When Younger Bosses Manage Older Workers: What Leadership Style Works Best?

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Abstract
The researcher conducted interviews to explore the dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager managing older employees and to seek practical suggestions to help both the younger managers and older workers to become more effective and satisfied. Qualitative research along with a literature review helped the researcher to determine if there was a difference in leadership styles in different generations. Based on the findings, the researcher identified five key points, such as No Difference in Leadership; Communications between generations is utilized differently; Managing Change is critical; Technology between Generations must be supported; and the last key finding was Diversity is important. These finding came out of the one-on-one interviews and focus groups and for ideas for future research.

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my wonderful son, Michael. Even though I missed seeing you play soccer, basketball and swimming at the YMCA, and sometimes you had to miss play dates with friends, your patience allowed me to accomplish my dream. I am thankful for a son like you. I love you.
ABSTRACT

The researcher conducted interviews to explore the dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager managing older employees and to seek practical suggestions to help both the younger managers and older workers to become more effective and satisfied. Qualitative research along with a literature review helped the researcher to determine if there was a difference in leadership styles in different generations. Based on the findings, the researcher identified five key points, such as No Difference in Leadership; Communications between generations is utilized differently; Managing Change is critical; Technology between Generations must be supported; and the last key finding was Diversity is important. These finding came out of the one-on-one interviews and focus groups and for ideas for future research.
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Chapter 1
An Overview

Baby Boomers, those born between 1946-1964, are staying in the workforce longer and are crashing into the “Generation Xs”, those born between 1965-1979. These two generations see the world differently and sometimes come into conflict.

No place is the clash between these two groups seen more than in Corporate America. Most baby boomers are now in late middle age. Due to greater financial strain, a limited retirement budget, and a youthful ethos, they are staying in the workplace longer than their parents did. And now, they are sharing desk space with the “up and coming”, Generation X group.

Research (Blanchard, 1984) states if there is friction today, there will only be bigger problems tomorrow. Each group will expand in coming years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, within the next decade, one out of three people in the workforce will be older than 55. Generation X is gearing up for millions more to graduate from college and head into the office. Because of reorganization, mergers and acquisitions, and the growing importance of technology, we are now in a situation where managers in their late twenties and thirties are overseeing teams of workers in their forties, fifties and even sixties.

As noted, Generation X and the Baby Boomers see the roles of work differently. Baby Boomers see Xers as disrespectful of rules, scornful about paying dues and lacking employer loyalty. Xers have a different view of themselves. They subscribe less to traditional notions of loyalty and dues paying. They have seen layoffs up close with their parents and they are more loyal to their professions than their employer. They are not
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disloyal; in fact, they are capable of a new kind of loyalty, which managers can easily earn by forging a new workplace bargain based on relationships of short-term mutual benefit.

Baby Boomers have a different self-identity. They are the children of Depression-era parents, for whom the job, and keeping the job, meant everything. Born into the post-war prosperity, they had the luck of being able to sign on with large, healthy companies and stay there for life, or so they thought until layoffs hit many of them.

These generational differences are no different than racial or gender differences and should be treated the same, as a diversity issue. The more a company’s leadership talks about the issues of older and younger workers, and addresses the related issues, the less likely grudges against this or that generation will increase. One manifestation of this issue that is pronounced is when younger generation bosses manage older Boomer employees. As Generation Xs take over more positions of leadership, there needs to be more research on how this group interacts with older workers, and their approach towards leadership in general. While leadership has been studied extensively, eg. (Burns, 1978; Bennis, 1990; Sashkin, 2003) what has not been looked at much is the clash of styles and resulting challenges of when younger managers are placed in leadership roles over older Baby Boomer or even post-war workers. There is a need for a study that examines what dimensions of leadership and managerial practices are most effective for these younger managers to employ in order to be respectful and also effective with their older workers.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the different dimensions and dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager with older
direct reports. The study will seek to find practical suggestions that are successful, satisfying and effective to both the younger bosses and the older workers.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be focused on for this study are:

1) What is the general leadership style of the Generation Xs?
2) How do older Boomers react to the X Leadership style?
3) What can Xs, Boomers and HRD professionals do to make leadership more effective for managing direct reports?

