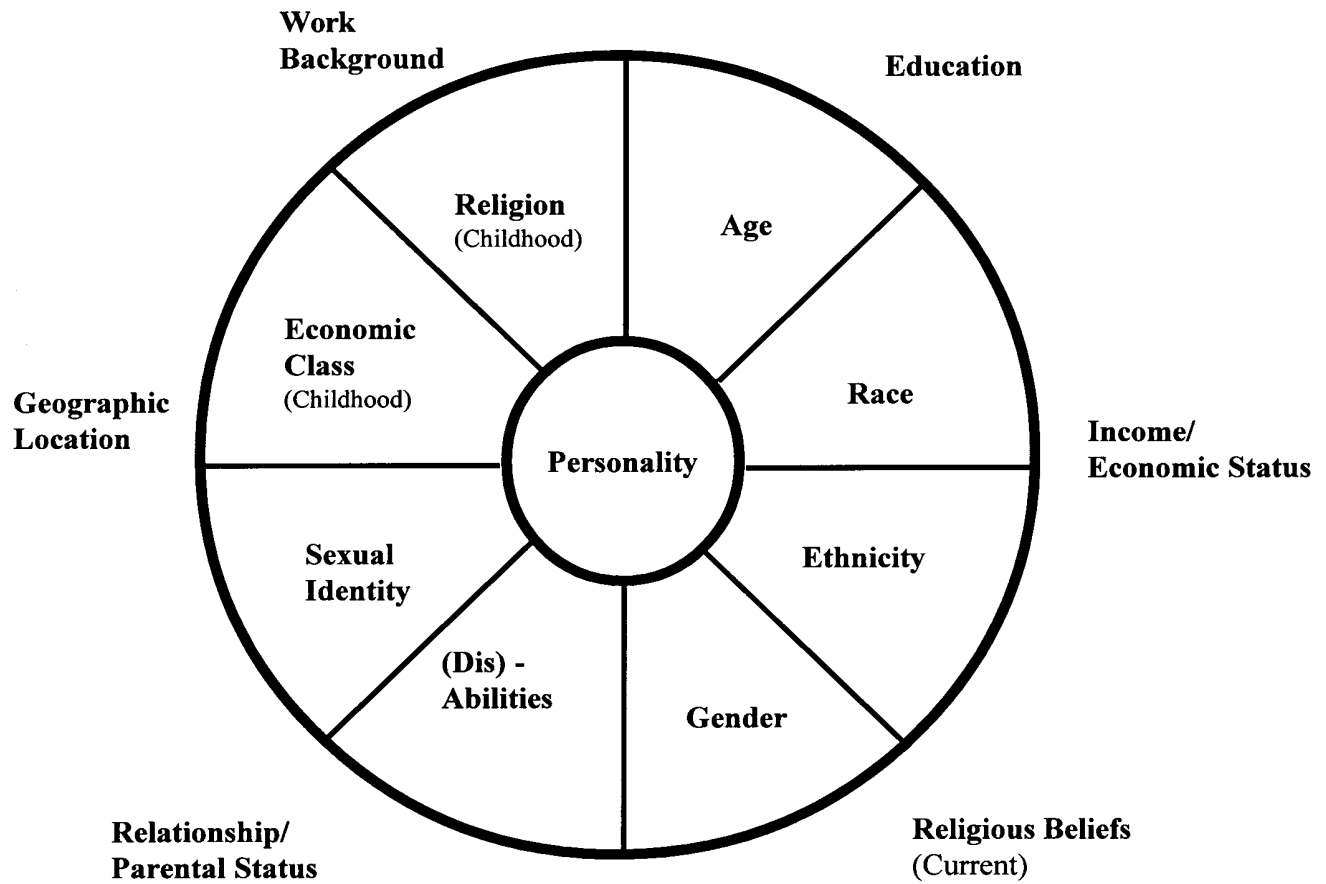
Generational Markers

- Events which have an impact on all members of the generation in one way or another. ~ Wendover, Robert W.
- Significant generational markers exist in all spheres of society and create experiences and values for

Spheres of Society

- **Social**: *Population size, racial/ethnic demographics, gender, age, rural/urban distribution, education*
- **Technological**: *Electricity consumption, telephone mainlines, information technology*
- **Economic**: *Local/global economies, poverty, unemployment, savings/debt ratio*
- **Political**: *Civil rights, freedom, armed conflict, access to public institutions*
- **Cultural Transmission**: *Family, peer, community, television, radio, newspaper, Internet*

Diversity Within Generations



Adapted from Loden & Rosener (1991)

