

Chapter 10

Managing the Multi-Generational Workforce

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ABSTRACT

Different generations of employees have different work values and beliefs. Failure to address these differences can lead to conflict in the workplace, miscommunication, and lower employee productivity. This differentiation amongst the workforce is called workforce diversity. Handling such a complex diversity poses a challenge to Managers as they need to handle the employees who have different work ethics, ambitions, views, mindsets, and work styles. This chapter discusses and analyses existing literature applicable to the various generations, namely the said generations' personalities, views, and values as well as the management of a multi-generational workforce. This chapter will provide insight into information that will assist managers to manage multi-generation workforce in their respective organisations.

GENERATION

A generation is defined as people born in the same period, sharing the same values, views, life events and experiences (Wengrzyn, 2021). While theory differs slightly on the generational grouping periods, most researchers label generations in their periods as the Traditionalist Generation (Veteran Generation), born between 1922 and 1944; Baby Boomers, born between 1945 and 1964; Generation X, born between 1965 and

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1980; Generation Y (Millennials), born between 1981 and 2000; and Generation Z, born between 2001 and 2020 (Ardueser & Garza, 2021) (Wong, et al., 2008). Examples of the experiences these generations share in South Africa are explained by Maluleke (2018). Generation X was born in a period where South Africa was in transition from the apartheid past. Generation Y was born during a period of major technological advancements and therefore are accustomed to technology and can adapt quickly to technological changes. These experiences influence the views and values of people, shaping their personalities, and that is why you find similar personalities, views, and values in generational groups.

Different Types of Generations

Traditionalist Generation

The Traditionalist Generation, also known as the Veteran Generation (between the age of 99 and 78) are a hard-working generation. Many people in this generation are still working way past retirement. Ardueser and Garza (2021) highlight that the traditionalist generation has survived the great depression and many wars. These life experiences play a role in shaping the characteristics of the traditionalist, explain Ardueser and Garza (2021). Traditionalists are loyal to their employers and display a consistent work performance over the years, states Ardueser and Garza (2021). A trait that has been carried through from the traditionalist generation being in the military is following the top-down decision-making process and teamwork (Ardueser & Garza, 2021).

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers (between the age of 57 and 76) are productive and hardworking employees that have been with the company for many years, and some are close to the age of retirement. Raines (2020) describes Baby boomers as a generation that prefers open, friendly, informal communication and dealing with matters in person.

Baby boomers have a wealth of experience and enjoy mentoring younger generations, this makes them excellent team players. Subramanian (2017) describes baby boomers as a generation who seek job security and prefer face-to-face communication over emails, especially when it comes to making financial decisions. Molefi (2018) advises that baby boomers often define themselves by their careers and professions, preferring to be the leaders in their teams, and feel threatened when challenged by younger employees or treated as equal to younger employees. Hughes

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