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INTRODUCTION

Workplace harmony is the key success for the success of manager managing his manpower and the company. While different generations working at one place puts a lot of pressure on the organization, globalization and competition causes it to grow. Today the boundaries are becoming smaller and smaller for businesses, and so is the age group of corporate in different industry. There are three types of generations now that are working in India, the Baby Boomers (born 1945-1963), Generation X (born 1964-1980) and Generation Y (born 1981 - 1997). This study mainly focuses on Generation X and Generation Y. Both of them have different characteristics, leisure styles, working styles, needs and expectations. These differences pose great difficulty in managing different generations for the management. The first thing in managing these two different generations is to identify where the differences lie and to understand how best to negotiate with and exploit these differences. The Indian workplaces have become a unique test-bed for experimenting what elements come together to ensure growth and prosperity for both individuals and the organization. Different work styles, values and often opposing attitudes towards work amongst the generations within the workplace have felt the quest for understanding what is required to ensure the different generations in the workforce work together successfully. Thus it is very important to know the

factors that are influencing the changes between the two generations and the role organizations must play, through policy making, in influencing the workplace. Understanding the changes between the two generations will help the organizations with better management of different generation employees in the same workforce and in the same organization. An important factor that has been influencing different generation is the changing technology in generational era.

CHAPTER 1

The Modern Work Place

The differences in work-places continue to evolve through the increase in generation gap. Keeping pace with the changing demographics of the personnel, meeting with the demands and keeping the employees satisfied are some of the main challenges for an organization. This chapter discusses the current trends in the work-place, evolution of a new force and their problems & demands with respect to the two dominant groups today: Generation X and Generation Y. Their preferences and their perspectives make them as different as chalk and cheese, it becomes complex for the management to satisfy them.

1.1 What is Generation gap all about?

We live in a world that is fiercer and has become more competitive from past few decades; this world that we live in right now is driven by technological innovations and not inventions. Our work and our life is more complex now, we are surrounded by various global trends. The world that we live in and work that we do have changed drastically over the past 2 decades, and so are our perceptions to deal with such situations. Gone are the days when

people used to put on their shoes and rush for work at 5 in the morning and return back at 6 in the evening. Organizations from different parts of the world are now preparing their forces with skills and knowledge to be able to compete in this tough world. Today people have dramatically changed with different generational attitudes and influencing people's views of the society they live in. The present day work place consists of people from different generations working all together and making it tough for the management of the organization to manage them.

a) Generation X

Generation X can technically be defined as the generation born between 1965 and 1980. They were brought up with televisions personal computers. The term 'Generation X' was designated to a group of population by the media to differentiate them from the rest of the population for marketing purposes. They are the generation that saw this country undergo a traumatic phase and are determined not to repeat the same mistakes. The generation X group is generally considered as market savvy, laid back, prone to psychological disorders because they are the major group of population that are brought up with family violence leading to divorce or separation of parents. They are the generation that were brought up with cassettes and television and were conscious about jeans as a fashion wear. This group started to enter organizations in the mid late 80's and early 90's they started their own work culture and work ethics. They were the age group who did not believe in working for 12 hours a day to fetch

them good money. They believed that even though you go to your office at 2 in the noon you must get the projects that are assigned to them with in the time frame even if they work at home or work late night. Money is not the main motivator for them, its name and fame that motivates them, and if one fails to motivate them they would simply shift to some other organization, taking with them all the clients. A lot of people believed they were a bunch of lazy people with least loyalty towards their organization, very little ambition, with an unimpressive pay with no future jobs. But the generation X is observed to be smarter than their ancestors, baby boomers and this negative perception is shifting as the Generation X age. However lately, generation X were seen finding their quest for better opportunities, using the latest technology in hand, starting new businesses, making waves on the net. They just have a different attitude towards work, and a different opinion about how to work. The generation X saw their parents' work ethic as 'live to work' but generation X believed 'we work to live', and that work is a medium that allows you to enjoy your leisure time. Such experience has produced a generation with less tolerance for bureaucracy and 'playing by rules'. It is believed that the generation X will not commit blindly to an employer, but instead ask "What's in it for me?" The main factors that are responsible for shaping generation X are focused on the technology boom with the introduction of personal computers, mobile phones, faxes, email, and the Internet. The growth in the size of organizations, the increase in the global reach of a company had a major impact on the characteristics of the generation X in the workplace. The Xers had grown up when there were a lot industrial uncertainties like Take-Overs, mergers and acquisitions and fall of major giants and rise of small and new companies. The Xers are more flexible, individualistic, and

entrepreneurial and are more socially responsible. They know how to strike a balance between their family, work and leisure. Because of their entrepreneurial nature the generation X from across the world has been starting new businesses at an unprecedented rate. While the generation X is now well established a new breed of generation has begun its journey- Generation Y.

