



Generation Gap: Closing the Generation Gap in the Workplace

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explore organization strategies that overcome gap issues.
- ✓ Evaluate the need and effectiveness of recruiting, retention, and succession plans in context of the generation gap.

Unit 2

Overcoming the Generation Gap at Workplaces

Knowing What You Want

Different people look for different things when it comes to considering whether they will work for your company or not. Some research stated that Silents and Boomers would look for similar things in a job advertisement, as will Generation Xers and Y's. The interesting thing here is that you could divide the folks up according to a different type of rule, but still come up with the same answer.

Silents and Boomers will appreciate job ads that outline:

- Value of their experience and expertise.
- A detailed job description.
- Traditional recruiting methods, like classified ads, outplacement firms, or recruiting companies.

Generation Xers, Y's, and Millennials will appreciate:

- Short, snappy writing.
- Emphasis on fast-paced, individual contributions, work-life balance, opportunities for growth.
- Technological recruiting methods like Internet job boards, company websites, and social networking.

If you are familiar with some of the following personality-based assessments, which are widely used in many organizations, you will find that similar categorizing takes place.

- Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI)
- Personality Dimensions
- True Colors
- DiSC Profiles

To categorize using True Colors, for example, aspects of Gold and Green describe the first group. Aspects of Orange and Blue describe the second group.

How do we work with this in the workplace? We must ensure that just as we understand the impact of generations on the workplace, we also understand the impact of personality. If you are trying to appeal to someone who is detail-oriented and works systematically, you are going to recruit and word your advertisements in the same way. If, on the other hand, you are looking for someone who will flourish in

a fast-paced, ever-evolving, or unpredictable environment, your advertisement will reflect that kind of person. If you need someone who is flexible in all kinds of environments, then your advertising ought to reflect that, and there are plenty of people who can meet your requirements.

Having It All

Case Study

Imagine you are a recruiter in a modern placement firm. The work is hectic and deadlines are frequent. On your desk this morning are three urgent requests for staffing. As you begin to prioritize them, you think about your own career up to this point. You've been out of school for about three years and have a two-year college diploma in business. You are looking for people that will be placed in jobs where they make more money than you make now.

Test your knowledge

As you reflect on this, you look at the requests. What kind of recruiting plans will you set up for each position? Will you advertise, and if so, where and why? Will you contact schools and colleges, or post information on the Internet? For each position, come up with three strategies that you will implement to find the right people, right now.

Staffing Request One

Looking to fill an entry-level receptionist position, which needs someone with a high school education and one year of experience in a busy office environment. This is a company with steady growth and almost no turnover.

Staffing Request Two

Looking to fill a position for an experienced accountant with eight to ten years of experience, a university degree, and the appropriate certification. This is a company with little turnover, but an expectation that 50% of their workforce is retiring over the next ten years.

Staffing Request Three

Looking for a bus driver for a medium sized city with an excellent bus system. Bus drivers do not generally come to a city with bus driving experience, so you are willing to train.

The Value of Planning

Succession Planning in a Nutshell

If we expect to have the right people in the right jobs at the right time and for the right reasons, we must address the following key factors of a succession plan. Succession planning and coaching are factors that increase an organization's sustainability.

We must be a part of a learning organization.

Succession planning is about developing leaders. In order to do that, we have to belong to an organization where education is valued, and where it is supported from the top down.

Succession planning does not exist in a vacuum.

Succession planning is a process. The process has to incorporate the other areas of the organization in order to support the business. If the plan does not support the organization, it will be discarded.

Succession planning requires the development of reliable data gathering.

Succession planning has been regarded as many things, including being an HR add on. Succession planning must be demonstrated scientifically, which is impossible if we consider it as a strictly creative process (although there is creativity required). Data gathering means that the organization is looking at benchmarks and actual results to measure and assess progress.

Succession planning requires senior level support.

The CEO or President must endorse and support the succession planning process. The CEO must be an involved and active participant (not just because he/she is one of those critical employees). When the CEO is highly engaged, the program becomes coherent and embraced.

You must continually assess your results.

If you do not assess the quality of performance within the organization, you will not learn the level of success – or failure – that the plan holds. We know that succession planning is a long-term endeavor, so we must ensure that the right people are in the right jobs without losing a focus on performance. If we place people in positions on a hunch that they had the potential, but those people did not actually have the skill to succeed, the leadership pipeline fails.

You do not have to do it all at once.

One major threat to succession planning is that implementation over a short period of time can overwhelm systems and people. Succession planning is a process; change can seem threatening. When you begin to contemplate a succession plan, you could realistically be creating implementation plans across multiple departments or several regions or countries, involving a huge number of people. Step by step implementation will allow you to experience success in one area and to demonstrate to other stakeholders how effective the process is, while allowing the important work to take place. Phased implementation also allows time to make adjustments to the program before it is widely distributed.

