

The multi-generational workplace

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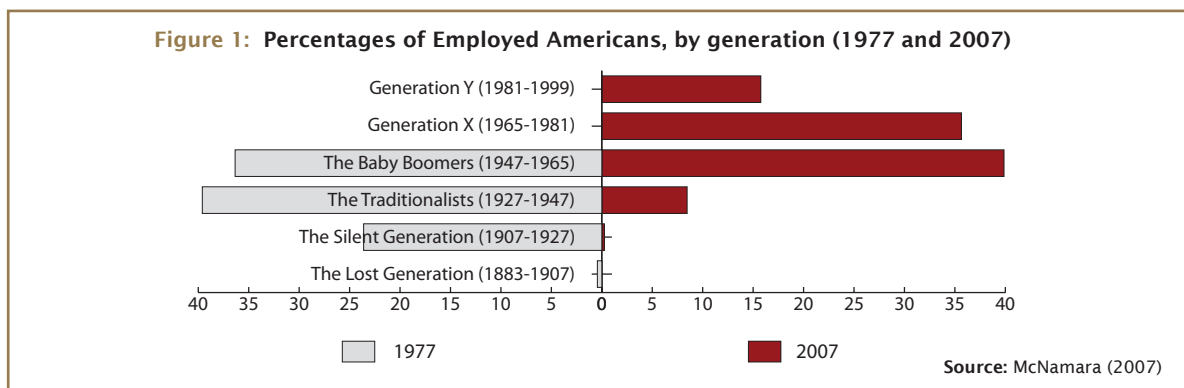
THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKPLACE

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People from different generations have worked side by side throughout much of human history, but today increased life expectancies mean that in many workplaces four or more generations of workers interact daily.

Question 1: How multi-generational is the workplace today?

- Analysis of the March 1977 and 2007 Current Population Surveys indicate that when the Baby Boomers were entering the workforce in 1977, the vast majority of workers were in one of three generations: The Silent Generation (23.6 percent), the Traditionalists (39.6 percent), and the Boomers (36.4 percent). Today, as the Baby Boomers are exiting the labor force, the majority of workers are spread across four generations: The Traditionalists (8.5 percent), the Boomers (39.9 percent), Generation X (35.7 percent), and Generation Y (15.8 percent). (McNamara, 2007).



Question 2: Do attitudes toward work and employers differ for workers of different generations?

- According to a 2004 Families and Work study, "Twenty-two percent of Boomers are work-centric, compared with 12 to 13 percent of other generations." (Families and Work Institute, 2004: 7).
- According to a 2007 Center for Creative Leadership survey, more than 60% of Early Boomers (born 1946-1954) agree they would like to stay with their current organization for the rest of their working lives, compared to less than 30% of Late Xers (born 1877 to 1986). (Deal, 2007: 121).
- According to a 2007 Center for Creative Leadership survey, more than 60% of Late Boomers (born 1955 to 1963) agree that they see themselves being with the same organization in three years, compared to less than 40% of Early Xers (born 1964 to 1976). (Deal, 2007: 126).
- An analysis of the 2002 National Study of the Changing Workforce found that only 21% of young adult workers said they had more skills than needed for their jobs, compared to 46.7 percent of older adult workers. (Shen, 2007).

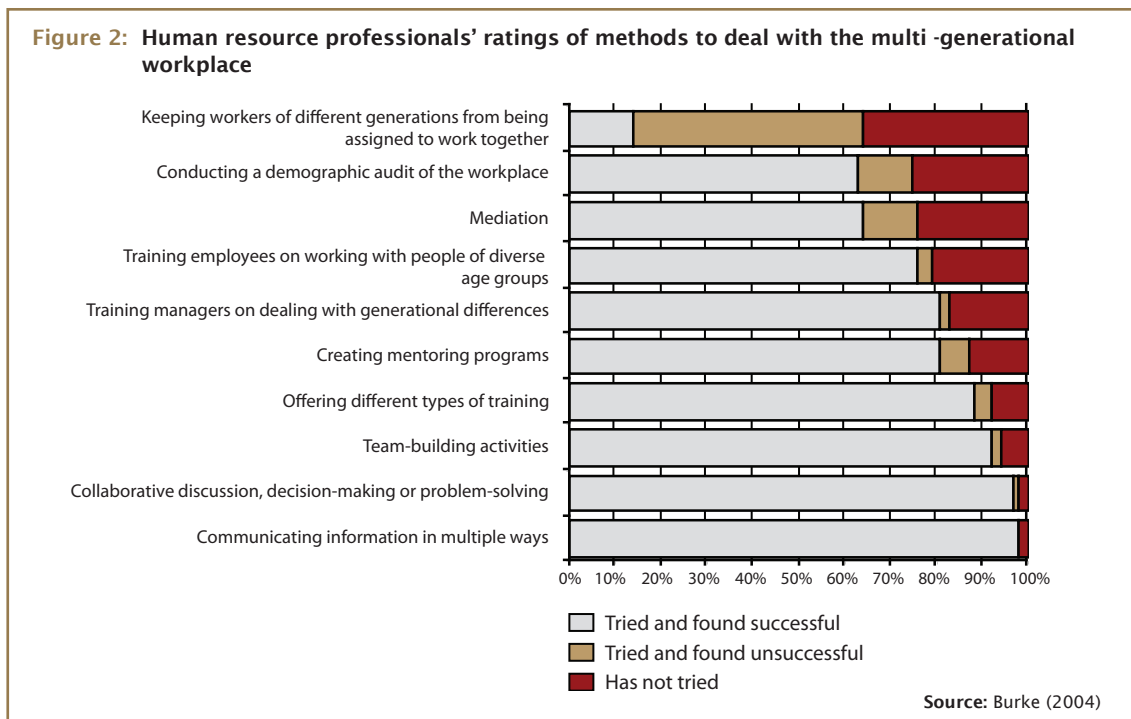
Question 3: What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of multi-generational workplaces?

- When asked what some disadvantages of hiring older workers were, 7% of human resource professionals responded that older workers do not work well with other generations. (Collison, 2004: 3).

- According to the 2004 Generational Differences Survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), “most human resource professionals (60%) said they were not aware of intergenerational conflict among employees at their organization, while 40% said they were aware of conflict.” (Burke, 2004: 4).
- According to the 2004 Generational Differences Survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), when asked how often better quality of work was produced due to a variety of generational perspectives at their organization, 27% of human resource professionals said frequently, 55% said occasionally, 15% said rarely, and 3% said never. (Burke, 2004: 2).
- In a 2007 survey of human resource professionals at over 500 organizations, 22.4 percent said it was very true that early-career employees were loyal to the company, compared to 53.8 percent who said late-career employees were loyal to the company. (Pitt-Catsouphe, Smyer, Matz-Costa, & Kane, 2007: 8).

Question 4: How are employers dealing with multi-generational workplaces?

- When asked what their organizations were doing or had done to deal with the multi-generational workplace, 50 percent of human resource professionals mentioned that keeping workers for different age groups apart was an unsuccessful approach, while 98 percent mentioned communication information in multiple ways (such as via e-mail and during meetings) as very, moderately, or slightly successful. (Burke, 2004: 10).



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