b) Generation Y

The term 'Generation Y' was labeled to the group of population that was born after generation X. The generation Y is often termed as generation N by most researchers because they are born in the age of interNet and search eNginEs and are going to change for the next 20 years as the technology innovates and advances. This generation is born between 1981 and 1996. This is the newest generation; some of them have started working and are on their career, for some of them this is their first job. And some of them are pursuing their education and some of them are still in high schools and colleges. As it is, a young generation with very young people between the age group of 20 – 30, their work preferences and characteristics are not clear. Certain characteristics of generation Y are more common to the baby boomer generation who are in most cases are their parents and has a close affinity to the mature generation i.e. their grand parents. The generation Y is more in close relations with their coaches, grand fathers, and teachers because their super competitive grand fathers had them involved in sports and other activities through out their life when both their parents were working. The generation Y are

more self confident, optimistic, structured and impatient. This age group or generation is more tolerant and socially liberal. This generation has seen many chaotic events like the Kashmir violence and terrorist attacks in New Delhi and the Parliament, the violence in the Far East. It has also seen the terrorist attack of 9/11 in America and the Iraq war and many natural calamities like the Tsunami. Experience of so many chaotic events is definitely going to effect the change and uncertainty before them in the ever changing workplace. The Generation Y has more global perspective on life and is more globally educated then their ancestors because of the emergence of internet and the ease of global travel. The Internet and mobile phones and features such as SMS and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS). The more and more awareness about the environmental hazards due to technologies has shaped this generation. The generation Y does not hesitate to work harder and are more efficient and working smarter and not longer. Gone are the days when employees were paid according to their working hours and not on their output. Today is the time when quality of work is appreciated than quantity of work. This has been a bit of problem for some organizations in the management of employees in the future with different expectations of measuring performance.

1.2 Different generations at the same work place

Recent comparative studies between the baby boomers and their descendants the generation X and generation Y has shown that employee commitment was different between

the two generations: the baby boomers showed higher level of commitment towards their work and employers where as generation X was more committed and focused towards improving his marketability. The study also showed that generation X were more flexible and expected immediate promotions it was very rare n case of the baby boomers they were traditionally more attached with organization and were driven by a feel of affiliation and identification with the organization. Jeffries in 2002 conducted a qualitative study addressing different values, behaviors, leadership styles and attitudes of generation X managers. This study concluded that generation X has a very friendly personality, has a strong work ethic, a participative leadership style and willingness to accept any sort of challenges. The study also found that the generation X was more eager to learn about the technological advancements than the baby boomers.

The younger generation is looking out for experience: if they don't get it from their employees they would seek it from some one else. Where as in case of skills and knowledge there had never been much difference between the older generation and the young generation. Most of the young generation does not want to grow up like their parents where even after 50 years of loyal service in a huge organization what they get is a gold watch, few months of pension and a pat on their back. Money is not the main motivator for them, what they want is creating difference among all the people.

a) Generation X's preferred work place

Generation X has always grown up working in a phase of dynamic technological changes with tech- savvy products like laptops, Personal Computers, Cell phones, etc. Work place in any organization is subject to constant change: communication, values, employee attractions and retention, etc. The Generation X workers are still young and dynamic. Baby Boomers concentrated more on shaping their job rather than their careers, which results in a difference in preference for a work place from Gen-X. Gen-X's preferred work environment can be observed as:

- ***An Informal, Friendly workplace:***

As earlier mentioned, generation X does not believe in long and laborious hours of work, concentrating on a 'short and deliver you best' attitude, instead. This also includes their preference for a friendly, informal atmosphere in the work place, wherein they are free to express their tastes, preferences and opinions. The hierarchal levels do not make the slightest difference to the relationship amongst employees; hence a friendly and acceptable work place is craved for by most gen-X workers. This kind of atmosphere also results in bringing out the best among this group, since ideas are encouraged as exchanged. This also does not mean creating a chaotic work environment like a circus, but the work needs to be fun, instead of a chore.

