



# Generation Gap; Is There any Solid Solution? From Human Relation Point of View

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## ABSTRACT

The following research is about using different approaches to minimize the generation gaps within the working industries. Nowadays, generation gaps plays as a big role in business industries. It has a big influence in communication between younger generation and older generation. While generation gap occurs in business industries, it will be a critical issue that leads to several negative effects in business industry. This study has found that while communicating with different generation people should use different approaches to maintain their relationship in an appropriate level. This paper will expatiate the characteristics of generations, major issues of generation gaps and some solid solutions for generation gap in workplaces.

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## 1. Introduction

Generation gap occurs because of the difference of ages, races, genders and cultures that create various value and attitude to same matter. Value changes base on the year passed, this is the major reason of generation gap. According to Lilian.E (1970) there seems to be at least five separated concepts of generation currently in use, developmental stage, ranked descent, age homogeneous group, time span and "spirit of the age." The last concept differs from the first four because it refers to content rather than structure. Moreover, according to McCrindle (2006) Generation can be differentiated to 5 categories depending on the year born; Builder also known as Traditional and Silent generation (Before 1946), Baby Boomer (1946-1964), Generation X (1965-1979), Generation Y known as Millennial (1980-1994) and Generation Z (1995-2009). The difference of values, reactions, and behaviors presumably differ across generations. Attitudes, values and behaviors might change variations throughout an employee's life cycle or career stage, employees may be "generic" in the end. (Jurkiewicz & Brown 1998) (as cited in Tolbize 2008)

Generation gaps are now highly noticed by business industry. In addition, generation gaps would lead conflicts, communication barriers and dissensions. Besides, generation gap will affect and interrupt the quality of the communication within organizations, generation gaps probably would delay the process for organizations to catch up the trends and lose the opportunities. Nowadays, searching for solutions in generation gap also a major objective within the organization.

## 2. Demographic of generation within the workforce

According to Mark (2010), 6.5% of workforces are silent generations. Baby Boomers are occupying 41% of workforce. Generation X are occupying 29.5% of workforce and Generation Y are occupying 22.5% of workforce in the year 2010 respectively. However, in the year 2011, Silent generations' workforce participation decreased to 5%, Baby Boomers participation decreased to 38%, Generation X increased to 32% and Generation Y increased to 25% by Murphy and Raines (2007)

## 3. Characteristic of 4 generation

### i. Silent Generation

Silent Generation values family and patriotism and had a parent at home to raise the children, preferred consistency, and remained with one company over time (Allen, 2004) (as cited in Fjelstul and Breiter 2008). Matures are very loyal association members with almost 82% of them work for the same company for more than 11 years. (Fjelstul and Breiter 2008)

### ii. Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers have been described as being good at relationships, they respect on others right and will not simply judge on others mistakes or problems. (Rath 1999 and Zemke et al. 2000) (as cited in Tolbize 2008) Moreover, Baby Boommers are respected authority and hierarchy in the workplace and loyal to the company. They expect that company reward promotion and loyal because of their royalty. (Gursoy, Thomas, Maier and Chi 2007) Almost 50% of Baby Boomers are working for 11 year in same company. (Fjelstul and Breiter 2008)

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### iii. *Generation X*

Generation X know the importance of balance between work and life (Jenkins 2007 and Karp et al 2002) (as cited in Tolbize 2008) Generation X are very impatient, they are not willing to wait for their promotions or raises and expect to get rewards immediately after they did a good job on work. They assume every job is temporary, short-term and not royal to any companies. (Adam 2000)(as cited in Gursoy et al. 2007) 51.8% of Generation X are only work for 1-5 years. (Fjelstul and Breiter 2008)

