



Collaborative and Strategic Planning to Meet the Needs of a Multigenerational Workforce and the Organization

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Currently, there are five generations within the workplace: Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Their summarized generational needs as employees, managers, leaders, and organizations are diverse. Organizational leaders are continually learning how to address each generation's specific needs to enhance their recruitment, satisfaction, teamwork, productivity, retention, and preparing working in the future. Societal trends, economic upswings and downturns, and organizational culture continue to challenge multigenerational employees and organizational growth. Each generation wants to succeed in the workplace and in life.

Introduction

We are at a unique time in the history of the American workforce. Five generations of employees are engaged in the workplace. Each generation's interests are different yet there are some commonalities among them. Some of the commonalities include that each generation has experienced societal issues such as racial injustice, expansive income gaps, rising healthcare needs and costs, voting right suppression, and hunger and food insecurities. The societal issues also focus on addressing rising and affordable healthcare, securing educational attainment, equitable employment, securing equitable pay, eliminating gender biases, responding to political uprisings, reducing poverty, and eliminating systemic racism and class structuring. We also experience a challenged economy, increased cost of living, increasing personal and national debt, consumer spending, remote and virtual learning and working, climate change, gun control, and personal safety.

The aim of this white paper is to describe the workplace generations and share the historical values and beliefs of each generation. We will also identify the career needs of each generation and show how these needs impact organizations. We will demonstrate how organizational leaders may seize opportunities to collaborate with each generation and develop strategies that will enhance the career trajectory of each generation. Finally, we will demonstrate how this information contributes to future organizational strategic

planning (Lighthouse, 2020; SHRM Foundation, 2017). For this paper, we will discover how organizations as well as each individual generation idealistically determine their success and add their value to society. Learning how to grow the organization through the collective efforts of each generation will impart invaluable lessons for each generation and businesses at all levels. More than anything, societal trends have influenced workplace behaviors and economic trends for the multi-generational employees. Emphasis is placed on creating and sustaining new strategies and methods in managing generational cohorts in the workplace post COVID-19, establishing accountability and opening communications between and within the generations of workers and with organizational leaders.

Characteristics Impacting Multigeneration Workers

To facilitate growth, it is imperative to broadly define each generation, understand their historical experiences and assess how their experiences cultivate their career aspirations and development. We begin with the Greatest Generation born between 1901 – 1924. The number of workers in this generation is no longer significant due to their age, retirement, and rate of mortality. American history that defines their engagement in the workforce and worldviews are marked by World War I and the Great Depression when securing employment was extremely challenging due to the economy and war effort. We also have the Traditionalists also known as the Silent Generation; employees born between 1925-1945 who represent 2% of the current workforce (Lighthouse, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015; Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). Some of these individuals are still within the workforce for a variety of reasons; however, their numbers are also minimal primarily due to retirements and skill needs within the workforce. The Great Depression, World War II and the popularity of radios and movies reflect their career mindsets, beliefs, and values. They are known as tactful, committed, and loyal workers, who focus on respect for organizational leaders and principles (Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). Their communication style portrays the personal touch in relating to people as well as organizational policies. They value having a good relationship with their peers and work many years for the same organization (Lighthouse, 2020).

Baby Boomers are the generation currently leaving the workforce for retirement and includes workers born between 1946 and 1964. This generation represents 25% of the workforce (Lighthouse, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015; Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). This generation is now retiring in higher numbers than in previous years and or reaching retirement age (10,000 daily). There were multiple national events that shaped their perspectives and values. These events are characterized by the Civil Rights Movement, assassination of key leaders such as former President John F. Kennedy and Medgar Evers. This was also the generation wherein the American Dream was promoted as a real possibility to people of color. Americans experienced the moon landing, the Vietnam War and political challenges such as Watergate. This generation of workers are motivated by loyalty from leaders and other employees. They focus on team work to make the dream work. They prefer efficient communication either face to face and by telephone. They perceive paying your dues to the organization as the key to success.

Generation X workers also known as Baby Busters were born during the period 1965 – 1980 and represent 33% of the workforce (Lighthouse, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015; Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). Their worldview experiences are marked by witnessing the fall and destruction

of the Berlin Wall coming down, The Selma to Montgomery March, higher rates of divorce, more women entering the work force, the Aids epidemic, increased civil rights activism, musical explosions such as MTV's introduction and the boom in technology – the dot.com evolution. This generation witnessed additional political and social unrest with the assassinations of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, Malcom X, Fed Hampton, Alberta Williams King and John Lennon (TimeToast, n.d.). They are inspired by diversity, and work-life balance with revealed a shift on how they cared for themselves. There was also a shift on how they responded to organizational cultures that were non-accepting and did not consider their value. This generation demonstrated their flexibility, welcomed change, were skeptical of organizations and societal views. They are redefining retirement age because of their desire for better health.

