

Generation Gaps

Sample



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Each generation wants new symbols, new people, new names. They want to divorce themselves from their predecessors.

Jim Morrison

Sample Module: History



The term generation gap is a term used to describe the different values and attitudes between one generation and another. This term is typically used to describe the gap between parents and their children.

Since the 1960's, the term generation gap has also been used to describe the clash one age group has with another in various settings. The workplace is such an environment where different generations must intermingle and deal with each other's way of thinking.

This module will discuss the following topics as it relates to the generation gap in the workplace:

- What generations exist in the workplace
- What defines a generation
- What this means in our workplace

Let us begin by understanding what generations exist in the workplace.

What Generations Exist in the Workplace?



Today's workplace presents many challenges that are based solely on meeting goals, business objectives, and project deadlines. Threaded throughout the normal business activities are dynamics that could present issues and conflicts if left unchecked.

Since many older workers remain on the job longer and younger workers are entering the workplace right out of college, the work environment is fragmented into various generations. In order to understand this eclectic environment, it is necessary to understand what generations are present in today's workplace.

Because humans live on average 77 to 80 years, four potential generations may exist in the workplace today.

The four generations that could be present are the following:

- Traditionalist
- Baby Boomers
- Generation X
- Generation Y

Understanding the background, attitudes, and work styles of each generation is essential for a manager or supervisor. If they want to effectively coach and communicate then understanding these differences is paramount in creating a respectful and peaceful work environment for all employees.

This workshop will help you learn the characteristics of each of the four generations and how to deal with their uniqueness.

Before we get into the details of each of the four generations, we are going to learn what defines a generation.

What Defines a Generation?



A generation is a group of people born during the same period and shares the same attitudes and values. The period is the factor to dividing the generations into groups. The four generations mentioned in the previous section have time ranges that define their period.

For example, the Traditionalist Generation represents people in a generation born before 1946. The Baby Boomers are people born between 1946 and 1961.

Generation X represents people born between 1962 and 1980 and Generation Y represents people born in the 1980s and 1990s.

In each period are experiences that shaped the attitudes and values of each generation. In addition, the interaction between generations is also a factor in shaping the subsequent generation. For example, Generation X sought to be different by the larger more influential Baby Boomers. This thinking affects their behaviors and preferences.

What this Means in our Workplace



When groups have the same values and attitudes, communication and other dynamics typically go smoother. When there are multiple groups and each group brings their own style, values, and attitudes, this could create tension and other issues if not paying attention.

Multiple generations in the workplace presents challenges in many areas. Let us review two perspectives that must be managed.

First, the employee-to-employee perspective is critical; it shows how different generations interacting with each other may lead to miscommunication or misunderstanding. Furthermore, the way each generation handles confrontation may also be a point of friction.

The generation gap between employees could be seen more in the modes of communication, the words, and gestures used.

The manager-to-employee perspective is another sensitive area. Generation gaps in this situation could be difficult if the relationship starts on the wrong foot. For the manager, knowing that there are differences in the way generations communicate, view authority, life-work balance, and relationships is just the beginning.

The manager must also plan how to address these issues proactively, avoiding difficult or tense situations. Having difficult situations at work could lead to poor morale and productivity, which will reflect on the manager's performance.

Generation gaps at work means more work is needed to cultivate an environment that respects each generation's perspective and way of life. This also means the manager has to be observant and knowledgeable of the various traits associated with each generation.

Over the next three modules, we are going to learn about each of the four generations in detail. We will begin with Traditionalist first.