Managing Generational Differences in a Utility's Workforce

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McWane Ductile
Bond ... James Bond
1962-1967
Sean Connery

1973-1985
Roger Moore

1995-2002
Pierce Brosnan

2006-2012
Daniel Craig

http://www.007james.com/articles/who_played_james_bond_part_2.php
“Overall, how prepared do you think the water sector is to address issues related to talent attraction and retention in the next five years?”

- Only 1 percent indicated that the water industry was fully prepared to address issues related to talent attraction and retention in the next five years.
- 15 percent thought the industry not at all prepared.
- 35 percent thought it was only slightly prepared.
“Overall, how prepared do you think the water sector is to cope with any expected retirements in the next five years?”

- Only 1 percent of 2014 SOTWI respondents indicated that the water industry was fully prepared to cope with any expected retirements in the next five years while
- 12 percent thought the industry not at all prepared and
- 30 percent thought it was only slightly prepared. (AWWA, 2014)
Possible financial impact on Operations

- **Operational costs** directly affect the bottom line through a wide variety of forces, including:
  - Lost revenue due to extended outages
  - Penalties from regulatory agencies, higher maintenance costs; and
  - Increased frequencies of forced outages and accidents caused by human error as highly experienced operators retire (since human error rates would be expected to significantly decrease with experience). Bruffy & Juliano (2007)
Possible financial impact on Productivity

- **Productivity costs** are being incurred over a wide variety of areas, including:
  - Increases in the duration of planned outages as new hires gradually build the expertise and efficiency that the current workforce has; and
  - Work time lost in recovery from injuries is expected to be much greater for older workers.  Bruffy & Juliano (2007)
Possible financial impact on

- **Lost or delayed opportunities** to take costs out of the business are the opportunity costs of the aging workforce, including:
  - Executing performance programs that end up costing more than budgeted and which extend planned ROI time frames
  - Internal resources may be limited and act to prevent the performance program from ever beginning. Bruffy & Juliano (2007)
Today’s Take-aways

- What generations are and how they evolve
- Causes of today’s generation gap
- Management strategies for multi-generational workplace:
  - Motivation
  - Technology
  - Knowledge Management
Generations Ketter & Taylor (2009)

**Life Cycle Effect:** The biological impact of aging and the changing roles that people play as they grow older.

**Cohort Effect:** Unique historical circumstances that impact cohort as adolescence and young adulthood that imprint itself, producing differences that persist even as the cohort ages.

**Period Effect:** The major events that are likely to have a simultaneous impact all age groups, but have the greatest impact among the young because values and habits are less fixed than those of other age groups.
"The term Generation Gap was used mostly to describe conflicts between parents and children. Today, the "Gap" has more of a presence in the workplace, where employees from different generations are finding it difficult to work side by side because their experiences, goals and expectations are different".

Kogan, M. (2001)
Four distinct generations

- Silent Generation (1928 – 1945)
- Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964)
- Generation X (1965 – 1980)
- Millennials (After 1981)
Have conducted Five Surveys

Spring 2009: 15 companies in Central KY – 1,000 mix audience

Spring 2011: 100 Graduate and undergraduate students at Midway College

Fall 2012: 200 Utility Company in Central, KY

Fall 2013: 50 Surgery Nurses in Lexington, KY

Winter 2013: 800 Restaurant workers in KY, TN & GA
Key Findings

Consistent pattern of generational differences in relations in the workplace

However, there is also overlap between the generations in terms of support for basic issues like job security, career advancement, and a secure retirement
Baby Boomers Traits

- More work focused than family focused
- Loyal to the current organization & important that organization is loyal to them
- Like to communicate in person
- Company funded retirement is important
- Comprehensive health insurance is important

Key: Hard work and are team players
Gen X Traits

- Enjoy attending company events
- Competition among co-workers is a strong motivator
- Prefer group projects to individual projects
- Believe teams are more effective than individuals
- Having a strong voice in decision-making

**Key:** Life balance and respect for individuality
Millenials Traits

- Close supervision improve my performance
- Job security is my top priority
- Special recognition is a strong motivator
- Teams are more effective then individual efforts
- Tangible awards (trophies, plaques, and parking spaces) strong motivators

