

The challenges which Gen X faces while managing the career aspirations of Gen Y”- 24th Sept 2011

The topic this time in Muktasamvad was “The challenges which Gen X faces while managing the career aspirations of Gen Y”. The three panel members were Capt.Sukhwinder Kaur, Mrs.Swati Gokhale, and Ms.Vandana Vishnu. Some of the thoughts which they have shared are compiled below-

The session started with the definitions of GenX and GenY. Generation X is the term for people born in the Western world after WWII (1961-1981). Generation Y is the term for people between (1982-1995).

We should go back and ask ourselves -How have the formative years of Gen Y been? They have been a smaller section – Corporate, privileged, urban middle class. Some of the reasons lie in the upbringing of Gen Y like exposure to the information age, technology, having aware and affluent parents wanting to give better things to their children etc.

In this case- what happens to the economically lower strata of the society which accounts to almost 50% of India’s population? Someone needs to do research on this section of the society.

There is very little research data relating to Gen X and Gen Y in India. Gen Y is a small part of the total population. Some are not even employable after graduation. Population Explosion is now talked as Population Dividend. Some common statements by seniors across times and generations are-

“What is going on in the world?

These youngsters do not understand!

However, we shouldn’t get overawed by this concept or underplay it.

Some of the interesting characteristics of Gen Y which came out of the discussion were:

- 1.They are smart, creative and achievement oriented.
- 2.They believe that respect must be earned
- 3.Gen Y is influential at the college campus and has good networking skills.
- 4.There are no sharp boundaries between work and social life. Work is not just 9—5....They believe in multitasking – work is social activity -Face book status etc.
- 5.Gen Y prefers digital communication rather than Face to Face- Blog works!
- 6.They are more sustainable and environment conscious, confident and more communicative.

In the eyes of Gen X the following are the shortcomings of Gen Y:

1. Patience is not a strong virtue; no long term planning
2. They have limited coping skills
3. The need for learning needs to be encouraged.

Their behavior is impacted by two factors- good education and that they have grown up in times of economic prosperity. On the other side, Gen X had to interact with Baby Boomers. (who belonged more or less to the ration era) Hence employers cannot neglect needs and expectations of Gen Y.

Expectations at the workplace

1. Lot of information available to Gen Y – exposure to internet, media – so expect a similar set-up at the workplace. Decision-making is easy because getting data is easier due to technological saviness. Also there is lot of information available through different mediums. They can see patterns. Therefore Gen X needs to move faster in decision-making. Seniors need to take cognizance and move faster with decisions
2. Lot of competition right from childhood, hence the need to excel, compete and outperform the other is high—so attitude to help each other is less.
3. For Gen X- At home when they were kids, parents decided and did what had to be done. One never questioned them and they carried the same attitude at the workplace. If one checks out the kids of today i.e. Gen Y- they seem to have more choices, more openness and more freedom. Also ‘questioning’ is an inherent trait of Gen Y. They question the old processes in organizations and try to come out with innovative suggestions which can improve the process and /or benefit the organization.
4. Spending habits –Gen Y are born and brought up in an economy of plenty! – having a mobile/travelling by plane etc is taken for granted! Gen Y has many avenues for spending-Compensation has become very important. Higher salary at times outweighs job satisfaction. Compensation and benefits structuring is important. Hence, showcasing perks is also important.
5. No concern for stability – Parents/Family provides the stability. Many of the habits are actually promoted by Gen X. Gen Y is loyal to self and family (therefore high attrition) Since their base is secure- they don’t feel the need to stick to one job- they are ready to experiment and explore. The challenge for corporations is Gen Y may not stay for long – expert is willing to continue and stay long periods of time. In the middle - corporations have a gap! And do not have people in the middle... since youngsters are not staying long. Expectations of people coming in have changed... People coming in have much larger expectations. Hence, for the corporation – succession planning becomes a problem.
6. Boss must walk the talk – He has to do what he preaches. To manage their aspirations, Gen X bosses need to be their mentors NOT Teachers. Gen Y needs to work in a structured autonomy. Choice of assignment is varied – They require recognition- performance linked to awards. Like frequent feedback and appreciation... They also need instant gratification. Gen X should show them interest and genuine engagement. Gen Y focuses on output and not the process. They respond to individual attention and encourage technology.
7. They are more responsible towards self than society and workplace. The challenge is coaching and mentoring Gen Y for the right job fit. It is essential to understand their aspirations. Their aspirations appear unrealistic, so Gen X should help them see the connect and disconnect with reality. Gen X should also understand and respect Gen Y’s decisions.
8. Work should be a part of Gen Y’s life- but they don’t want work to be their life.
9. One can **“rent their presence but cannot buy their passion”!**

The panel discussion concluded with an invigorating round of questions and answers in the open house- overall quite a thought provoking discussion.



Panel Members (From L to R): Ms.Vandana Vishnu, Mrs. Swati Gokhale, Capt. Sukhwinder Kaur



The Audience