Significance of the Study

This study will be useful to the Generation X managers by uncovering many suggestions to become more effective in managing older direct reports. Boomers and war-time born employees will benefit by understanding more of the style of their younger managers and will provide practical suggestions on how to cope and adapt. This study will also be useful to HRD practitioners by providing ideas on how to manage this increasingly common workplace situation.

Conceptual Framework

This research paper will explore and discuss qualities of leadership outlined by Blanchard(1992). In his model Situational Leadership and how tailoring management styles to individual employees is important; and how to identify the correct leadership styles that enhance motivation on all levels.
Kouzes and Posner (1990) set out to discover what it took become a good leader and their Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership will be a framework for the study.

Harvey Silver (2001) who discusses a mix of people who have differing styles, values, virtues, expectations, habits and hang ups, will also be reviewed.

Finally, the study will also take a look at the research by Marvin Weisbord (1997) who takes the next step in exploring effective strategies for improving workplace productivity through dignity, meaning and community.

**Key Terms**

**Depression Era**  Population born 1922-1943

**Baby Boomers**  Population born between 1945-1964

**Generation X**  Population born between 1965-1979

**Generation Y**  Population born between 1980-Present
Chapter 2
Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager managing older employees. As noted, the study will seek to find practical suggestions to help both the younger managers and older workers to become more effective and satisfied. This chapter will examine dimensions of leadership and managerial practices that are most effective for these younger managers to employ in order to be respectful and also effective with their older workers.

This chapter will cover why this topic is important. It will define the three different generations and the key events and experiences that formed each of the generations. Then it will cover aspects of each generation’s work expectations, their view towards each other, and areas of inter-generational friction. Next it will provide brief advice from the literature for managing diversity in the workplace and finally identify where some of the present gaps are that have not been covered in the literature and what still needs to be addressed.

Today’s organizations are comprised of three different generations interacting and sometimes competing. They are the Depression Era, Baby Boomer and Generation X employees. Demand for talent is high, making recruiting and retaining employees hard. Effective managers must understand the generational characteristics of these employees and they must ensure that employees understand and respect one another’s differences. They must realize how generational differences influence attitudes toward work and the organization. They must provide opportunities for different generation employees to contribute their best toward the aim of meeting organizational goals. Managers must use
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leadership practices that encourage the hearts of dispirited employees (Kupperschmidt 2000).

Employees from different generations have different value systems and work styles, hence they react and respond differently to common life events. When managers and coworkers do not understand each other’s generational differences, tension will increase and job satisfaction and productivity will decrease. Managers and co-workers must become more sensitive to, and understanding of, generational differences. A generational perspective enables managers to take an employee’s uniqueness as a source of learning, productivity and innovation in order to create a model for positive co-worker relationships.

The Beginning

As a country, the US dates back several hundred years, with each generation having its own historical, distinctive social groups. A generation is a group of people or cohorts, who share birth years and experiences as they move through time together, influencing and being influenced by a variety of factors (Nathan 2002). Some of these factors include shifts in society attitudes, changes in the social, economic and public policy, and major events, such as war, public tragedies, and corporate downsizing.

As a result of these shared experiences, the group develops a peer personality or generational characteristics (Nathan 2002). These characteristics are generalizations, so individual differences within the generations certainly exist. Generational characteristics include values, attitudes, preferences and behaviors that form the lens through which groups interpret life experiences. This influences every aspect of a generation’s life including how they spend their money; their attitudes toward authority and organizations;
what they want and need from work; how they expect to meet these work-related needs and wants; and their attitudes toward marriage and family responsibilities. Although, each generation’s values and attitudes are different, they are influenced by previous generations. Many adults may fall between two generations, but generally they identify strongly with one or the other.

