MANAGING IN A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKPLACE

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The life course perspective considers the biopsychosocial factors that impact an individual both independently and cumulatively.

- Individual agency
- Human connectedness and communication
- Event history
THE ECOLOGICAL MODEL
COHORTS AND GENERATIONS

Cohort: a group of persons who were born during the same time period and who experience particular social changes within a given culture in the same sequence and at approximately the same age.

• Generation: a birth cohort becomes a generation only when it develops some shared sense of its social history and a shared identity.
Negative attitudes towards aging and older people based on beliefs that older people cannot function as well as younger people in society.

But, can ageism be focused toward younger people in society?
THE CHANGING WORKPLACE

- Four generations currently in workforce
  - Longer life span
  - Un-Retirement
  - Economic downturn
- Changing demographics, changing employees
  - Diversity is good for the workplace
- Competition for talent is escalating
- Productivity is linked to the work environment
  - Organizational culture matters
BABY BOOMERS - AT THIS STAGE OF LIFE

Biologically
Managing declining health issues and physical coordination.
May require additional workplace accommodations for vision, hearing and sensorimotor limitations

Psychologically
Basic personality traits remain the same
Cognition can still remain sharp if they are stimulated
Retention and retrieval may slow over time

Socially
Multi-generational homes
Sandwich generation duties
Loss of partners and supports
BABY BOOMERS – WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Assets:**
  - Service oriented, Experienced, Team Oriented

- **Liabilities:**
  - Avoid conflict; process over results

- **Thrive when:**
  - Part of team, environment is warm and caring, decision making is democratic, making a difference

- **Motivations:**
  - Feeling needed, valued and important, recognition, promotion

- **Communication styles**
  - Face to face, phone calls
Biologically

- Beginning development of diseases of aging
- Decline in metabolism, energy level, eyesight, hearing and muscle tone.

Psychologically

- Increased problem solving skills, and creativity
- Height of professional knowledge

Socially

- Personal issues: divorce, care giving to parents, parenting (young children to empty nest), college affordability
GENERATION X – WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Assets:**
  - Adaptable, technology literate, independent, open to change

- **Liabilities:**
  - Skeptical, distrust authority, like to control their schedules

- **Thrive when:**
  - Environment is flexible, supportive of growth and training, showing results, technology is state of the art.

- **Motivations:**
  - Flexibility, freedom, autonomy

- **Communication styles**
  - Email, voice mail, text
**Biological**
- Optimal physical condition
- Beginning of poor health habits
- Starting families

**Psychological**
- Highly educated and enjoy learning
- Higher levels of depression and anxiety

**Socially**
- Often levels of high debt and underemployment
- Socially conscious and aware
- Wide variation of experiences between 20s and 40s.

**MILLENNIALS – AT THIS STAGE OF LIFE**
MILLENNIALS – WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS

- **Assets:**
  - Multi tasking, technology savvy, optimistic, team oriented

- **Liabilities:**
  - Require lots of supervision and structure, difficult working independently

- **Thrive when:**
  - Environment is organized and structured, coaching and mentoring are available, showing results, managers are positive.

- **Motivations:**
  - Recognition, being the hero

- **Communication styles**
  - Text, messaging, social media, pictures
**Biological**
- Optimal physical condition
- Marijuana use more common and accepted

**Psychological**
- Beginning of use of abstract reasoning in the workplace
- Still converting knowledge into overall intelligence
- High levels of anxiety and awareness of mental health

**Socially**
- Still dependent upon parents emotionally, physically and financially
- Cancel Culture
- Polariation
- Assets:
  - Multi tasking, technology savvy
- Liabilities:
  - Require lots of supervision and structure, difficult working independently, learning to work, skeptical of authority
- Thrive when:
  - Environment is organized and structured and expectations clear
- Motivations:
  - Money
- Communication styles
  - Text messaging, video chat
Myth: Older workers aren’t as productive
- Reality: Work is means for personal satisfaction and fulfillment at all ages

Millennials are “entitled”
- Reality: Recognition and appreciation are ALWAYS important!

