Talking about the Generations: Communicating with and Managing Intergenerational Teams

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Webinar Outline

• About us and our generation
• Origin of Generational Theory
• Workplace: Three Theses
• Case Studies – hear from you
• Our Approach: effectively working with intergenerational teams
• Questions
About Us

• Rikke – Gen X
  – 16 years working in academic health sciences libraries
  – Management experience with librarians, non-librarian staff, and students
    • First supervisory experience: all supervised employees were approximately 2x her age
    • Currently lead a team of students, librarians and staff spanning several generations

• Jeff – Gen X
  – 15 years working in academic health sciences libraries
  – Management experience with librarians, non-librarian staff, and students
    • Most memorable experience – first librarian he supervised was 60 years old
    • Currently lead team of eight librarians spanning Millennial to Baby Boomer
Origin of Generational Theory


  - Published subsequent books on different generations:
    - 1993: *13th Gen: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail?*, about Generation X

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strauss%E2%80%93Howe_generational_theory
Generational Theory

• Recurring generational cycle in American history.
  – Starting in 1588: “Puritan” generation (1588-1617)
    Through “Homeland” generation (2005- )
• Four major generation archetypes:
  – Prophet
  – Nomad
  – Hero
  – Artist

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strauss%E2%80%93Howe_generational_theory
**Archetypes**

- **Artist**: Overprotected children > conformist young adults > process-oriented middle-aged adult leaders > thoughtful elders.
  - Past generations: John Quincy Adams, Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt
  - Today: Silent Generation (1925-1942) Sandra Day O’Conner

- **Prophet**: Indulged children > self-absorbed young adults > moralistic middle-aged adults > wise elders.
  - Past generations: Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt
  - Today: Baby Boomers (1943-1960) Bill Clinton

Archetypes

• **Nomad**: Under-protected children > alienated young adults > pragmatic middle-aged adults > resilient elders.
  – Past generations: George Washington, Ulysses Grant, Harry Truman

• **Hero**: Protected children > optimistic young adults > overly-confident middle-aged adults > politically powerful elders.
  – Past generations: Thomas Jefferson, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan
## Generations in the Workplace

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Silent Generation</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Millennials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect authority</td>
<td>Individuality</td>
<td>Self-reliant</td>
<td>Image-conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>Goal oriented</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
<td>Service oriented</td>
<td>Respect production over tenure</td>
<td>Need supervision and structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Team oriented</td>
<td>Loyal to individuals, not organizations</td>
<td>Team oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal, and expect employer loyalty</td>
<td>Career equals identity</td>
<td>Want open communication</td>
<td>Want job that is personally fulfilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t like conflict</td>
<td>Process oriented to a fault</td>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td>Value instant gratification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AARP - Leading a Multigenerational Workforce - [http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org_/cs/misc/leading_a_multigenerational_workforce.pdf](http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org_/cs/misc/leading_a_multigenerational_workforce.pdf)
American Hospital Association: Workforce 2015: Strategy Trumps Shortage
# Managerial Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Like managers that...</th>
<th>Hate managers that...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>Take a logical approach. Are fair and consistent. Provide clear job expectations</td>
<td>Are too touchy-feely. Indecisive. Disorganized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>Treat them as equals. Show warmth and caring. Tell them they’re making a difference</td>
<td>Aren’t open to input. Bureaucratic. Don’t show interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>Support their personal goals. Use a coaching and supportive approach</td>
<td>Are cynical and sarcastic. Treat them as if they’re too young. Are inconsistent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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GENERATIONS IN THE WORK PLACE:
THREE MAIN THESES
1: Characteristics are helpful, but not ultimate truth

Lack of empirical evidence to suggest true differences in work attitude.

1: Characteristics are helpful, but not ultimate truth

- No significant difference in hours worked
- Small differences in work centrality
- No differences in altruistic values of work
- Slightly higher job satisfaction with Millennials

2: Take an individual approach

1) What factors in the employee’s experience might be causing this behavior?

2) Is this person really so different from older employees?

3: Acknowledge the underlying commonality across generations

Expectations for Employers

1. To work on challenging projects.
2. Competitive compensation.
3. Opportunities for advancement and growth
4. To be fairly treated.

White, M. Rethinking Generation Gaps in the Workplace: Focus on Shared Values. UNC Executive Development, 2011. Available online at: http://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/executive-development/about/~media/C8FC09AEF03743BE91112418FEE286D0.ashx
3: Acknowledge the underlying commonality across generations

Expectations for Coworkers
1. Respectful communication
2. Value contributions
3. Dedication to work
4. Reasonableness
5. Clear expectations
CASE STUDIES & DISCUSSION
Case Study: Well that was a little bold now. Wasn’t it?

Newest colleague chewing the ear off of Mrs. Big Wig.

Colleagues response: “Who does he think he is?”

Source: www.flickr.com/photos/edenpictures/5022807503
What is your response to your colleagues?

1. Address the newer colleague
2. Address the senior colleague
3. Some combination of 1 & 2
4. Grab a holiday cookie.
Case Study: Been there. Done that.

New reference service proposed.

Feedback commences.
Some constructive.
Some not so constructive.

Source: www.flickr.com/photos/tslac/830772665/
What do you think they meant? You’re too young ... 

1. In the organization?
2. In the profession?
3. In age?
4. Some combination of 1-3
Case Study: Where is everybody?

- Librarians spending more time working off-site.
- Concerns about productivity...

http://www.flickr.com/photos/28738704@N07/4805637038/
If your organization permits working from home, do you?

1. Have guidelines or a policy?
2. Have CLEAR guidelines/policy?
3. No guidelines or policy
4. I want to work from home...
OUR APPROACH: EFFECTIVELY WORKING WITH INTERGENERATIONAL TEAMS
Team Building by Using the Variety of Strengths

• Building on communication differences
• Practice listening to understand
• Create a culture of mentoring – career path, life-seasons
• Value both experience and entrepreneurial spirit
Poor Behavior Among Coworkers, Doesn’t Excuse Bad Leadership

Fundamentals of Good Leadership:
1) You Make a Difference
2) Credibility is the Foundation
3) Values Drive Commitment
4) Trust
5) Lead by Example

Wrap Up

• Generational Theory – Archetypes, Expectations
• Workplace: Three Theses
• Case Studies
• Team Building
• Leadership is Key
QUESTIONS?