The Millennials also known as Generation Y are currently the largest workforce group represented within our work culture. This generation of workers were born between 1981 and 1996 and represent 35% of the work force (Lighthouse, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015; Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). They experienced the 9-11 attacks, massive school shootings to include Columbine, exponential social media growth with the age of technology and the internet. The communication style is driven by the expansive personal and professional use of technology in the form of instant messages, texts, and emails. This generation of work is characterized as being competitive, civically responsible, and achievement driven. They have already surpassed their growth in numbers and represent the largest group of workers in the current workplace (SHRM Foundation, 2017). They have collectively demonstrated for social change throughout society and in the workplace. They want leaders who acknowledge their worth, challenge them, prepare them for growth opportunities and commit to change. They are more likely to change jobs if their needs are not met. Their needs include being an integral part of organizations seeing their social role, organizations committing to the growth and success of its employees, organizations that are collaborative and support creative innovations. Millennials also need organizations that promote flexible and remote work schedules along with organizations that promote a healthy work-life balance. Surprisingly, 15% of working millennials live at home with their parents (Purdue University Global, 2021).

The iGen Generation, also known as Generation Z, represents workers born from 1997 – 2010 and constitute 5% of the workforce (Lighthouse, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2015; Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). They also witnessed the Great Recession, life after the 9-11 terrorist attack in America, the insurrection of Americans on the nation's Capital in Washington D.C. in January 2021 based on political incitement, technological expansions throughout the world, increased terrorism both domestically and foreign, political leadership upheavals, pronounced racial disparities throughout the country, a global pandemic of 2019 throughout the world which resulted in the deaths of nearly 600,000 in America and over three million people around the world (CDC, 2021). These events continue to impact their career choices, societal views, and economic stability. made significant changes in how they work. They are experiencing virtual learning, demonstrations, and the upsurge of activism of their generation. This generation is characterized by its global worldview. It was born in the technology age and view technological innovations as a way of improvement. It is known for its desire for diversity and individuality; however, they value their independence. They prefer working with millennial managers and anything generating new technologies. Like the millennials, they prefer to communicate using technology.

Generation Z possesses the entrepreneurial challenge and the opportunity to try and do something different to generate income (SHRM Foundation, 2017).

Finally, the Alpha Generation is the youngest generation, and members of this generation have not yet entered the workforce. It is important to note what they will have knowledge of what each generation has encountered as a part of their collective experiences. Their future will focus on addressing the issues of the pandemic that impacts the long-term health concerns and wealth of the society. They will also be leaders in resolving the diversity, equity and inclusion problems that have plagued the nation. They will also be in positions to help improve the legal challenges presented in creating legislation to ensure equal pay and higher minimum wage. They will be serving in careers that have yet to be developed. We know they will have strong technology skills and will be able work remotely from anywhere in the world.

All generations currently in the workforce saw the pandemic change the way businesses are managed in response to the number of Americans succumbing to the virus and the impact this has on organizational culture (Ahmad et al., 2021). Across the generational spectrum, each generation experienced either their coworkers, leaders, friends, and family die or become ill during the coronavirus. The death rates are highest among people of color and those over the age of 85 years old, the Traditionalist and the lowest death rates have been among people 15 years old or younger, Gen Z and Alpha Generation (Ahmad et al., 2021). The gender most decimated were males 85 years and over. The current generations in the workforce saw many businesses close due to a devastated and locked down economy and social distancing. The virus required each generation to take stock of what was most important to them and govern themselves accordingly by learning how to manage life and their careers differently. During President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris' administration, and their first 100 days in office, nearly 200 million Americans have received the coronavirus vaccinations. Some multi-generational workers are now deciding if they will take vaccinations to minimize the effects of the virus. Skepticism of the vaccinations is presented by some members of each generation and only time will tell the outcome of their delay. Organizations are also deciding their future policies in relationship to employees not taking the vaccine. Again, societal trends are impacting the economy and the workplace. Multi-generations within the workplace have pivoted and this is reflective in their world view and workplace engagement. Many received stimulus checks from the government to help with their survival as well as stimulate the economy as many awaited new jobs. A period of uncertainty exists during this time. As the economy opens, generational workers desire to experiences success in their careers and in their retirement stage.

Generational Needs

While we note that millennials are the largest group of generational workers within the workforce, other generations have made indelible marks in moving through their careers and adapting to the times in which they were living that impact the social views and values. Each generation desires to continuously improve during their working years. To manage this, organizations as well as employee must align their goals and be open to the resulting changes during to societal and world trends. Generation X has the highest consumer spending of all the generations for food, alcohol purchases, housing, apparel and services, transportation, entertainment, personal care products and services and finally personal insurance and pensions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017; SHRM Foundation, 2017). The generation spending the most on healthcare is the

silent generation. The pandemic has shifted world and societal views. Generations within the workforce sought and continue to seek a variety of benefits to help them through this period.

Each generation has indicated positive personal and career perceptions for themselves in the workforce. Organizations are strengthening their efforts to be inclusive within the organization's culture. All stakeholders in the workplace are communicating their concerns. During a time of change and regaining economic stability, the working generations want to secure positions that will support them and their families. Being employed adds value to their lives and the future of their organizations. Each generation wants opportunities to show what they can accomplish with support from organizational leaders. The challenge comes when bringing the generations together and encouraging team effort as needed and showing mutual respect for leadership and the employees. They all have similar concerns regarding the security of their jobs and careers, fears generated by the activities of the pandemic.

