

Applying Generational Theory to Greater Understand Desirable Relationship Characteristics in Multigenerational Team

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ABSTRACT

As the demographics of the workforce change, consider that for the first time, in many organizations five generations are working side by side on multigenerational teams. How can this burgeoning generational diversity be leveraged to support efficiency within organizations and specifically workplace teams? The following paper will seek to identify characteristics of effective multigenerational teams through an in-depth study of Generational Theory, Generational Archetypes and the generation's preferred relationship characteristics. Included will be an in-depth review of literature and data from observations of multigenerational team experiences. Based on literature and observations recommendations for supporting multigenerational relationships will be offered.

INTRODUCTION

Organizational careers do not look the way they did in the past. Now it is common to see four or five generations of people working together within an organization. While the multigenerational workforce brings benefits, it also introduces new challenges. As examples, younger managers are often leading older individuals and work values vary widely among generations. Why do some multigenerational teams reap the benefits of diversity while other teams crumble under the challenges? To answer this question, the researcher seeks to identify the primary characteristics of effective multigenerational teams. Information was collected through literature review, interviews and observations.

OBJECTIVE

To determine the characteristics of productive multigenerational teams based on The Generational Theory, interviews and observations.

CONCLUSIONS

Productive Multigenerational Teams

Understanding.
Respect for differences.
Clear roles.
Compromise.

Generational Theory

1. Age predicts differences in attitudes, behaviors and explains place in the life cycle.
2. Understanding life cycle experiences can help support respect for differences.
3. Understanding life cycle experiences can support compromise.
4. Generational Theory is one learning tool that can support understanding from one generation to the next.

GENERATIONS THEORY

(Strauss and Howe, 1991)



HYPOTHESIS

Productive multigenerational teams have team members that exhibit social awareness.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research.
Informational interviews.
Participant observation.

OBSERVATIONS

Observations from five teams that demonstrated productivity through completion of assigned task.

- Each team had at least five members.
- Each team had at least four generations.
- Productivity was achieved.
 - Common goal.
 - Team members compromised.
 - Respect for each other's perspective.

INTERVIEWS

What are the characteristics of an effective multigenerational team?

- 30 interviewees.
 1. Understanding.
 2. Respect differences.
 3. Clear roles.



REFERENCES

Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: the history of America's future*. New York: NY: Harper Collins Publisher.