Myth: Generation X and Millennials have a lot in common
- Reality: Gen X and Millennials are shaped by different lived experiences and are at quite different stages in life and therefore have different workplace needs.
COMMON MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

- Myth: Generation X are “slackers”
  - Reality: Gen X tend to be more results oriented than process oriented and are looking for more efficient ways to accomplish goals and balance life.

- Myth: Baby Boomers have stopped learning new things
  - Reality: Training and professional development are ALWAYS important!

- Myth: Younger workers are more needy
  - Reality: Effective management skills are important regardless of age.
Good managers know

- Their employee’s strengths
- What motivates their employee’s strengths
- How their employee’s learn new skills

Management surveys show that a “caring” supervisor is a key element of employee engagement and retention

- Care about them personally
- Take interest in their lives
- Care about their input
- Support their health and well being
PERSON CENTERED SUPERVISION

- Active listening
- Perceptive of needs above and below
- Approachable
- Calm under pressure
- Trauma Informed Perspective
| Communication should reflect organizational culture |
| Communication expectations should be made clear to all employees |
| Use multiple communication tools |
| Individualize communication styles when possible |
| Limit the use of humor and sarcasm |
| Be willing to accept feedback on communication styles |
ESPECIALLY FOR BABY BOOMERS

RECOGNIZE AND ACKNOWLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS
INCLUDE IN TEAM PROJECTS
LEVERAGE EXPERIENCES AS WELL AS SKILLS
ASSURE KNOWLEDGE IS TRANSFERRED
CONNECT TO BIGGER VISION AND VALUES
ESPECIALLY FOR GENERATION X

- PROVIDE CLEAR TIMELINES
- PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENTS
- FIGHT URGE TO MICROMANAGE
- KEEP TECHNOLOGY CURRENT AND CUTTING EDGE
- WIIFM
ESPECIALLY FOR THE MILLENNIALS

OVERCOMMUNICATE. ALWAYS. ALL THE TIME...EVERYDAY.

TIE COMMUNICATION TO PERSONAL GOALS

AVOID SARCASM

BE WILLING TO BE SOCIAL, HUMAN AND TRANSPARENT

TAKE A MENTORSHIP APPROACH
ESPECIALLY FOR GENERATION Z

TRANSPARENCY WITH WORKPLACE NORMS AND POLICIES
HELP MODEL WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS
ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS THAT FEEL PERSONAL
SHOW AUTHENTIC RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE
REMEMBER WHEN YOU STARTED...
CREATE A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKPLACE

**Professional Development**
- Age diversity training
- Reflect staffing to customer/client base

**Employee Retention**
- Develop ways to transfer knowledge
- Stager “retirement”, recruit diverse volunteers
- Continually assess employees needs
- Assure job expectations are “ageless”
- Assure performance evaluations are objective (metric driven) vs. subjective (characteristic driven)
CULTURE MATTERS

Benefits/Compensation

- Provide incentives that appeal to workers at all stages of life
- Maintain a flexible environment
- Performance and productivity, not years on the job.
- Sometimes time is money

Mentoring Relationships and Teams

- Explore multigenerational team approaches to tackle problems
- Leveraging the strengths of all ages in mentoring
- Coaching across age groups
- Be careful not to over emphasize differences and reinforce stereotypes
Let go
- Let go of workplace stereotypes surrounding age and ability

Embrace
- Embrace efficient change efforts

Know
- Know your styles

Become
- Become your own advocate
SUMMARY FOR BEST PRACTICES

Openly discuss generational differences
Address stereotypes and depersonalize issues

Ask, ask, ask!
Be open to understanding peoples’ needs and preferences

Provide choices
Keep it manageable and accountable

Be flexible
Adjust personal styles to meet expectations others

Build on strengths
Use team approaches that are based on the unique skills of individuals
LASTLY...

While understanding patterns of behavior can be helpful in our awareness, stereotypes can be hurtful and harmful. Diversity matters and our organizations are stronger for it.
THANK YOU!