Research indicates the multigenerational employees have identified their needs within the workplace (Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017). Managers and leaders are now focusing on the old and emerging needs of employees that also align with their organizational culture and goals. Employees want respect for the work they do; They want to use the skills, knowledge, and abilities they have and be in position to learn and do more based on the organization's needs. Technology innovations are constantly emerging. The generations who are not technologically savvy may fear technology; however, must be guided into learning. The nation and world were grateful for technology advancements during the pandemic as technology platforms were used to work from home, provide educational services for their children, and allowed them to connect with family, work, and friends due to mandated lockdowns and social distancing guidelines throughout the world. Members of each generation want all or some of the following considerations: fair and equitable pay, increasing minimum wage in some cases, opportunities for promotions and supervisory skills, personal and professional development, recognition for the work they complete, mentoring and coaching, a seat at the table in deciding what is best for them, having a say in their career advancement, timely and appropriate training and feedback, and a host of other opportunities for advancement within the workplace (Paychex Work, 2019). After experiencing the remote working, many appreciate this flexible opportunity to work from home and help to keep an eye on their family. This time is like no other in American history.

Organizational Needs

Organizations must stay relevant to survive in today's economy. They must meet their goals to provide goods or services as a business and keep an eye on their profits and losses. This means becoming aware of the needs and taking into consideration the needs and differences of their employees from each generation (Lighthouse, 2020; SHRM Foundation, 2017). Becoming aware of the specific needs and nuances for each generation will help them to cater to those specific needs and align them with the organization's needs. As they determine their organizational priorities and goals, they should collaborate to build a stronger and productive organization and work culture. They will subsequently and frequently implement realistic strategies to support the good of the cause within the workplace which helps with productivity, retention, teamwork, recruitment, training, succession, and other factors influencing their employees' perceptions and business growth. Getting multigenerational employees on the same path may not always be an easy

task; however, it is a necessary task. Transactional and Transformative leadership styles and skills may provide the additional momentum to encourage growth throughout the organization as new employees are onboarded and new leaders are trained and allowed to lead in an ethical work environment where values and standards are clearly presented (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns 1978). Transformational leaders are results driven; however, they support employee development and creativity to help strategize future successes. This is a shift in mindset for many organizations. The former ways of doing business may not work as well with each generation of employees based upon their worldview, goals, values, beliefs, and trust of the organizational leaders (Lighthouse, 2020; Purdue University Global, 2021; SHRM Foundation, 2017).

Effective Organizational Strategies

Organizational leaders are recognizing the need to for coaching and mentoring throughout the ranks to increase employee satisfaction and ensure the employees are thoroughly trained to meet the organizations' mission and provide related services (Lighthouse, 2020; Purdue University Global, 2021). Many organizations recognize and can accommodate some of their staff working remotely. Some organizations have decided to close their brick-and-mortar physical builds and operate solely on online platforms. They know that they need innovative and technologically strong skilled employees as well as those who know how to work together as a team. They are learning and many know how to bring the generations together to build a strong employee and strong organization. They recognize the positive interpersonal skills are valued within the organization with each generation (SHRM Foundation, 2017). When collaborating with employees and other agencies, they demonstrate the employees' value to the organization. They recognize they must pay fair and competitive wages to recruit good talent and train employees to enhance their effectiveness. This means allowing space for creativity and innovations within the organizations. They must invest in and train new leaders to exercise leadership and supervision skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills, creativity skills, problem-solving skills, decision making skills, planning and organizational skills, technological skills, and adaptability skills to name a few that will have a residual influence and dynamic growth for the multigenerational workforce and the organization and industry. These actions may help to build employee loyalty and opportunities for growth within organizations.

Conclusion

In our ever-changing society, the multigenerational workforce is here to stay, grow and collaborate with organizational leaders to help develop strategic plans to grow professional and enhance organizational growth. The five active generations currently within the workplace have a wealth of experiences in skills, knowledge, and abilities to be harnessed by organizational leaders who are forward thinking. The multigenerational workforce's summarized needs as employees, managers, leaders, and organizations are diverse yet manageable in terms of setting goals, meeting objectives, establishing accountability and planning for the future. The research compels organizational leaders to continually learn how to address each generation's specific needs to enhance their recruitment, satisfaction, teamwork, productivity, retention, succession, and future opportunities. Societal trends, economic upswings and downturns, and organizational culture continue to challenge multigenerational employees and organizational growth; however, leaders are now aware of the needs and may focus their energies in bring the generations

together to weather the challenges and opportunities presented in society and the economy. Technology, communications, and relationships must be leveraged in addressing the needs of the employees as well as the needs of the organization. The possibilities are endless when compared to the career options available. There are careers that being created to support changing workforce of the future. Job recovery is taking place. Multigenerational employees are optimistic about what the future holds for them. Organizations are also optimistic about their future and providing opportunities for the workforce to grow and grow their organizations with new and innovative ideas.

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