The Generation Gap and Employee Relationship

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ABSTRACT

We live in a world of different generations. Some people perceive it as a great divide and difficulty to get along in an organizational situation. The Generation Gap as discussed in many forums as usual a creation of human ingenuity and imagination. It is difficult to imagine any point of time in history when such generation Gaps did not exist and people found it difficult to get along with others in the family or society at large. Consider the joint families and large families of yester years; they did not have any difficulty to get along as a family or live happily in society. But the so called progress in human endeavors has made way for smaller families and the dispersal of industries has contributed for human settlements to be far from the mooring. In the industries and modern factories which are well dispersed the husband and wife pairs are constrained to live separately from the larger family set up. Inside the companies we find people of different cultures working together to make a profit. This naturally leads to a situation where different generations of people are put together to work and generate surpluses. But working together needs a lot of adjustments. This paper deals with that.

Keywords-- Generation Gap, employee relationship, human ingenuity and imagination, the meaning of generation GAP, how to work together and create good organizations

I. INTRODUCTION

A generation Gap is a difference of opinions between one generation and another regarding beliefs, politics, or values. In today's usage, "generation gap" often refers to a perceived gap between younger people and their parents or grandparents. The sociological theory of a generation gap first came to light in the 1960s, when the younger generation (later known as Baby Boomers) seemed to go against everything their parents had previously believed in terms of music, values, governmental and political views. Sociologists now refer to "generation gap" as "institutional age segregation". Usually, when any of these age groups is engaged in its primary activity, the individual members are physically isolated from people of other generations, with little interaction across age barriers except at the nuclear family level.

It’s in our fast-changing cities where the crisis is most pronounced. Globalization, gentrification, migration, urban transience, digitization and housing bubbles have all contributed. The multiplying effect is that many older people have deep roots in their communities but few connections, while many young people have hundreds of connections but no roots in communities. Social divisions between young and old mirror financial ones. Ending age segregation is essential, and would remind us how much we share By spending time with people who are not like us – people whose age, life experiences, class and views on the world may differ substantially from our own – we can show that people from across perceived divides have so much to gain from one another.

A generation gap consists of the differences in opinions expressed by members of two different generations. More specifically, a generation gap can be used to describe the differences in actions, beliefs and tastes members of younger generations when compared to members of older generations regarding politics, values and other matters. While generation gaps have been prevalent throughout all periods of history, the breadth of differences of these gaps has widened in the 20th and 21st centuries. Since the emergence of generation gaps, sociologists have coined it as institutional age segregation and have divided the lifespan of an individual into three parts: childhood, midlife and retirement. One of the most notable findings in the study of the generation gap is the isolation of members of other generations when an individual is engaged in his generation's primary activity.
Of course the era in which you were born and came of age matters, if you fought a war or lost family to the Blitz, that impact your world view. And if you were born into ubiquitous technology, from the 90s onwards, that also shapes how you behave. But while there is clearly a growing generational gap, commentary that paints a picture of different generations economically pitted against each other lacks the nuance of real life. While many intergenerational differences persist, there are also areas of commonality. Both groups aspire to good relationships, health, learning and independence. Older and younger people feel equally overwhelmed by the dominance of new technology. Almost eight in 10 of those aged 18-24 and the over-65s want life to slow down.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OBJECTIVES

The ‘Generation Gap’ is something we hear every now and then. But his has become so common an expression that people tend to take it passively and without comment. Many would not have even paused to think about what it means. This research paper is to highlight the meaning, the larger consequences of social impact and what we can do about it. The origins of this term are attributed to the baby boom era of about 1960s. What it signifies is the growing lack of understanding between the new generations of youngsters in the age group of 20-22 who enter an active career in organizations. Since this kind of thinking has the propensity to scuttle organizational relationships we need to analyze the pros and cons of such thinking and how to get over it. With this in view following specific Objectives have been identified:

1. Business environment and challenges
2. The influence of environment on the generation gap
3. A brief Analysis of the beginnings and growth of this thinking
4. Impact of such philosophies on organizational climate
5. How organizations, currently coping with this phenomenon
6. Futuristic ideas and suggestions for organizations.