**Key:** Making a difference in the world and respecting diversity
Significant Impacts on the Workplace

- Work-style
- Technology
- Loyalty
- Communication
- Recognition and Reward
- Authority / Leadership
- Work / Family
Focus on Three Areas in a Multigenerational Workplace

- Motivation
- Technology
- Knowledge Management
# Motivation

## Work Ethic & Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workaholics</td>
<td>Eliminate the task</td>
<td>Asking what is next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working efficiently</td>
<td>Self-reliance</td>
<td>Multitasking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crusading causes</td>
<td>Want structure and direction</td>
<td>Tenacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal fulfillment</td>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning Authority</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Leadership Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consensual</th>
<th>Believe everyone is the same</th>
<th>Will be better determined as this generation gets older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collegial</td>
<td>Challenging others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asking why</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Interactive Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Team player</th>
<th>Entrepreneurial</th>
<th>Participative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loves to have meetings</td>
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</table>
### Motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work and Family Life</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work to live</td>
<td>No balance</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No balance</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Feedback and Rewards</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don’t appreciate feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?”</td>
<td>“Whenever I want it, at the push of a button.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td></td>
<td>Believes freedom is the best reward</td>
<td>Meaning work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title recognition</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Messages that Motivate</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You are valued.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Do it your way.”</td>
<td>“You will work with other bright, creative people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You are needed.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Forget the rules.”</td>
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</table>
Pew Research notes that today’s young are history’s first generation of digital natives.

The online world isn’t something they’ve had to adapt to — it’s all they’ve ever known, and it’s their indispensable platform for social interactions and information acquisition.

Take advantage of your millennial employee’s computer, cell phone, and electronic literacy
So how can businesses take advantage of the tech-skills that younger workers bring?

One effective strategy is reciprocal mentoring. Reciprocal mentoring takes that concept a step further by creating a two-way conversation.

As the mentor teaches the newcomer valuable business information, the young person can help their older colleague master the techniques of new technology, including how to avoid the embarrassing “newbie” mistakes that inhibit a lot of inexperienced users from participating in online activities.
Knowledge Transfer

- Personal dynamics and communication between source and receiver can make or break the transfer of knowledge, especially between generations.
  - Identify where it is most vulnerable
  - Evaluate current processes and practices for transferring critical knowledge to determine how its culture, systems, and processes enable knowledge loss

Knowledge is a Strategic Business Issue

- Define losing knowledge as a strategic business issue, and articulate changing workforce threats to the management team—don’t assume they get it.
- Northeast Utilities developed a five-year corporate development program and funding plan. One of its components is the business case for retaining critical knowledge: to ensure that operational performance does not suffer as a result of known workforce transitions.

Knowledge Transfer Process Steps

Step 1: Identify and evaluate the knowledge.
Step 2: Validate and document the knowledge.
Step 3: Publish and share the knowledge.
Step 4: Transfer and apply the knowledge.
Step 5: Learn and capture the knowledge.
Channels for Knowledge Transfer

- **Telling**: meetings, teleconferences, mentoring
- **Showing**: on-the-job training, mentoring
- **Background Prep**: reports, guides, manuals
- **Decision-Making**: persuasive documents, evidence (documents, statistics, cores, lab results, cuttings, gas analysis, etc.)
- **Sharing**: e-mail, list-serves & feeds, texting
- **Training**: workshops, classes, webinars, presentations

Essentials for Knowledge Transfer

- Create awareness in older employees of the benefits they stand to gain, such as recognition.
- Build the human element into the process. After all, you can’t force people with knowledge to share it, and you certainly can’t force people who need someone else’s knowledge to use it.
- Reciprocity and recognition are the foundation for changing the way we transfer knowledge.
- Emerging knowledge transfer methods such as reverse mentoring provide opportunities for behavior change in both the source and receiver.
Focus on the receiver, not just the source. Younger employees should be involved in deciding how they want to receive knowledge.
Recommendations to Gen X and Baby Boomers

- Start listening and stop assuming
- Be present on college and high school campuses. Don’t wait until millennials show up for an interview
- Start viewing millennials as strategic business investments
- Scrap “do as I say, not as I do”
- Learn to tap into millennials potential

Hain, R. (2013, July 30)
Recommendations to Millennials

- Having perspective is important
- Be patient
- Look at relationships and communication differently
- Convey respect while pursuing your goals
- Pursue mentors and advocates

Hain, R. (2013, July 30)
References


