# The Challenge of Generation Gap Within Organization

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**Abstract:** Organizations are facing the retirement of many older workers and the challenge of recruiting and retaining young talent. However, few studies have empirically substantiated generational differences in work values. The differences generation representing Silent, Traditional or Veterans Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen X) and Generation Y (Gen Me, also known as gen Y, or Millennials). Each generation is shaped by economic, social, historical and contemporary politics. This will create a conflict of generation gap in an organization that requires immediate action from the management and the workers themselves between which can be done to address this problem is to understand the nature and the characteristics of each generation in order to reduce the existing public perception of every generation and introduce appropriate measures to be taken by the management of the organization. Each generation and their unique perspective should be acknowledged and incorporated through the implementation of organizational policies

**Key words:** Organization · Talent · Generation · Gen X · Gen Y

## INTRODUCTION

A generation gap is commonly to refer to perceived differences between generations that cause conflict and complicate communication, creating a "Gap." Word maven William this provides more fire positive definition: "Generation gap can be a frustrating lack of communication between young and old, or a useful stretch of time that separates cultures within a society, allowing them to develop their own character. "From their position in the family and with more life experience than younger family members, grandparents are uniquely poised to see that differences between generations can be positive for all those concerned.

In the present era of globalization, technological change and an increasingly sotisfikated has dominated almost every aspect of life including work organization. The main challenges to be faced by an organization is how to manage and understand the workers who come from all walks of generation. Nowadays, there are several generations working groups within an organization based on their age. Clash of cultures, backgrounds, ways of working, technologies and educational level of exposure to a wall that can lead to various problems.

According Department of Statistics Malaysia (2012), Generation Y will dominate over 50% of the workforce in Malaysia in 2015, as approximately 21% of the 28 million Malaysians are composed of this group. According to Topscott, [1] generation Y are those born between 1977 to 1997. However, most researchers have classified the current generation of workers into four main groups. The first group is the group Traditional or 'Silent Generation' born before 1945. The second group is Baby Boomers born to after World War II (1946-1964). After that, the third group are they born between (1965-1980) are Generation X and last but not least the group in the workforce is Generation Y born after 1980 between 1981 until 2000 [2]. The phenomenon of collisions between four generations this is the first time this has happened in the history of human civilization. Therefore, the problem of the generation gap can only be tackled if the characteristics of a generation is understandable, public perception of the impact of a generation can be minimized and appropriate action can be taken by organizations meet these challenges.

**The Characteristics of Generation:** A generation group will often shaped by economic, social and political

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backgrounds as they grew up. So, every generation will have priority, perspectives, skills and different ways of working. If not treated properly, it can lead to conflict and lowers productivity and employee morale. Therefore, every employee must understand the characteristics of each generation who surround them.

At work, generational differences can affect everything, including recruiting, building teams, dealing with change, motivating, managing and maintaining and increasing productivity. Think of how generational differences, relative to how people communicate, might affect misunderstandings, high employee turnover, difficulty in attracting employees and gaining employee commitment and engagement. Research indicates that people communicate based on their generational backgrounds. Each generation has distinct attitudes, behaviors, expectations, habits and motivational buttons. Learning how to communicate with the different generations can eliminate many major confrontations and misunderstandings in the workplace and the world of business.

Born before 1945, Veterans have a very strong work ethic. "Just git'er done" could be their motto. Give an impossible task to a veteran and somehow, Some way it will get done. As a result, Veterans tend to be very respectful of seniority, title and rank. Because their world outlook was shaped by the Great Depression and World War II, Veterans have a very practical outlook (make do, reuse, recycle) and know how to put money away for a rainy day. Generally, veterans note biases towards them as being loyal to employers, having consistent performance, having strong work ethic, being financially conservative and being respectful of authority.