Organizations are created as going concerns and they need to go on with their specific purposes, which may be modified from time to time suiting environment. But it is important that organizations cannot be paralyzed by any internal or external developments impinging on their role. A recent development is the notional gap between various age groups of people working in an organization. This research paper proposes to evaluate if such thinking really exists in modern organizations, and if so what organizations can do about it. A Questionnaire method was suggested during the process of evaluating various alternate methodologies. But the feasibility was difficult and so it was decided to do a comprehensive of available literature and try and consolidate the data for the purpose of meeting the objectives. Literature was available and what required was a good compilation and consolidation to arrive at the conclusions in answering the research questions. This has been done satisfactorily and results can be seen at the end of this paper in the Concluding remarks.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

e- millennials – individuals born between 1982 and 2002 – are called technology natives because the members of this generation grew up and lived with technology. The use of technology is a significant part of a typical millennial's activity. When a member of another generation – typically an older generation – approaches a millennial for help in using such technologies, a wide difference between knowledge on technology becomes evident. Older generations are not associated with technology as much as millennials are. As such, businesses focusing on technology isolate those generations that do not understand their products as much as millennials do.
People who seem to be looking to mark time until retirement aren’t going to make a great impression, whatever their age. No one will be surprised to hear that many people emphasize on staying current with technology. Many also pointed out that this is easier to do than ever: From instructional YouTube videos to courses at your local library, the resources are endless. One has to be conversant in tech-tool developments in your field; be curious about (not dismissive of) such developments in general; and be proactive, so you’re not just promising that you are willing to keep learning, but demonstrating that you do so all the time.

![The Generation Gap](image)

**Figure 2: Understanding Generation Gap**

Millennials form 70% of the current US work force. So, you don’t need to pose like a younger person, but you need to negate the view of the older generation for what the truth is. Figure 2, 3 and 4 illustrate the characteristics of thee millennials and the new generation of youngsters.
Figure 3: Millennial mindset

Figure 4: Generations by birth year
Many academics have stressed the importance of social media platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter. Your future may not depend on obsessing over a digital “following,” but the fact that these tools are so popular makes them worth exploring — and some can be useful networking aids. Dismissing the entire category out of present day communication aids send a message that you’re closed-minded and resistant to change. And while the customer response has made it clear that age bias can be a real challenge, there are many counterexamples that demonstrate how it’s being overcome. Consider description of a work team whose members range in age from 24 to 68: “Those on the ‘younger side’ acknowledge our decades of experience and respect us for our competence. Those on the ‘older side’ don’t preach or pontificate and remain open to new ideas.”

From Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 the characteristics of different generation and their age groups can be observed. The US work force is getting younger from 1990 onwards and the current generation of working people is much younger in the age group of 20-25 years. Their approach to life is strikingly different. For example the communication devices are hand held devices today as opposed to Formal letters and printed matter. Attitude to technology as rather disinterest and now Technology particularly the mobile technologies and hand held devices are in the fore front. As people work longer and delay retirement, internal career paths have changed. “Organizational careers don’t look the way they did before,” says Peter Cappelli, professor of management at the Wharton School and coauthor of Managing the Older Worker. “It’s more common to see someone younger managing someone older.” This can lead to tension on both sides. “Maybe there is a feeling of: why am I being bossed around by someone without a lot of experience? On the other hand, maybe the younger person feels insecure and wonders: how do I do this?” “It’s important to be aware of generational tension — loosely defined as a lack of respect for someone who’s of a different generation from you — among colleagues,” says Jeanne C. Meister, a founding partner of Future Workplace, a human resources consultancy and the coauthor of The 2020 Workplace. “It’s your job to help your employees recognize that they each have distinct sets of skills and different things they bring to the table,” she says. Here’s how.

For the first time in history, five generations will soon be working side by side. But whether this multi-generational workplace feels happy and productive or challenging and stressful is, up to you: the boss. How
should you relate to employees of different age groups? How do you motivate someone much older or much younger than you? And finally: what can you do to encourage employees of different generations to share their knowledge? (See illustrated Figure 6 below)

First and foremost one needs to understand that Generation GAP is real and one generation cannot think like the other. While the ideas and motivations of these groups may be different there is no rule to say they cannot work together as seen from the experience of about 100 years and with different generations and there characteristics as outlined the above paragraphs. As a team leader or Manager your duty is to get the best out of them and it is important to remember that you have inherited them rather than recruiting them.

