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## Turning Generational Diversity into a Competitive Advantage

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Indiana State University*

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Contractors of South Dakota*

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## Learning Objectives

- Identify four generations in the workplace, and define them by experiences and events.
- Compare and contrast the values and the potential outcomes of generational interaction.
- Consider and identify potential problems for an organization when people from different generations fail to communicate effectively.
- Offer strategies for effectively sharing acquired knowledge and skills.

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## Why Learn About the Generations?

- Changing demographics
- Understand the impact in the workplace
- Knowledge management
- Increase personal competency in communication and management

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**Disclaimer:**

Generational differences may influence behavior; however, this does not mean that generational differences determine adult interactions.

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**Four Generations at Work**

Veterans	1922-43
Baby Boomers	1944-59
Generation X	1960-79
Baby Busters	1980-present

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**Traditionalists  
(Veterans)**



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### Veterans

- Defining moments
  - Great Depression
  - WWII
- Values and beliefs
  - Patriotic
  - Value hard work

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### Baby Boomers




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### Baby Boomers

- Defining moments
  - Television
  - Civil rights movement
- Values and beliefs
  - Personal gratification
  - Posses strong work ethic
  - Like clear boundaries at work
  - Tend to be micromanagers

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# Generation X

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## Generation X

- Defining moments
  - Watergate
  - MTV
  - Fall of Berlin Wall
  - Challenger disaster
- Values and beliefs
  - Value diversity/global thinking
  - Self-reliant, sufficient
  - Dislike micromanagers
  - Work to live
  - Have re-defined the workplace

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## Generation X

80% of all companies that were started in the last 5 years were created by a Generation Xer.

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# Baby Busters (Y)




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## Baby Busters/Millennials

- Defining moments
  - School violence
  - TV talk shows
  - Terrorists
- Values and beliefs
  - Value making \$
  - Are civic minded
  - Like teamwork
  - Unfamiliar with workplace norms

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## Example

### Generational Feedback

Veterans – “No news is good news.”

Boomers – “Feedback once a year and lots of documentation.”

Xers – “Sorry to interrupt but how am I doing?”

Millenials – “Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button.”

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### What Do We Know?

- New Workers are Expensive! 
  - Recruitment
  - Qualification
  - Selection
  - Interview(s)
  - Pre-hire Activities
  - Appointment
  - Assignment
  - Training/Education
  - Reduced Quality & Productivity
  - Scrap/Waste
  - Other?

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### How Much Do YOU Invest in a Worker?

- Once hired, what is your investment UNTIL the worker is "earning their keep?" 
  - 30 days?
  - 90 days?
  - 6 months?
  - 1 year?
  - 2 years?
  - 3 years?
  - ???

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### How Much Do YOU Invest in a Worker?

- In South Dakota, the average is\* 
  - 30 days?
  - 90 days?
  - 6 months?
  - 1 year?
  - 2 years?
  - 3 years?
  - ???

\*variable, based on trade

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### How Much Do YOU Invest in a Worker?

- In South Dakota, the average is\*
- 30 days?
- 90 days?
- ~~1 year?~~
- 1 year?
- 2 years?
- 3 years?
- ???



\*variable, based on trade

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### So What?

- Reduced productivity & quality =
  - Reduced profitability
  - Increased frustration
    - Supervisors?
    - Co-workers?
    - Accountants?
    - Owners?
    - New Hire?

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### What's The Point?

“I Don't Like to Pay for the Same Real Estate Twice!”

... George C. Scott as General George S. Patton



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### Preserving Assets



- *“If we don’t ensure transfer of knowledge & skills from generation to generation, why are there fences around our equipment?”*

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### What’s the Difference?



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### Methods of Preserving Knowledge & Skills Assets

- Veteran worker
  - Sponsors a new hire
  - Mentors a new hire
  - Assists w/classroom new hire orientation
  - Assists w/jobsite new hire orientation
  - Assists w/curriculum development for new hires
  - Monitors/measures/reports new hire progress




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### Sponsoring a New Hire

- Human Resources targets/solicits viable candidates from management ranks
  - People skills
  - Experienced in the relevant trade(s)
  - Willingness to "grow" the next generation
  - Receptive to acquiring training/presentation skills

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### Mentors a New Hire

- Operational Management assigns an experienced peer to instruct & nurture in:
  - The industry
  - The company
  - The crew
  - The work processes
  - The means to obtain assistance
  - And express concerns

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**Assists w/Classroom NEO**

- Human Resources provides access to instruction training and support:
  - Preparing the classroom
  - Classroom presentation skills
    - Multimedia
  - Dealing w/the “problem student”

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**Assists w/Jobsite NEO**

- Veteran worker coaches provides oversight of new worker’s assignments and work tasks
  - Supporting the mentor and/or supervisor

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**Assists w/Curriculum Development**

- Provides “from the field” input to HR/Training staff re: field needs
  - And aids in making curriculum “real world”

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**Monitors/Measures/Reports NH Progress**

- Coordinates w/field managers, supervisors
- Meets w/new hire periodically, obtaining input from the new hire and their experiences

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**Monitors/Measures/Reports NH Progress**

- Coordinates w/field managers, supervisors
- Meets w/new hire periodically, obtaining input from the new hire and their experiences
- Reports to Human Resources

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**Value**

- Reinforces the concept of “operations-driven” processes
- Minimizes repeats of others’ experiences
  - Not making repetitive mistakes
    - Injury/illness/property damage
- Demonstrates company commitment to formally investing in workers
- Accelerates acquisition of knowledge/skills

Presentation to XX on date

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### Cost

- Sea change - implementing formal learning
  - Veteran workers conditioned to "learning by doing"
    - With associated negative reinforcement from mistakes
  - New workers conditioned to formal learning
    - Learning from others w/o having to make mistakes
- Perception of "taking time away from the job"
- Labor costs
- Documentation

Presentation to: XX on  
date

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### Summary

- Recognize value of preserving human assets
  - Using a formal process (policy) of transfer
- Embrace a system of sharing knowledge/skills
- Understand inter-generational and intra-generational needs to ensure capture of K&S
- Respect that sharing is a needed tool in continual improvement process

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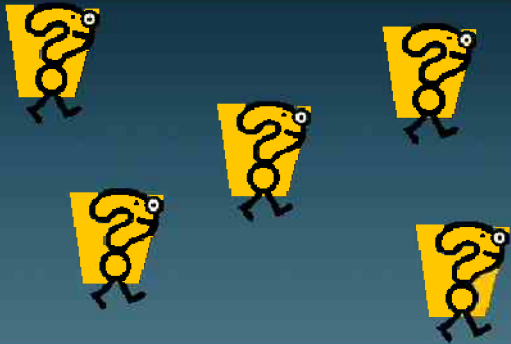
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