Issues and Challenges Faced by Generation X While Managing Generation Y

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss how Generation X and Generation Y differ from each other and the issues and challenges that the aging Generation X may face while interacting and managing the Generation Y as the younger generation advance into the workforce to build their career. Furthermore, this paper discusses how Generation X could do a better job in managing and motivate the younger generation by implementing a few management theories. Generation Y raises challenges to Generation X managers and team leaders who are responsible in training these young employees so that they can be valuable asset to the company. Gen X managers should also know that there would always be a continuous adjustment in managing the new generation as more members of this generation advance into workplace. In order to be prosperous and successful, it is fundamental for managers fully understood, monitor and addresses proactively the generation differences in an organization.

Keywords: Marketing Professors, Market Orientation, Organizational Performance, AACSB International

Introduction

Generation Y, the latest generation to enter the workforce, is making a difference the in world of employment. This young generation deemed to be the future workforce that carries their own set of, work habits, demands, and expectations (Ng, Lyon and Schweitzer, 2012). In this pass few years there has been numerous of study on the topic of generation differences in the organizational and management literature and how these differences had affected and influenced on the workforce design and management strategies. Much of these discussions involved on these two generations, Generation X and Generation Y. While Generation Y brings new energy and spirit to the workforce, at the same time it also adds complication to the organization as they are trying hard to understand what motivates and inspires these twenty-something year olds employees.

In this paper, we will discuss how these two generations differ from each other and the issues and challenges that the aging Generation X may face while interacting and managing the Generation Y as the younger generation advance into the workforce to build their career. Furthermore, this study will also discuss how Generation X could do a better job in managing and motivate the younger generation by implementing a few management theories.

II. Secondary Findings

2.1 Gen X as the preceding group

In order to better understand these two cohorts and how the differences have affected the working atmosphere, first we should understand the preceding age group, Generation X. This generation is usually classified as the generation after the Baby Boomers and born between the year 1961 and 1979 (Justin and Crocker, 2010). This generation also described as, "the most misunderstood, disheartened, and ignored generation. (Nagle, 1999)" This generation was brought up through the time when the technology epochs began, the time where computers are commonly used in household.

Because a large number of Gen X parents were working, they are left to make decisions on their own. Generation X had learned from the mistakes that their parents made and also avoided them. Gen X is able to handle each situation on its own potential, with given information they have at that time, and responding in the best they can, (Hicks and Hicks, 1999).They grew up as a generation that appreciates hard work, education and the supremacy of money (Justin and Crocker, 2010).

2.2 Generation X tends to be skeptical

Members of Generation X are claimed skeptical, they grew up at the point of time when both of their parents had became workaholics only witness leading institutions called into question from massive unemployment rate caused by the U.S. Corporation to the crashed Stock Market in 1987 (Lancaster &Stillman, 2000). Life experiences of Gen X have generated a generation that carries characteristic such as lost of trust in organization and focus on individual achievement. Generation X also treats their personal goals far more important than goals related to work. They are much likely to leave an organization for a more ambitious and challenging job or higher salary job.

2.3 Characteristics of Generation Y

Generation Y is different. They are usually described as the generation that born between 1980 and 2000, the Millennial. This generation is widely known to be self-reliant, self-assured, goal-oriented. In spite the fact that Gen X has witness the beginning of the technology era, Gen Y was "born into technology"(Justin and Crocker, 2010) and they are "technologically sophisticated"(Swenson, 2008), their knowledge about the digital world are far greater than that of their elders.

Because of the availability of Internet and texting from a young age, they are regards as the "digital natives" (Shaw and Fairhurst, 2008). This allowed them to easily adapt the fast-paced world with immediate access to information. Generation Y is brought up in an environment with freedom and choice, because of the advancement of the technology, they more educated. Comparing with the previous generation, they could be the most productive generation because they are geared with technology that changes their daily life (Matthewman, 2011)

The principles and point of view of these two generations towards an ideal workplace are very different. Generation X regards work as " a thing you do to have a life" (Nagle, 1999). However, Generation Y gives the impression that they desired a work-life balance in order to "define who they are in their career" (Justin and Crocker, 2010). Furthermore, half of this generation is brought up in a single-parent family; this inherent the individualistic and confident nature of the group.