Test your knowledge

Name the most troublesome ingredient in this list.

How can you manage it in your workplace?

Coaching and Mentoring

Coaching can be an important aspect of succession planning, especially when we consider that we are preparing people for leadership roles. It is also a key element in developing authentic teams. While training is usually focused and scheduled, coaching can be provided when an opportunity presents itself.

Coaching is not effective at fixing problems like those that are associated with poor performance. However, it can be very effectively used to prepare future leaders.

Coaching and mentoring are different in that mentoring is actually teaching someone a particular skill purposely. If someone is completely new to a subject, mentoring is appropriate. To try to coach someone who has never used a wrench how to change the oil in his/her car would not make any sense. That person needs a mentor or teacher. However, for the mechanic who is a valued employee within a shop environment, and who has excellent leadership qualities and the potential to be a critical employee, some coaching can accelerate his/her evolution into a leadership role.

Good coaches actually take the time and make the effort to learn how to coach. Anyone can call himself or herself a coach, but some of the key aspects of coaching need to be learned in order to be effectively applied. Coaches lead; they do not teach. A coach approaches something in a way to help someone discover, explore, and ask their own questions rather than just answer a coach's questions.

Coaching is available with specialties in certain areas that can really help with succession planning. Executive coaches can help someone who lacks certain skills to develop the skills that will make them successful. Or, when someone is moved into a role before they are completely prepared, they may benefit from job content coaching. In other circumstances, process or image coaching focuses on the impact that the leader projects. Can they carry a conversation, project a confident and professional image during a business lunch or meeting, deliver bad news to staff, or conduct a meeting?

The value of coaching is that it works across generations. Members of each generational group appreciate being coached, in general, because it is done respectfully and it meets the outcomes of the individual within the context of their employment. Coaching is an excellent way for younger managers to learn communication, supervisory, and management skills that they can apply with workers who are younger and older than they are.

Test your knowledge

Write down five areas in your professional or private life where you could benefit from working with a coach.

Do you see value in becoming an in-house coach or by receiving coaching from a professional?

Are there pros and cons?

Developing Targeted Retention Strategies

Retention Considerations

Although the oldest members of the Silent generation are well into their seventies, the youngest of them are in their sixties. Not everyone wants to retire at 60 or 65. Some people do not wish to work for free (volunteer); others cannot afford to retire because they do not have enough money saved; still others would like to work part-time and do other things such as travel and volunteer. They may also need time off to see to the needs of an ailing spouse or parent. They have important contributions to make to your workplace. They have developed a tremendous amount of knowledge that can be useful for subsequent workers.

Members of this generation do not wish to be put out to pasture. Many of them are healthy, fit individuals. However, there are some company programs that can put a long-serving member of this generation at a distinct disadvantage if they stay in your workplace. It is very important to ensure that these problems are addressed.

For example, in some pension plans, if a worker decides to shift from part-time to full time, they receive a decreased pension benefit when they actually retire. Similarly, an employee who works full time beyond their retirement number (i.e., age 50 and 30 years of service) may be penalized for working longer. This requires very careful planning and places obligations on the employer and employee to know that the choice to stay on with an employer can have a negative impact on their pension.

Another example would be when companies make stupid mistakes, such as stopping benefit coverage for workers at age 65, but then continuing to deduct premiums from individual paychecks. This will simply frustrate your employees, so benefit staff need to be well prepared to adapt their practices and

the quirky rules that might be affected by having employees remain at work beyond usual retirement age.

What issues exist in your workplace that could impact people who elect to work beyond normal retirement age?

Pulling Things Together

Come up with three to five ideas or reflections about each statement below.

Evaluate the ages of your workforce.

Develop attraction and retention strategies.

Look at processes to determine whether you are as effective as you can be.

Communicate.

Assess skill development issues.

Be active in your retention plan.

What We Really Want

Filling in the Gaps

As we've shown, the generation gap at work is really more of a perception than an issue with a lot of substance. However, generation issues do have implications for recruiting, retention, and succession planning. The generation can be managed, just like so many other workplace issues are. Here are a few gaps that we will complete together.

Test your knowledge

Fill in the blanks in the sentences below.

- People want the same things at work, and they also _____ the same things, no matter what _____ they come from.
- We can effectively work with and _____ people from any generation.
- Everyone wants _____.
- _____ is important to all of us.

- No one really likes _____, but we can all be better prepared for it.
- Retaining older workers is the same as retaining younger workers; you simply have to do the right things and make your _____ valuable.
- Across _____, we know that everyone wants to learn and to be _____.
- Almost everyone is open to _____, and it doesn't vary according to generation; it varies according to personal _____.

What's the Plan?

The generation gap is not the chasm we might have thought. The issues surrounding the gap are answered through measures that are part of recruiting, retention, and succession planning. What are the first five steps I can take at work, or personally, to address the real issues?