Born between 1946 and 1964. Baby Boomers invented the 60-hour workweek. They are competitive to their own detriment at times with a "work-til-you-drop" work ethic. They have a history of turning endings into beginnings. Now entering traditional retirement age, they have no plans for porches, rocking chairs, tables or seats at bingo. Retirement is not the end of a career but the start of a career transition. They are optimistic about their own lives - they believe that if they set goals and work hard, they can achieve whatever they set out to do. Boomers have less respect for rank and hierarchy than their predecessors but still respect the hierarchy of leadership, especially when they can be part of it. They set long-term goals and have the "no pain-no gain" attitude to set them through. Boomers are committed, hardworking and career focused - which has caused them to be tagged as

workaholics by Gen X and Gen Y. The Baby Boomer work ethic is also characterized by dedication, loyalty and a willingness to stay in the same job for a long time. They have a lot to offer businesses with their work and life experience, skills and knowledge that many younger people cannot offer. They tend to work longer hours - and respect is paramount when managing a Baby Boomer.

Born between 1965 and 1979. Gen Xs are the free agents of the workforce - independent, self-reliant and entrepreneurial. Because they do not find any value in wasting time with non-essential stuff, they shattered the management philosophy of "if is not broken, do not fix it." Gen Xs are very concerned about life balance and fiercely protective of family time. They tend to be skeptical and pragmatic and value leadership by competence. They have no respect for service, title or rank because their parents had all three and lost their jobs anyway. Their career paths create a mosaic of work, learning, family and even sabbatical.

Gen X occupies a massive 60 per cent of the current workforce. They possess an entrepreneurial spirit, a do-it-yourself attitude and, in contrast to the generations before them, embrace change in the workplace. They are career-oriented but place a strong emphasis on family time and strive for a good work-life balance. They enjoy freedom and autonomy - they work to live rather than live to work, which is often frowned upon as slack and difficult to manage by the Boomers, who prefer to do the long hours. A flexible workplace is a must for a Gen X-er and they value constructive feedback - which both need to be taken into consideration when managing Gen X.

Gen X-ers are seen to be in the best position in the job market at the moment as they are set to step up to the plate and fill the leadership roles when the boomers retire. Where have the experience boomers, Gen X-ers also have the qualifications to go with it. Brought up in an era of technological and social change, Gen-X is tech-savvy and open to change. They possess a different work ethic to the boomers - Gen X thrives on diversity, challenge, responsibility, honesty and creative input, compared to the boomers' preference for a more rigid, work-centric approach.

Born between 1980 and 2000. Gen Ys are very entrepreneurial. Most worked at legitimate jobs before they left high school. Gen Ys are technology-savvy. They've never known a world without mobile devices and 24/7 connectivity. They see themselves as citizens of the world and feel very connected through the internet. Practically born with a mobile phone strapped to their ear

and a laptop in their cradle, these guys are totally comfortable with digital technology. Excellent multi-taskers - they've had to juggle school, soccer training, dance class, computer games and other social interests, all whilst sending text messages - they are impatient and require instant gratification as they have always had all the information they need at their fingertips via the Internet.

Where boomers prefer 'face time', Gen Y prefers to communicate through platforms such as email, Instant Messaging (IM), blogs and text messages, rather than on the phone or face to face. Gen Y also prefers cyber training, web-based delivery systems and telecommuting rather than traditional lectures or training. The typical Gen Y is smart, creative, productive and achievement-oriented. They seek personal growth, meaningful careers and mentors or supervisors to encourage and facilitate their professional development. They have been constantly surrounded by choice and therefore do not tend to stay in one job for very long. They require constant stimulation and the opportunity to develop their skills.

**Overcoming and the Importance of Understanding the Differences Between the Generations:** The main difference in an organization that involves multiple layers of generations is the communication factor. The former is more likely to meetings, discussions or any face to face communication. Meanwhile, a new generation will be more focused on the rapid communication of new media such as e-mail, sms, video calls or various forms of the latest methods that allow them to communicate instantly. Therefore, these changes should be adopted by the previous generation in order to reduce the gap between the generations. The administrator of the organization must complete the facilities the latest technology to all levels of employees so they can communicate with the same medium as the passage of time.

