Generation Gap at Workplace
About the Tutorial

A **generation** is normally an identifiable group that includes members based on their age and location and also based on any important life events in critical developmental stages, that spans up to 5 to 7 years. Depending on the generation an employee belongs to, his functioning and attitude toward several core competency areas can be assumed correctly.

In this tutorial, we shall discuss in detail about the four generations of the American workers and their similarity, differences and its implications. We will also discuss how the different generations respond to different organizational mechanisms and situations in the workplace.

Audience

This tutorial is designed primarily for those professionals, who are getting the opportunity to work in a diverse workplace and need assistance in understanding the approach they are supposed to have, especially while dealing with employees who belong to a different generation group.

Prerequisites

Before proceeding with this tutorial, the reader is expected to be familiar with the concept of organizational working models, and the different ways in which organizations function in.

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A *generation* is defined by “an identifiable group that includes members based on their age and location and also based on any important life events in critical developmental stages, that spans up to 5 to 7 years.”

There are broadly two theories that support the above postulate:

- The first theory identifies a "generation" as a group generally driven by their significant life events and sharing common thoughts, values and behaviors that differs from those born before or after them.

- The second theory believes that despite the differences in their career, jobs, or life-cycle among members of different generations, they share a common expectation and desire from their employer. This view looks at generation through the prism of employment.

The Working age of Americans in 2008 was broadly divided into four generations to observe the difference in their functioning. They are:

- The Traditional Generation Employees
- The Baby-Boom Generation Employees
- Generation-X Employees
- Generation-Y Employees

In the subsequent chapters of this tutorial, we will discuss in detail about each of these generation types.
2. The Traditional Generation Employees

The first generation of the American workers comprises of people born between 1922 to 1945, and are now believed to be living a semi-retired/retired life in most cases. Members of this group have been witness to a great post-Second World War depression in their lifetime, in addition to some other major events. These experiences have affected their lifestyle to a great extent.

**Characteristics of Traditionals**

A survey conducted by "The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association Office of Diversity" suggests that the members of this generation are non-complaining, love formality, stand by their commitments, obey rules, are loyal to their employers, have dedication toward their work, and believe in teamwork & partnerships.

- Traditionals are characterized as those who believe in a top-down chain of command, need respect and normally are hesitant in implementing things that are not done earlier.

- They can be categorized as people who like to pay their bills in time, love their profession very much, and rarely venture outside its perimeter.

- They are also described as stability-loving people, needing to know everything in detail before committing, avoiding changes in their workplace, avoiding uncertainty and normally not challenging authority.

- They are not very efficient in handling conflicts and prefer to be silent rather than disagreeing vocally.

- Traditionals prefer developing their communication skills and are known for their tendency to save and conserve.

- They are characterized as individuals who believe in technological development; continue to work with uniformity and consistency in all possible situations.

- Influenced by the military operations during Second World War, they are happy to follow command, obey the hierarchical structures, and give respect to their leadership in their workplace.

In addition, the traditional generation employees are mostly disciplined, responsible, patient, resilient, and good at accommodating financial restrictions.