- ***Functional, Planned & Efficient:***

The Gen- X workers like everything planned and organized. Their work has to be functional, though that does not mean a 9 to 5 job; it refers to accomplishing a specific task on time, to proceed further. The series of tasks for a particular goal is functional and aligned among all workers.

- ***Technology up gradation:***

Gen X expects the latest, the most efficient technology served to them, as it helps them accomplish their tasks faster. Time being a major constraint, they also ensure the work is satisfactory in terms of quality, which is accomplished through the latest gadgets. They are looking for learning skills that will ensure them security for career development. The most important factors kept in mind while demanding the latest technology is to be at par with competitors, time and knowledge. They certainly do not expect to be left behind while their competitors walk ahead with the accolades.

- ***Neat, Clean and Organized:***

‘A messy office means a confused mind’ goes just right for this group of people. They give neatness of the office their undivided attention. For them, the key to working efficiently is a clean environment, hence is a desirable factor. This also includes all the

equipment that make them feel comfortable, like a personal computer, air conditioners, organized units for the storage of documents, etc.

- ***A learning school:***

For Gen X, learning does not end with a qualification. The work place is also an important learning medium, wherein they expect ideas to be exchanged top-down or bottom-up. For this communication is essential. Communication gap between various departments, hierarchal levels is to be narrowed, ensuring the work place becomes a good learning medium.

- ***Freedom of speech:***

Freedom to express opinions is of utmost importance to Gen-X. They should be given liberty to say 'I need not do a nine to five job, I can get the work done on time even without slogging.' this is expected by any Gen-Xer when he accepts his position in an organization. It is essential that the managers understand and provide them with this liberty, since it is found to be an important driving force for better output.

b) X's demands

The demands of the X generation mainly include:

- A challenging and a demanding role in the organization with the freedom to assignments and projects that they will be working on. The generation X is always searching something in which they can sink their teeth into, a challenging assignment or a project holds their attention into it. They are more attitudinal towards marketing their skills to others.
- Career opportunities: The generation never believes in job security or a career path, hence their job safety does not lie with their employers. Career development is a main driver to this generation if they don't find it with their employer they simply shift they roles to some other organizations.
- The work environment for the generation should be such that it is fun to them. Generation X do not believe in working hard, they are more socially responsible and balance their work in such a way they are able to give time to their family too. Their search for balance also includes making work as fun and not hard and laborious. They believe in having very casual environment at their work place, minus the stress. This can

seem to us very different because we have seen organizations where there is discipline and the boss is the dictator.

- The generation X group is a very entrepreneurial in nature; they believe in diversification, high levels of corporate responsibility and are regularly seeking for channels that would allow them to work upon ideas and creativities. The employers should take this into account as bottom line impact. If the Xers feel that their employer is not living up to their expectations then they would simply shift to some other organization.
- Work at home. Generation X was the first generation to see both their parents working long hours and having very less time for their family. As a result the Xers feel a more balanced family- work life to exist in their organization. As they believe in getting their assignments done in the right time that are allotted, whether they work 2 hrs a day or 5 hrs a day they believe in getting the work done is what they are paid for. Thus the location of their work place does not create difference in their work life. It is true that today many, are asking for working at home from their employers. Thus it is very important manage such initiatives so that all the employees are given a fair chance.

- Knowledge management. In today's world the generation X rules in knowledge management. They hungrily grab into new ideas theories to garnish and update their knowledge database. They consider each job an opportunity to add to their skills arsenal. They very well know that its their responsibility to search out more and more opportunities. They never relied on their employer for job security, they always believed in maintaining their employability through regular learning and development. The Xers know that to keep their employability they must keep their knowledge database up to date. If they don't find a employer providing them such a platform they would simply shift.

Many big organizations have already started reworking on their policies for example Ernst & Young. Ernst & Young, an accounting firm, is on the cutting edge. They developed a team-approach for determining the needs and responsibilities of their employees and for setting up new schedules. Ernst & Young won a Catalyst award a few years ago for their efforts to redesign work. The differences in generations at the work place will continue to be a debatable topic and will be discussed upon across the globe. Keeping ahead with the changing demographic trends, organizations have to think out new ideas to manage different generations on the job, active and engaged in accordance with their values and expectations. The next thing that I will be discussing is what influenced this generation to become what they are.