Managing in a Multi-Generational Workplace

Module One:
Defining the Generational Cohorts

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Angela L.M. Stopper

Angela has recently joined the Penn State Outreach team as the Global Relationship Manager for Penn State Outreach Global Initiatives. She began her professional career working with Penn State Executive Programs. There, Angela was responsible for facilitating the daily logistical and operational details of the public and single-client program portfolios. Angela was also the lead Program Manager for Executive Programs, managing the client experience for over 300 individuals yearly. As a Client Relationship Manager for Executive Programs, she worked directly with teaching faculty and corporate clients to ensure programs were developed and delivered to meet client needs and exceed their customer service expectations.

Angela began her education at Robert Morris College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she was the head of the Fund Raising committee for the American Marketing Association. She also served on the Leadership Development Committee, organizing a weeklong Leadership Conference for the students and faculty of Robert Morris College. She transferred to Penn State after a year and a half to take advantage to Penn State’s double-major undergraduate program and broaden her major from marketing to marketing and international business. While attending Penn State, Angela participated in a study abroad program by spending a semester studying business and art in Rome, Italy. She has worked with Penn State Math Options, a program that teaches teen-age girls about career options in business, math and science. She also spent a summer doing volunteer work in Hydaburg, Alaska organizing and teaching at a youth camp there.

Angela holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing and International Business and a Master’s of Science degree in Workforce Education and Development, focusing on Human Resource Development/Organization Development. Her thesis research focused on generational diversity and learning style differences. She is currently a PhD candidate in Penn State’s Workforce Education and Development program.

Angela is married to Ben Stopper, a Network Engineer for L. Robert Kimball and Associates. Angela and Ben live in State College with their three cats and enjoy all that Happy Valley has to offer, especially Penn State football! In her free time, she enjoys traveling, outdoor activities such as hiking, kayaking, rock climbing, and bike riding, and reading, both for professional development and pleasure.
Module 1: Defining the Generational Cohorts

- In this module, we will discuss:
  - Generational Cohort Theory
  - Influencing events, core values, and distinguishing characteristics of each cohort
  - Increase in narcissism
  - Praising properly
Generational Cohort Theory

• Only where events occur in a way that distinguishes a cohort can we speak of a generation

• Six items that can cause such distinction
  – A traumatic or formative event
  – A dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society
  – An interval that connects a generation to success or failure
  – The creation of a “sacred space” that sustains a collective memory
  – Mentors or heroes that give impetus and voice by their work
  – The work of people who know and support each other

Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal, & Brown, 2007
Generational Cohort Theory

• A traumatic or formative event
  – World War II
• A dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society
  – The post war baby boom
• An interval that connects a generation to success or failure
  – The Great Depression
• The creation of a “sacred space” that sustains a collective memory
  – Woodstock
• Mentors or heroes that give impetus and voice by their work
  – Martin Luther King
• The work of people who know and support each other
  – Bill Gates & Steven Jobs

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## Cohorts in Today’s Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generational cohort</th>
<th>Birth years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>1922-1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1944-1960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Xers</td>
<td>1961-1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Next</td>
<td>1981-2000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Arsenault (2004)

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Generational Cohort Theory
Activity

• Think about each of the cohorts listed on the previous slide.

• Using Generational Cohort Theory, what are some additional events that would influence each cohort?

• What personality traits do you think these events would influence into the personalities of individuals in the cohort?
Veterans

• Individuals who were born between the years of 1922 and 1943

• Veterans are conformers, conservative spenders, past-oriented, and history-absorbed. They believe in logic, not magic.
Veterans

Influencing Events
- The Great Depression
- The New Deal
- World War II
- G.I. Bill

Core Values
- Dedication / Loyalty
- Sacrifice
- Hard work
- Conformity / Obey the rules
- Conservative and traditional
- Respect for authority / Honor
- Ok with delayed reward
- Duty before pleasure
- Practical
- Patient

Distinguishing Characteristic
- Irreplaceable repositories of wisdom

Stereotype
- Old fashioned
- Behind the times
- Rigid
- Autocratic
- Change/risk averse

