

# Age diversity

[Business](#), [Organization](#)



A more diverse workforce does not necessarily mean more problems. Diverse workforce can however be seen as something positive that may bring positive impact to an organisation despite of all the challenges that the management as well as the employees may have to deal with. In this essay, I will focus on age - the aspect of diversity often been avoided, the organisational behaviour challenges that are created and lastly, knowledge and skills managers have to develop. Generations are sectioned into the Traditionalists (born 1900-1945), the Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), the Generation Xers (born 1965-1980), and the Millennials (born 1981-2000). The Traditionalists have core values of dedication, hard work, conformity, discipline, loyalty, consistency and patience. The Baby Boomers on the other hand, believe in growth and expansion, optimistic, service oriented, driven, willing to " go the extra mile", and good team players. The Generation Xers attained the core values of diversity, thinking globally, balance, techno-literacy, fun, informality, adaptability, independent, and pragmatism. And lastly, the Millennials, whose core values are optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement, sociability, morality, and street smarts. They also have multi capabilities and technology savvy. (Zemke, R, Raines, C & Filipczak, B 2000) With the differences in personalities and values among generations, there bound to be misperceptions of one another. Thus, conflict arises where values differ and needs varies. This is where several organizational behaviour challenges come to surface. Some negative impacts that are related are such as how costly it can be when companies have to set policies, develop procedures, and create everything from corporate cultures to compensation and benefit plans, and how challenging it

can be for the managers who are charged with recruiting, managing and motivating up to four generations in the workplace at once. One of the greater challenges is to purge stereotyping. Stereotyping occurs everywhere, some of which are exaggerating or discriminating. Media is one of the greater influences that contribute to stereotyping. It puts negative images into our minds, and these affect how we view each of the generations. Stereotypes also arise from resentment. For example the Generation Xers resent the Traditionalists for being resistant to change, or Boomers resent Xers for finding it so easy to change jobs whenever they feel like it (Lancaster, L. C & Stillman, D 2002, p. 17). Another challenge is to cater to the different values each generation has. As mentioned earlier in the essay, each generation possesses their own values that eventually define who they are and their behaviour. Organisations rely on individuals to make decisions and take actions that achieve corporate objectives. Consequently, values represent a potentially influential approach to keep employees' decisions and actions aligned with corporate goals (McShane, S & Travaglione, T 2005, p. 111). Also a challenge is to provide adequate training for unskilled and inexperienced workers. It is not just simply providing. Other issues such as the cost, time and abilities have to be considered. Basically, the complications of generational collisions at work include everything from reduced profitability to the loss of valuable employees, higher payroll cost, wasted human potential, and even serious health problems caused by stress. Bridging the generation gap is becoming more important in the workplace because networking and relationships are more central to job performance. Apart from the government and organisation, managers also play a huge

part. Managers must first have understanding of the diverse workforce, obtain the knowledge of almost every aspects of the diversity and develop certain skills to deal with the challenges. Managers have to appreciate all perspectives, eliminating biasness, and encourage employees and team members to see the value of all (Chang, R. Y 1996). One of the many ways is to practice diversity awareness training which sensitises people about stereotypes and prejudices that may undermine the benefits of diversity. The training dispels myths about people from different backgrounds and may bring out subtle prejudices through role-plays and exercises. (McShane, S & Travaglione, T 2005, p. 88) Other strategies may include encouraging employees to work in diverse teams and open up communication lines. Contact that involves working together and communication toward meaningful goals is most likely to bridge generational differences. (Carr-Ruffino, N 1999, p. 283) Different managerial skills are needed to help manage different generations. Basically, it comes down to managers being observant; monitoring the performance of employees; having the ability to evaluate weaknesses and provide training and development strategies to strengthen the weaker skills in the team; being able to communicate well; motivating; making good decisions; and demonstrating knowledge and expertise. (Karp, H, Fuller, C & Sirias, D 2002)