### *Generation Y*

Generation Y are effected by parental excesses, computers and dramatic technological advances. One of the main characteristics of this generation is their comfort with technology and good on it. (Kersten, 2002 and Niemiec 2000) (as cited in Tolbize 2008). Generation Y may have a more casual attitude in using the internet for sending confidential information with little awareness of legal ramifications or sensitive issues says Linda Harber (as cited in Tyler, Kathryn 2008) Although, Generation Y are good at communicating through electronically based interaction, they lack skills to communicate with face to face. (Fjelstul and Breiter 2008) Generation Y are similar to Generation X as they are not royal to company. Since Generation Y are still young, their responsibility are not heavy as Generation Y; they would change the job as they like and not necessary to look for jobs which have stable income. (Gursoy et al. 2007)

## 4. Different communicating style and platform

Different generations have different communication styles and platforms. Baby Boomer prefers communicating using telephone, face to face, fax, e-mail group/team meetings, and Cell phones for talking, but does not prefer to social networking sites, blogging, texting and technophobia. However, Generation X prefer communicating by the way that they often do like e-mail, cell phone, text, blogging, tncstant message and online forums but obstruct with face to face communication, formal letter writing, team discussions(better one to one or alone), difficulties in communicating up or down a generation and some barriers with social networks. On the other hand, Generation Y prefer communicating with text, online social networks, e-mails and instant messages. Generation Y are obstruct with face to face conversations, telephone conversations and professionalisms or even casual letter writings. (Dave 2010)

## 5. Impact of generation gap

In a recent survey which was conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, generated the differences are the factors which created 40% of conflict. In organizations with 500 or more employees, 58% of human resources professionally reported conflict between younger and older workers, because of the differing perspectives on work ethic and work-life balance. (Raines and Hunt 1999) (as cited in Watkins 2013) These generation gaps will create "us vs. them" mentality between different generation, it is likely to create further conflicts and unable to work efficiently. (Yang and Guy 2006). According to PR Newswire (2006), employees tend to feel more comfortable on reporting to a manager older than them. Every generation brings a different way of thinking to the company; for example, Generation Y push the older generations to think differently, while the older generations mentor Generations Y and provide them with the tools to succeed. (Townsend and Joanne, 2011)

## 6. Communication approach for generation gaps

### i. *Communicating with a Silent Generation*

When communicating with a Silent Generation, words and tone of voice should be respectful, and using good grammar, clear diction, no slang or profanity. Using language should be formal and professional, and the message should relate to company history and long-term goals. (Murphy and Raines 2007) Messages which are sent to the Silent Generation are telling them there are respected in the company; their experience is important and their perseverance is valued and will be rewarded. (Watkins 2013)

### ii. *Communicating with a Baby Boomer*

When communicating with a Baby Boomer in the conversation should be more relational. Boomers tend to witness relationship and business results as intertwined. For example, they ask about mutual interests such as how his or her sons do well in college. Make the conversation participative by getting the other topic, and link the message to the team or individual vision, mission, and values. (Murphy and Raines 2007) Messages to motivate and communicate with Baby Boomers is telling them they are an important role in company, the company recognize their contribution and ask their vision for some matter. (Watkins 2013)

### iii. *Communicating with a Generation X*

When communicating with Generation X, try not wasting the person's time by being direct and straightforward. Sending an email or leaving a voicemail that states clearly about the matter and simplify the sentence, this is how it serves the Generation X. (Murphy and Raines 2007) Motivate Generation X are telling them to do the job with their own approach. (Watkins 2013)

### iv. *Communicating with a Generation Y*

When communicating with Generation Y, need to be positive by sending a text message or meeting face-to-face. Try relating the message to the Generation Y's personal goals or the teams are working toward. Do not be condescending. In additional, avoid cynicism and sarcasm. (Murphy and Raines 2007) Messages to motivate and communicate with Generation Y are telling them that they are provided the equal opportunities and listen to their opinion. (Watkins 2013)