**DOMINANT PERSONALITY TRAITS ACROSS GENERATIONS**

![Multi-generational characteristics](image)

Traditionalist (born prior to 1946) who seemingly won’t ever retire; the cynical Gen Xer who’s only out for himself; and the Gen 2020er — born after 1997 — who appears surgically attached to her smart phone. Generational stereotypes are there, but they are just not true to be generalized. There is no evidence that 35-year-old managers today are any different from 35-year-old managers a generation ago. Besides, your goal is to help your team move beyond the labels. Generation-based employee affinity groups are a waste of time and energy. Don’t assume people need special treatment and “don’t dwell on differences with a group discussion that devolves into: “Get to know each person individually.” Here are a few tips to handle people from different generations.

**Build collaborative relationships.** The mindset is to make that person your partner and involve them in everything you do. You’re still the boss and the one making the decisions, but you should hear them out. A collaborative approach works well when managing workers who are in their 20s, too. They are used to discussion and engagement because that’s what they had in the college environment. Help your employees make the transition from school to the workplace by encouraging debate. You don’t necessarily need to take all their advice, but be aware of their motivations.

**Study your employees** Just as you would research a new product or service; you need to study the demographics of your current and the projected future workforce to determine what they want out of their jobs as these things are different generation to generation. If your company conducts an annual survey of vision and values, add new questions to the mix, such as queries about your employees’ preferred communication style and planned professional paths. Then “use that information to look critically at your human resources and business strategies. Figure out: What matters to different sets of employees? What can you do to attract younger or more experienced workers? It’s a low cost way to get a pulse on generational career issues.

**Create opportunities for cross-generational mentoring** Reverse or reciprocal mentoring programs, which pair younger workers with seasoned executives to work on specific business objectives usually involving technology, are increasingly prevalent in many offices. The younger person — who grew up with the internet — teaches the older person about the power of social media to drive business results. Meanwhile, the more experienced employee shares institutional knowledge with the younger worker. Mixed-age work teams are another way to promote cross-generational mentoring. Studies show that colleagues learn more from each other than they do from formal training, which is why it is so important to establish a culture of coaching across age groups. In mixed-age teams, mentoring relationships develop more naturally. Older folks are more likely to fall into a mentor role and help the young employees. Meanwhile, young people often find it easier to take advice from an experienced worker.
than from one of their peers because they’re not competing in the same way.

For motivating them Consider life paths: When it comes to inspiring and providing incentives, employees who are much older or much younger than you, it helps to think like an anthropologist. Consider where your employees are in their lives and what their needs are. Younger people, for instance, typically don’t have many outside obligations; work-wise, they are motivated by new experiences and opportunities. Employees in their 30s and 40s, on the other hand, often have children and mortgages and are in need of flexibility as well as money and advancement. Workers at the end of their careers are probably not as interested in training, but they do want interesting work and work-life balance. Understanding the characteristics around these predictable life paths will help you figure out how best to work assignments and also the best ways to manage and motivate your team.

DOs

- Experiment with mixed-age teams and reverse mentoring programs that enable older, experienced workers to interact with and learn from younger hires
- Develop incentive plans that reflect where your employees are in their lives
- Conduct regular human resources surveys to get a pulse on your employees’ demographics and needs

DON'Ts

- Bother with generation-based employee affinity groups — they generally reinforce stereotypes
- Act like a top-down manager — forge partnerships with employees of different ages and encourage them to share their opinions
- Assume you already know how to motivate employees who are older or younger — ask them what they want out of their professional lives