Defining Characteristics of Generational Cohorts

The Silent Generation

- Born 1922-1943 (prior to 1946). Also known as the “The Veterans,” Rosie the Riveters; Traditionalists
- **Markers:** WWII, the Great Depression, Korean War, FDR’s New Deal, Racial segregation; Advent of television, telephone, mass production of automobiles, kitchen appliances, phonographs
- **Cultural Transmission:** Extended families, local social groups (e.g., faith communities, fraternal organizations, PTAs, neighborhoods)
- **Core Values:** Respect for authority, loyalty, hard work, sacrifice for the common good; “Live to work versus work to live”

Baby Boomers

- Born between 1946-1964 (1943-1960)
- **Markers:** Post WWII economic growth and prosperity; Civil rights movements: Black Civil Rights, Women’s Liberation, Chicano Farm Workers Movement; U.S. Space program, Cold War, Vietnam War; Birth control pill; Stonewall Riots
- **Cultural Transmission:** More likely in nuclear families; strongly influenced by television and peer group
- **Core Values:** Grew up with sense that security was taken care of – left room for exploration and protest; place high value on youth, personal gratification, health, material wealth; Generally optimistic, value hope and peace, and believe their generation changed the world

Generation X

- Born between 1965-1980 (1960-1980)
- **Markers:** Vietnam, Watergate, first post Civil Rights Act of 1964 generation, advent of MTV, latchkey experiences, higher rates of divorce (40%); Americans with Disabilities Act (1991)
- **Cultural Transmission:** Peer culture and mass media
- **Core Values:** Desire balance in their lives, diversity viewed as norm, motivated by money, self-reliant, value free time and having fun; “Work to live, not live to work”; assumed gender equality in the workplace; First generation to embrace the personal computer and Internet

Millennial Generation

- Born between 1980-2000 (or 1981-1991) Also known as Generation Y, Nexters, Generation Next; Approx 30% of the current population - greater in number than Baby Boomers
- **Markers:** Technology/menu driven society; most racially/ethnically diverse (1 out of 3 is a person of color); 25% from single parent families; most educated generation – pressure to excel academically; No recollection of the Reagan era, do not remember the Cold War, have known only one Germany, world has always had computers, AIDS, answering machines, microwave ovens, VCRs
- **Cultural Transmission:** Access to global information via World-Wide Web; Loyalty to peers and family; Relationship with technology as social medium
- **Core Values:** Most globally oriented generation; Combined work ethic of Baby Boomers with the can-do attitude of Silent Generation/Veterans and the technological savvy of Generation Xers. Interested in health, exercise, body adornment.

Assessing Generational Dynamics in the Workplace

Generational Cohorts

What percentage of your workers belong to each generation?

Silent Generation _____ %

Baby Boomer _____ %

Gen X _____ %

Millennial _____ %

What percentage of your area's supervisory/ management staff belong to each generation?

Silent Generation _____ %

Baby Boomer _____ %

Gen X _____ %

Millennial _____ %

Generational Cohort Groupings

- **Silent Generation: 1922-1945**
- **Baby Boomers: 1946-1964**
- **Generation X: 1965-1980**
- **Millennial Generation: 1981-2000**

Evaluating Generational Competence

1) Is any generation under-represented? If so, why?

2) Do you understand what motivates and inspires each generation?

Yes No

3) Have you built a generational approach into:

- Recruitment approaches? Yes No
- Supervision efforts? Yes No

4) How does your supervision reflect awareness and respect of generational differences?

Yes No

5) Do recruiting materials and new hire interviews reflect and appeal to all generations?

Yes No

6) What steps do you need to take to ensure that you are effectively supervising generational diversity?

Perspective Taking within the Intergenerational Workforce

Silent Generation Workplace Characteristics

- Dedicated and hard worker
- Sacrifices own needs for cause of the greater good
- Conforms to rules, laws and order
- Respectful of authority
- Patient and delays personal rewards
- Places duty before leisure
- Adheres to rules

How might these characteristics influence Silent workers' perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Baby Boomer Workplace Characteristics

- Optimistic and team oriented
- Strives for personal gratification
- Health and wellness are priorities
- Personal growth is important in any job
- Work-oriented (frequently “workaholics”)
- Will spend money and time appearing to be youthful
- Like to be involved—where the action is

How might these characteristics influence Boomer workers' perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Gilbaugh, Patricia, edited by Mikelson, B. 2009

Generation X

- Appreciate diversity and see it as opportunities rather than challenges
- Think globally—the world has always been connected economically
- Try to balance work life with personal life, and sometimes with educational pursuits as a third “shift”.
- Strong computer skills and technologically inclined
- Try to make the workplace fun
- Like to keep interactions and work attire informal
- Very self-reliant and appreciate supervisors who do not micro-manage them
- Tend to use pragmatic approaches to problems at work, home, and other areas of life—every problem has a solution; the solution just needs to be figured out.