## 7. Solution and bridging of generation gaps

According to Simoneaux (2013) which structured brainstorming sessions on education, brainstorming will point out that different employees have different training needs, and some of those needs are generational. The key to communicate effectively between the generations is to be open-minded. It had better not assume that all Millennial are knowledgeable in technology while Baby Boomers are not. Baby Boomers should not look at a new generation worker as a threat but look at this opportunity to learn new concepts from them. (Bowen 2011) People from any generation in workplace need to know people as individual and respect to each other (Murphy and Raines 2007). According to Chad Nelson (2009), it is important that understand each on other personality to have a quality communication. Moreover, it minimizes misunderstandings, and better leverages the talents of our teammates. According to Wood, Stephanie (2005) solves generation gaps by using generation united. There are four steps of generation united. Firstly, worker must identify the mistakes they had made to develop their wisdom and then shared their wisdom with one another. Secondly, the elder generations must assume their roles as teachers and mentors to the upcoming generations. Thirdly, the younger generations must accept their role as followers. They must be willing to show that they are trainable, flexible, self-motivated, and able to express their needs without rancor. Lastly, all generations must acknowledge and respect each other's differences as opportunities for self-growth. By doing so, they will have the hindsight to learn from the past, insight to stay focus in the present, and foresight to create a better future. No matter how hard you try, you cannot change the generational differences. Instead, changing how you motivate different generations by incorporating different motivational techniques into your management styles. Acknowledging the validity of each generation's values, and finding out what each employee wants as a motivational incentive. Knowing the employees about what motivates them, and controls their behaviors. (Houlihan and Anne 2007)

## 8. Discussion

In the coming future, amount of Silent generation and Baby Boomers will get lesser in the workforce because of getting old and retirement. On the other hand, Generation X and Generation Y will keep on increasing in incoming year. Therefore, bridging the generation gap between Xers and Yers are the mainly focus in human resource department to help the industries work efficiently. Moreover, because of the increase in Generation Y that prefer using electronic device to communicate and work; thus, if Baby Boomers want to cooperate effectively with Generation Y, they must improve their knowledge in internet, technologies and more.

Normally generation are being defined by the year of they born and within around 20 years in a span consider as one generation. ("Projected Median Age" 2016) (as cited in McCrindle 2006). People within the same generation will have some similar characteristics; these characteristics have helped managers get to know the approach and deal with them. However, according to Murphy and Raines (2007), part of the generations might have totally different characteristics with their generation. It mostly because of the difference of experience and personality compare to same generation. Even though generation is different, some people might have a same characteristic with another generation. Therefore, before bridging or finding the solutions for the generation gap should focus on the personality ethic and value to categorize them but not only consider in the year they are born.

Since every generation has their preferred communication styles and platforms, butin these multigenerational workforce only know few way to communicate or own generation communication approach would create a lot of misunderstandings and conflicts. Thus, understandings and learning from other generation are important role to reduce conflicts between generations.

Every industry will have some effort and solutions to help solve the problem of generation gaps. However, this is not enough to minimize the problem of generation gaps. Every single person must do their effort for it. For examples, Baby Boomers always think that Generation X and Generation Y have not trained as well as them and younger generation is slacker in the industry. Same situation to Generation Y, they think Baby Boomers are old and low productivity and all their skill are out dated. These kinds of negative thoughts should not happen among the employees. Every generation has their own strengths and weaknesses. For examples, Baby Boomers are experience, skilled and knowledgeable they can pass their knowledge to those new generation to help them solves on a lot of problem. Moreover, Generation X and Y are good in new technologies, gadgets and more creativity can help older generation people think in different way. If people from different generation accept the fact that everyone has their strength and weakness. Besides, helping each other in different situation will improve the ability of all different generation people.

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, because of the different situations, cultures and experience, it creates different types of generation. Every generation is acquired different type of abilities, values, strengths and weakness. Be respected on people of other generation personality keep learning the strength and skill from people of other generation. Lastly, doing a favor or helping on the thing that older or younger generation weak on it. These are the most effective way to minimize the generation gaps between older generation and younger generation. These different approaches that have discussed in this paper might solve generation gaps problem and conflict effectively. By solving the generation gaps in company, it would lead create a harmony and better workplace to accomplish the organization goals more efficiency.

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