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Baby Boomers

• Individuals who were born between the years of 1944 and 1960

• Boomers are driven soul-searchers willing to go the extra mile. They were raised to expect the best from life, believing that while they should be independent and control their own destiny, they should also embrace traditional values and material wealth.
Baby Boomers

Influencing Events
- Vietnam War
- The civil rights and woman’s movements
- The JFK and Martin Luther King assassinations
- Nixon’s Watergate
- First walk on the moon
- The sexual revolution
- Expansion of suburbia
- Economic prosperity
- Woodstock

Core Values
- Orientation towards teaming / consensus building
- Cooperation
- Personal gratification
- Personal growth
- Health and wellness
- Youthful self-identity
- Ambitious
- Competitive
- Good at mentoring
- Optimism
- Idealistic

Distinguishing Characteristic
- Concerned with fairness, humanity, and the heart

Stereotype
- Self-centered
- Unrealistic
- Political
- Power-driven
- Workaholic

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Generation X

- Individuals who were born between the years of 1961 and 1980

- Gen Xers are self-reliant, skeptical, risk takers who are always seeking balance and a sense of family. They think about the job, not the work hours.
Generation X

Influencing Events
- Increasingly globally competitive environment
- Sesame Street, MTV
- AIDS
- Steroids
- Divorce
- “Latch-key kids”
- The Challenger explosion
- The beating of Rodney King
- End of the Cold War

Core Values
- Comfortable with diversity
- Think globally
- Entrepreneurial
- Technoliteracy
- Informality
- Self-reliance
- Pragmatic
- Individualistic/Independent
- Skeptical
- Friend = Family
- Life balance
- Fun

Distinguishing Characteristic
- Require feedback and flexibility
- Comfortable with change
- Dislike close supervision
- Adventure seekers

Stereotype
- Slackers
- Selfish
- Impatient
- Cynical

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Generation Next

• Individuals who were born from 1981 to the present

• Nexters are optimistic about the future while being realistic about the present. They are tenacious and prefer collective action.
Generation Next

Influencing Events
- Expansion of technology
- Fall of Berlin Wall
- Mixed economy
- Globalization
- Cell phones
- Video games
- Play dates
- Return of family values
- Drugs and gangs

Core Values
- Fast paced
- Great at multitasking
- Optimistic
- Civic duty / Globally concerned
- Technically savvy
- Confident
- Use to achievement
- Comfortable with diversity
- Street smarts
- Health conscious
- Fun-seeking
- Social
- Moral

Distinguishing Characteristic
- Fast job mobility
- “Can Do” attitude
- Strong team ethic

Stereotype
- Short attention span
- Spoiled
- Disrespectful
- Technology dependent

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College Student Narcissism Levels (1979 – 2006)

• Narcissism:
  – A positive and inflated view of the self
  – Social extraversion
  – Self-regulation efforts aimed at enhancing the self
    • Attention seeking
    • Taking credit for the work of others

• Narcissistic Personality Inventory
  – Studied 16,475 college students
  – 30% increase

The shift over 25 years is twice as large as the current sex difference, meaning that generation is now a better predictor of narcissism scores than gender!

Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, and Bushman (2008)
Narcissism in the Workplace

Think about the following questions while we discuss the handout

- Will this increase in narcissism affect new employees’ ability and willingness to adapt for the good of the group?
- Will increased narcissism make new employees harder to please?
- What additional business ramifications can you see coming from this increase in narcissism?
- What can we, as managers, do to prevent issues caused by the increase in narcissism levels?
Narcissism in the Workplace Activity

With the person sitting beside you, discuss the following questions. Be sure to note your answers, concentrating on question 4. Be prepared to discuss your answers with the group.

1. Will this increase in narcissism affect new workers’ ability and willingness to adapt for the good of the group?
2. Will increased narcissism make new workers harder to please?
3. What additional business ramifications can you see coming from this increase in narcissism?
4. What can we, as managers, do to prevent issues caused by the increase in narcissism levels?