How might these characteristics influence Gen X workers’ perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Millennials

- Quite optimistic about the future
- Take pride in their contributions to civic duty activities
- Possess a lot of confidence
- Values achievement; therefore can be overly competitive or competes for things that do not require a competition.
- Will take strong stands on issues of morality
- Wise to the ways of the “street”—can easily find and access resources of just about any kind
- Not only appreciate diversity, but embrace it

How might these characteristics influence Millennial workers’ perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Implications for the Workplace

Silent Generation Workforce Generalizations:

- **Accepting of hierarchy; belief in meritocracy**
- **Witness numerous technology changes, least familiar with Information Technology**
- **Strong loyalty to company where they are employed**
- **High level of respect for authority and rules**
- **Least embracing of diversity and different ways of problem-solving**
- **Career identifies who they are**

Baby Boomer Workforce Generalizations:

- **Define themselves through jobs and work performance**
- **Competitive, self-driven, do what it takes to complete task (e.g., 50-60 hrs per week)**
- **Desire recognition for job well-done**
- **Comply with civil rights laws as adults; raised in segregated environments as youth – creates internal conflict on diversity issues**
- **Mass effects on organizational/societal policies**

Generation X Workforce Generalizations:

- **Creative in use of technology for workplace applications and communication**
- **Face to face skills may have received less emphasis; communicate specific expectations**
- **May resent work requests that interfere with their social lives**
- **Social emphasis on family activities may not engage Gen X'ers as choosing a permanent partner & children are often delayed**
- **Approach career development as a necessity, not an option**

Millennial Generation*:

- **Most globally oriented generation; planet as ever-shrinking**
- **Thought patterns influenced by computers: more 'mosaic mode' of thinking than 'linear' process; able to integrate complex data before drawing conclusion. Allows for faster processing and great absorption of materials**
- **Combined work ethic of Baby Boomers with the can-do attitude of Silent Generation/Veterans and the technological savvy of Generation Xers.**
- **Apt to change jobs 5-8 times during lives**
- **Interested in health, exercise, body adornment**
- **Assume technology is integrated in workplace**
- **Flexible working hours to balance work/life**
- **Need more structure/supervision/direction: present clear picture of expectations, outcomes, accountability; involve in decision-making**
- **Want to work hard to do a good job, and believe saving money is important**
- **Investigate everything, question rules that have created the organizational culture**

***Source: Clausing, Sherry I. AORN Journal, Sept 2003**

Perspective Taking within the Intergenerational Workforce

Silent Generation Workplace Characteristics

- **Dedicated and hard worker**
- **Sacrifices own needs for cause of the greater good**
- **Conforms to rules, laws and order**
- **Respectful of authority**
- **Patient and delays personal rewards**
- **Places duty before leisure**
- **Adheres to rules**

How might these characteristics influence Silent workers' perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Baby Boomer Workplace Characteristics

- **Optimistic and team oriented**
- **Strives for personal gratification**
- **Health and wellness are priorities**
- **Personal growth is important in any job**
- **Work-oriented (frequently "workaholics")**
- **Will spend money and time appearing to be youthful**
- **Like to be involved—where the action is**

How might these characteristics influence Boomer workers' perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Gilbaugh, Patricia, edited by Mikelson, B. 2009

Generation X

- **Appreciate diversity and see it as opportunities rather than challenges**
- **Think globally—the world has always been connected economically**
- **Try to balance work life with personal life, and sometimes with educational pursuits as a third “shift”.**
- **Strong computer skills and technologically inclined**
- **Try to make the workplace fun**
- **Like to keep interactions and work attire informal**
- **Very self-reliant and appreciate supervisors who do not micro-manage them**
- **Tend to use pragmatic approaches to problems at work, home, and other areas of life—every problem has a solution; the solution just needs to be figured out.**

How might these characteristics influence Gen X workers’ perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Millennials

- **Quite optimistic about the future**
- **Take pride in their contributions to civic duty activities**
- **Possess a lot of confidence**
- **Values achievement; therefore can be overly competitive or competes for things that do not require a competition.**
- **Will take strong stands on issues of morality**
- **Wise to the ways of the “street”—can easily find and access resources of just about any kind**
- **Not only appreciate diversity, but embrace it**

How might these characteristics influence Millennial workers’ perceptions of and interactions with co-workers and supervisors of other generational cohorts?

Supervising Generational Dynamics

A. Awareness

Being aware of each generation's unique influences helps us understand the motivations, or lack of motivations, surrounding certain types of behavior.

Values drive behavior; behavior results in intended and unintended consequences.

B. Communication

Communicating with employees on levels that are important to them will foster an environment that avoids negative morale and loss of productivity. When we understand the assumptions and behaviors that people hold about each generation (i.e. stereotypes), we help to influence simple strategies of effective communication.