Reciprocal Mentoring, partnering young employees with older colleagues to work on tech skills who teach them how to use Twitter and how to get more out of professional networking sites, such as LinkedIn. Create time in the day to get on LinkedIn and shape your thinking in terms of how to operate in the social environment and have a better appreciation the importance of social media. This new generation mix is shaping the future in terms of purchasing habits: They don’t use cash to buy things; they use electronic means. They are provided professional counseling and also help in improve communication skills. The thought that personality is intrinsic and immutable is wrong! Personality does change with age and there is an entire trajectory of traits that dominate a person’s behavior depending on his or her generation. Based on user responses to Good Co’s personality survey, some trends based on personality age were unearthed. The endlessly energetic Gen Z thrives in high-stress situations. They love an emotional roller coaster and enjoy the challenge and drama of a high stress environment. They are all about creativity, imagination and abstract thinking – seeing the world in new and different ways. Their newly achieved sense of responsibility may lead to them taking more on their plate than they can probably accomplish. Millennials believe in living life in the fast lane – risk becomes their middle name. Why plan anything when you can get results through determination and energy? Characterized by a high amount of intellectual curiosity, they love to learn and like to explore any topics of interest. But that doesn’t mean they are all hyper-emotional – in fact, they develop a cool and collected demeanor which may sometimes come across as emotionally cold. Gen X-ers tend to be keen to be the top boss and will work hard to achieve a position of influence. They become highly competitive and ambitious, eager to lead the field. However, they do realize the importance of team and community spirit – what affects one, affects all and they prefer collaboration. With time, they become adept at adapting and develop the gift of getting along with anybody Baby boomers are generally very democratic and subtle in their dealings. They are inclined to give every idea a fair hearing. Socially confident, they enjoy having a large and variable network of contacts. They tend to be interested in new approaches and ideas – as long as they’re a demonstrable improvement on the old ones. With a considerable experience behind them, their drive starts shifting from money to pleasure of working on personally fulfilling tasks. The Greatest Generation tends to be sensitive to the emotions of others. They are highly empathetic who believe strongly in supporting others. Maturity coupled with experience makes them specialists in delivering adaptable strategies for any situations.

A multi-generational team should be constructed based on the distinctive traits across each of these age groups. The higher the fit, the better are the synergies for the organization and the lower the conflicts. Yet, the design should be fluid to incorporate personality changes with age. After all, personalities are not set in stone and inflexible.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The challenges today for organizations are visible and never before have we seen such transparency in this manner. The dictates of the business environment has to be considered by any organization for survival and growth. The characteristic of the present environment are the Technology that I changing with every generation or much before the appearance of another. The younger generation is able to keep pace with such technological revolutions as mobile technology and proliferation. But the problem is that we are not blessed to have only one generation of people as the generations are overlapping and need to live with one another.
That is precisely one of the challenges of the present population. Though there are several opinions about generation gap, we find the existence of a gap in the thinking and opinions and outlook of the newer generations. The fast pace of life, unitary families, distance of separation from the larger families and the nature of working of both husband and wife and the need to leave the children to fend for themselves have all made the society as it is today. As the title of this article suggests it is prudent to find ways and means of reducing friction and getting on with the job.

As seen in the review of literature, the present organizations consist of different generations of people and there is not only a growing awareness but a compelling vision to work together for a better future for mankind. Organizations and people working together to make a success of its objectives are working together to understand and forget the differences and orient themselves to work. Organizational intervention strategies are being considered by the companies to get the best out of the workforce.

Such philosophies have impacted organizational functioning. Progressive organizations are built on teamwork and not individual merit. To be successful in the present organizations people have to forget their individuality and mould their attitudes towards team spirit and functional leadership. This has to come from cross functional teams often consisting of different generations of people. The Managerial role is to integrate their work and not to consider their age and generation differences. This is happening in US and soon in India as well. Unless people learn to forget their differences in age and generations like other factors when they come to work, it is difficult for them to be successful and if they aren't they will find their way out sooner than later.

Presently organizations do this through Training and Recruitment of suitable candidates who will function well as a team. Experiences gained by successful teams will form the basis for futuristic actions. Various ideas for cross functional working have been given in the above paragraphs. A critical review of employee profiles, how to work without feeling the age differences, particularly considering the life path and DOs and DON'Ts are very important for successful working of teams.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Futuristic organizations will have to contend with a mix of different generations of employees working in teams to produce results. If the results have to be in line with corporate expectations, one of the main areas of concern in modern times is this need for employees of different generations to work together forgetting their differences and help one another by exchanging their ideas and skills for mutual benefit. The best thing is to forget their age differences and always it is the past generation which has to make some concession so that the younger generations are made to realize in time that they are also going to be a part of the ‘past’ in due course of time!

**REFERENCES**


WEB REFERENCES