The difference between the generations will also be formed in terms of job satisfaction, namely the award yng needed by each generation of workers. Studies conducted employee satisfaction (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010) divide on several factors:

- Leisure: Whether individuals "work to live" or "live to work"
- Extrinsic Rewards: notion that states pay, material possessions and prestige are the primary factors that motivate individuals to work

- Intrinsic Rewards: notion that individuals own work for work's sake rather than to obtainor secure external stimuli or material items.
- Rewards altruistic: to what degree an individual is motivated to work by their desire to help others or their society
- Social Rewards: To what degree an individual needs to feel a sense of belonging or connection in order to be motivated to work.

In conclusion of specific study in work values is the increase in the value placed on leisure. Increased value in leisure has led to the decrease in work centrality and reflects the current realities of the workplace. Organizations are moving from a hierarchical, rigid structure to a more collaborative, flat lattice. Interestingly enough, although there is a large global movement to be more philanthropic and sustainable, altruism Generation Y values just as much as the other generations. The values have long been recognized as important determinants of behavior [3]. These values have the propensity to influence workplace attitudes and performance. Organizations would benefit from this research in order to adjust their practices to better accommodate and serve their employees. From a human capital perspective, employees will work more efficiently and effectively if they are being properly managed and their needs are aligned with those of their organization.

Each generation has a distinct perspective on working hours, work / life balance, working remotely, communicating and receiving feedback. In order to overcome these differences, Glass suggests that, "There are four areas to focus on for overcoming generational conflict at work and ensuring that demographic mixed workplaces can survive and thrive-changing human resource policies / corporate philosophies, ensuring an environment of effective communication, incorporating collaborative decision making and developing internal training programs that focus on the differences [4]. In sum, Glass asserts that it all boils down to finding the right communication method to reach each generation and encouraging employees to be more open minded about generational differences. Achieving these two goals would help to eliminate many of the pains caused by generational differences in the workplace.

To help employees overcome generational biases, organizations must first help themovercome mental models. The largest concern for employers is retention rather than recruitment. Putting employees in an

environment where they hope to remain begins with ensuring that they get along with coworkers. Some suggestions for organizations that hope to create this healthy environment are based on creating open communication between generations through what are considered to be best practices. The organization should provide frequent and informal feedback, institute policies that allow for a flexible and casual work environment, keep work-life balance a priority, incorporate technology into processes and offer employees opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities.

To determine other ways to meet the needs of varying generations, organizations also have the option of surveying employees. While it is unlikely that an organization will be able to meet all requests and while not every employee in each generation will express the same needs, organizations can do their best to make compromises. Changes based on employee wishes will strengthen the environment of the organization and will give employees more motivation because their wishes are important to their organization. When employees have a sense of ownership in their job, they perform better. When considering that this ownership can comechanges instigated by generation differences, the generational gap may begin to close.

## CONCLUSION

In order to overcome these barriers, organizations must have a culture where it isacceptable to question ideas and approach one another (regardless of status) when concerned with something. Likewise, the organization should welcome difficult conversations, as they can help to get the real issues and concerns out on the table and then the organization can begin to effectively handle and approach those issues. Finally, the organization should take a systems thinking approach; it should build a shared vision, encourage team learning, get rid of mental models preventing good performance and reward personal mastery. If an organization can take these steps forward, it will have much better success at becoming and sustaining as a learning organization.

In conclusion, after considering all of this data, organizations can reduce generational gaps by catering various generational practices to meet all needs. Implementing these practices successfully requires that biases based on mental models, characteristics and historical events are all considered regarding each generation. Organizations should also consider the differences between generations and how to bring them together to achieve a shared vision. Practices should bring new perspective regarding each employee generations besides their own, without forcing these biases on them. There is a risk of potentially creating biases while trying to eliminate them, so organizations must be contentious in their tactics. Overall, when creating a learning organization, considering generational needs could lead to improved retention rates, better overall communication, the ability for employees to learn from other generations and the chance or employees to gain a better sense of each.

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