C. Managing Conflict

Good communication resolves most of the conflict that arises from generational differences. Develop the ability to negotiate an understanding of root causes of conflict. The effort this takes will help in generating solutions, many of which will be creative and unique to the generational influences of the parties involved in the conflict. Encourage communication around emotionally sensitive matters by facilitating awareness. Asking questions to parties in conflict can be an effective strategy for this type of negotiation.

D. Empowering Employees

In matters of employee recruitment and retention, how agencies attract qualified people and how good employees are retained is the result of developing good marketing strategies around several intergenerational dynamics. When employees are similarly empowered across all generations, the workplace moves toward an *intragenerational* workplace.

Gilbaugh, Patricia, edited by Mikelson, B. 2009

Generational Work Performance Expectations

1. Every employee should be held to the same standard of expectations and performance, regardless of generational cohort.
2. No adaptation should be made that compromises the integrity of the job or diminishes the effectiveness of your agency's mission.
3. All employees should comply with policies and procedures set forth by administration.

So Appreciating Generational Diversity Means . . .

Generational differences may *influence* behavior; however, this does not mean that generational differences get to *determine* how people interact with each other.

Generational differences represent only one factor in how people are influenced by culture.

A Method to Becoming Generationally Competent

The best kind of supervision makes the *most* of your existing generational talent.

Take a close look at how your older workers can be effectively utilized. Make the most of their experience and ensure their knowledge is passed along before they leave.

Demonstrate courage by talking about ageism and its effects and pointing out examples of generational differences and how those differences interact with other types of unique cultural characteristics.

Foster an open-dialogue with employees about how your team/workplace can work towards becoming generationally competent.

Cultural competence is encouraged with each additional interaction folks have with those who are different from themselves. Deliberately create opportunities for people of different generations to work together on projects or tasks. Decrease segregation in the workplace by re-arranging the placement of workstations if you have to. Decreasing segregation by any category that has traditionally struggled with issues of oppression will gradually lead to a changed workplace climate.

Gilbaugh, Patricia, edited by Mikelson, B. 2009

References and Recommended Readings

Books

- Bagby, M. (1998). *Rational Exuberance: The Influence of Generation X on the New American Economy*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Beaudoin, T. (1998). *Virtual Faith: The Irrelevant Spiritual Quest of Generation X*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bernhard, N. (2000). *Best of Baby Boomer Trivia*. New York: Vantage Press.
- Chester E. & Carlson, L. (ed.) (2002). *Employing Generation WHY?* Lakewood: Tucker House Books.
- Hicks, R. & Hicks, K. (1999). *Boomers, Xers, and Other Strangers: Understanding the Generational Differences that Divide Us*. Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers.
- Goldberg, B. (2000). *Age Works: What Corporate America Must do to Survive the Graying of the Workforce*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Lancaster, L. & Stillmann, D. (2002). *When Generations Collide*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Raines, C. (1997). *Beyond Generation X: A Practical Guide for Managers, 188 Tips, Tools, and Techniques that Narrow the Gap at Work*. Menio Park: Crisp Publications.
- Schneider, B. & Stevenson, D. (1999). *The Ambitious Generation: America's Teenagers, Motivated but Directionless*. US: R.R. Donnelley and Sons.
- Shenk, D. (1997). *Data Smog: Surviving the Information Glut*. New York: HaperCollins.
- Tapscott, D. (1998). *Growing Up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Zemke, R., Raines, C., & Filipczak, R. (1999). *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*. New York: AMACOM.

Websites

<http://www.gentrends.com>

<http://www.babyboomers.com>

<http://www.experienceworks.ca>

<http://www.workforceonline.com>

<http://www.fourthturning.com>

Motivation and Employee Recognition

1. In what ways do you currently attempt to recognize and motivate your employees?
2. How do those efforts attune to the generational characteristics people bring to the workplace?
3. What ideas about generational characteristics do you have that could help motivate your employees?
4. What ideas about generational characteristics do you have that could help you further recognize employees that are high performers?

Recruitment and Retention

1. Look at your generational assessment. What generations are under-represented? Would you like to have more workers from the under-represented generations?

2. What informal methods of recruiting can you do to increase the probability that people of a particular generation would apply for an open position in your office?

3. What informal processes can you take advantage of to encourage people of certain generations to retain employment within your office/location?

Performance Monitoring and Disciplinary Action

1. How do generational characteristics and life cycles (i.e., child-rearing responsibilities, caring for aging parents, etc.) affect employees' performance on the job?
2. How can you attend to the unique needs of generational and life cycle characteristics while maintaining consistent performance standards?
3. How do generational characteristics affect employees' acceptance of negative feedback or disciplinary action?
4. When the need for disciplinary action is warranted, what generational characteristics can you appeal to in addressing less than satisfactory performance?