Owing to the fact that, Generation Y enters the working class where there are more jobs than people; therefore they are less motivated and developed a short-term career mindset. Because of this, they are often being misunderstood by the older generation and being labeled as unpatriotic, over-confident and capricious. However, Generation Y is more adaptable, efficient, and innovative and they are fast learners. They tend to be more accepting of differences; therefore, they are more tolerant towards religions, races, and other social differences.

Gen Y evaluates people not according to their hierarchical position but by the contributions they make. Getting the job done as a group is more important that battling to climb up the hierarchy ladder (Mackey, 2005). This generation appreciates collaboration and coworker relationship than hierarchies. They develop vigorously on innovation. They have to habit of asking "why not?" when top management is reluctant to try their ideas. These traits are quite different than Generation X. Gen Y are confident and often set high expectation on themselves, because of their vibrant energy, they tend to set sight on working faster and doing better than other employee. They also have strong demand on recognition and reward from other people.

III. Implications

3.1 Managing Gen X by Implementing Management Theory

Generation Y is the latest and the youngest generation to be in the workplace or about to enter the field of working. They will be a pleasant addition to any organization, but at the same time organizations must also be mindful that this young generation is entering the workplace with their own thinking and agenda. Gen Y has enter the workplace a few years and has already gained the reputation of being unpatriotic, over-confident and capricious, arguably this is because they are being mis-managed by the managers who are still using the same framework on managing Gen X. This "young blood" raises challenge to Generation X managers and team leaders who are responsible in training these young employees so that they can be valuable asset to the company.

In order for Gen X managers to successfully motivate Gen Y, it is fundamental for them to know what actually drives these younger employees. By understanding their attitudes and characters, the needs and their wants, it will then be easier to read their behavior and thus, able to identify the right ways to motivate them accordingly.

3.2 Motivation Theories

The subject of Motivation Theories are found on the idea that people of all ages have desires and needs that constantly drive them to meet this wants and needs (Aroonwan, Petterson, and Zhu, 2011). These needs and wants can be study in order to read a person's behavior(Lussier and Achua, 2007).

To better understand the behaviors of the younger employees and motivate them, Gen X managers should consider acquiring Maslow's theory of Hierarchy of Needs. This hierarchy of needs explains that needs must be satisfied in a hierarchical manner. However, Gen Y have a drastic needs of Belonging but at the same time they also worry about the issues of Esteem and Self-Actualization which is the highest level of Maslow's Hierarchy Pyramid and this does not align with Maslow's standard needs order (David, 2013).

3.3 Generation Y's perceptions of needs

As was mentioned earlier, Generation Y treats the needs of Belonging, Esteem, and Self-Actualization equally important. Therefore, with Safety and Physiological needs at the bottom of the pyramid and grouping up the Belong, Esteem and Self-Actualization Needs together. This shows that in order to motivate Gen Y, Gen X managers should understand that Belong Needs are just as important and influential as Esteem and Self-Actualization Needs to Gen Y.

Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2:

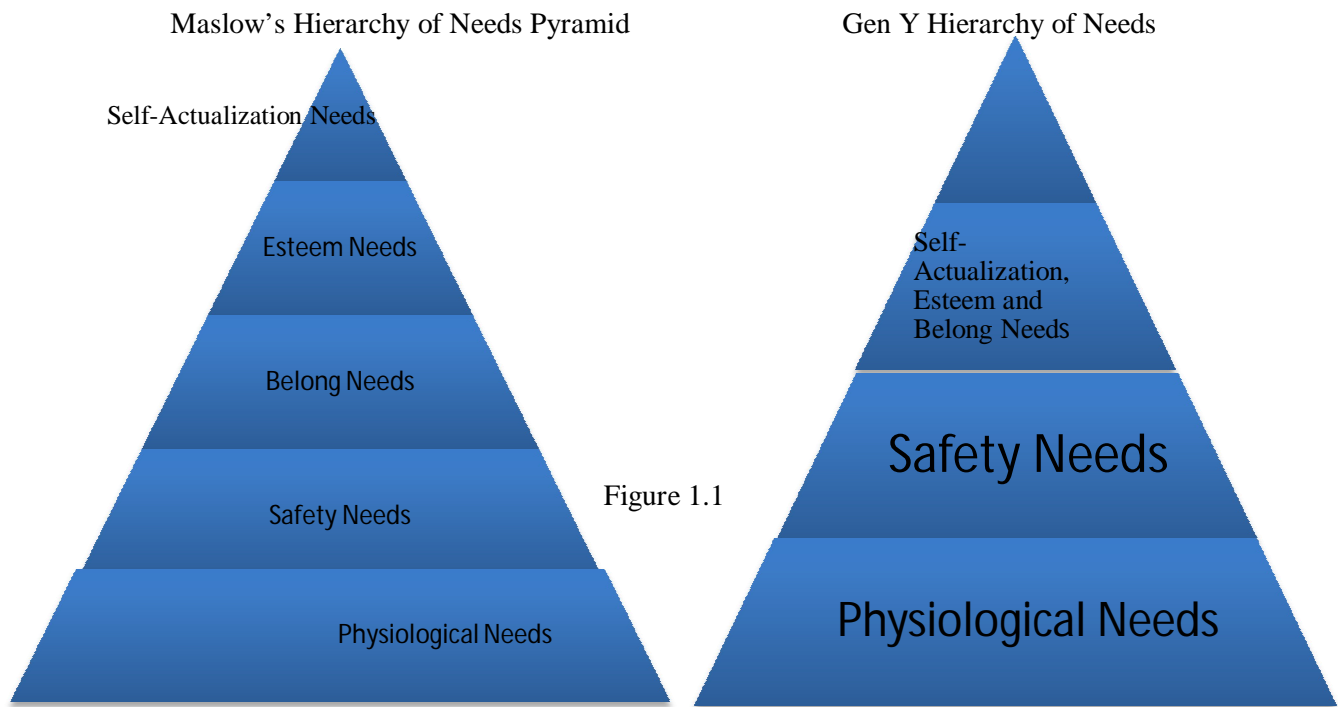**Maslow's Pyramid of Needs versus Gen Y Pyramid of Needs**

Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

3.4 Mayo's Behavioral Management

Beside Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, Gen X managers should also consider Elton Mayo's Behavioral Management. Mayo believes that there was more to work than work itself. Mayo's studies illuminated that the requirements to motivate employees is more than just money. He discovered that because employees are members of society and every worker is a representative of a working group (Mayo, 1945), the attitude and belief of these groups produce an important part in determining his behavior as a worker and a member of society (Brown, 1954).

In other words, employee productivity is being affect by external influence such as social groups and is being motivated by the way they communicate with each other. As was mention before, Generation Y preferably enjoy in working as a team. This generation appreciates collaboration and coworker relationship than hierarchies. Putting them in teams, especially allowing them to have the power to make decision, will create a sense of being trusted and recognized. Furthermore, they tend to be more accepting of differences and are more tolerant towards religions, races, and other social differences. This will be an advantage for them in working in teams.

IV. Conclusion

Generations after generations have given some of the challenges within workforce. Each and every generation has inbred core values created by the epoch in which they were born and the experiences the faced. These values changes work ethic, affected perceptions of others' work ethic, and communication styles. Generation Y raises challenges to Generation X managers and team leaders who are responsible in training these young employees so that they can be valuable asset to the company. Gen X managers should also know that there would always be a continuous adjustment in managing the new generation as more members of this generation advance into workplace. In order to be prosperous and successful, it is fundamental for managers fully understood, monitor and addresses proactively the generation differences in an organization.

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