**Depression Era (1922-1945)**

This generation, which is defined from the period prior, during and after the Great Depression (Corsini 2002), grew up in tough economic times during which great leaders stepped forward and guided the nation. The majority were raised in Judeo-Christian environments that stressed morality, obligations, social norms, self-denial and hard work as valuable and one’s duty (Strauss & Howe 1990). As they matured, their parents pressured them to conform: marry; raise obedient, disciplined children in homes with fathers as breadwinners and mothers as homemakers; provide for aging parents; and give back to the community. They saved and sacrificed to provide for their children, aging parents and their retirement years.

Depression Era employees came of age respecting authority, accepting a more traditional, top-down “Great Man” model of leadership, executive decision making and the command (Strauss & Howe 1990) approach to management.

Some key events that happened during this period were the Great Depression and WWII. This was probably one of the worst economic slumps in U.S. history. The main cause was an unregulated stock market and fiscal policy, and the unequal distribution of wealth. This imbalance of wealth created the unstable economy which led to the stock market crash (Strauss & Howe 1990). When Pearl Harbor was attacked, December 7,
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1941, it damaged the pride of the U.S. Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt who tried to lead the country during a very difficult time period. Half of the people in this group came of age later in the 1950s, when there was a booming American economy, the introduction of television, the sound of Jazz, even Presidency and death John F. Kennedy and the Cold War.

**Baby Boomers (1943-1964)**

Baby boomers grew up during times of economic and educational expansion. This generation latched on to thinking that they were entitled to and expected the best from life. For many of the Boomers, their formative years were characterized by redefinition of gender roles, family and social upheaval and change. Their parents’ divorce rates increased, hence leading to the phenomenon of “latchkey kids” who returned home to empty houses. The first wave of the Boomers were idealists. They initiated or joined many causes. They formed or joined many of the self-help movements (Strauss & Howe 1990).

Some key events that happened during their formative years were the Civil Rights movement, the Women’s Rights Movement which put more women back into the workforce, the Cold War and Watergate. This generation saw man go up into space and the first landing on the Moon. John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy & Martin Luther King assassinations all occurred, and of course, the Vietnam War had a profound effect on this generation.

Boomers are characterized as workaholic, strong-willed employees who are concerned about work content and material gain. They value promotions, titles, corner
offices, and reserved parking spaces and they spend rather than save. The economic recession of the late 1970s and 1980s saw organizational restructuring and downsizing that resulted in the loss of high-paying jobs, top and mid-level management positions and benefits and pensions.

Generation X (1965-1979)

Many in this generation are described as the children of Boomers who, rather than inheriting a future bright with promise, inherited formative years with the experiences of high rates of divorce, soaring national debt, an educational system that emphasized social skills and self-esteem rather than academic achievement, reality driven television shows, violence in movies, the end of the Cold War, The Clinton years and of course technology and computers etc. The increased divorce rate resulted in disappearing fathers, with many infants and youth being raised in poverty. They were raised in an environment of higher integration and diversity, diverse family units resulting from society’s tolerance for divorce, remarriage, and alternative life styles; and diverse technology, including microwave ovens and personal computers at school and home(Corsini, 2002).

Young adults during this time experienced key events that shaped them for adulthood like Desert Storm and the energy crisis. They also witnessed a major disaster for NASA with the Challenger explosion, a new, terrible disease known as AIDS, and of course the rise of Global Terrorism.
Expectations and Frictions

Not all employee problems are due to generational differences, however these differences pose a greater management challenge than the obvious differences of race and gender. They define managing today's diverse workforce (Zemke 1998).

Expectations of Depression Era Workers

They tend to be conformers who value logic and make decisions based upon what did or did not work in the past (Atkinson, 2003). They value safe working conditions, job security and benefits and received satisfaction from doing their jobs well. The social norm of obligation is the belief and expectation that long-term employment promised job security. They honor their family, work and their country.

However, that picture is not how the younger generations view them and this is where some friction lies. Boomers view them as dictators who are reluctant towards technology. The Generation X sees them as set in their ways and out of touch. They have made most of their money for retirement and should now go away and enjoy what's left in life! (Corsini, 2002).

Expectations of Boomer Workers

Boomers think of themselves as "free agents" (Russell 2000). Free agents are radical individualists who advocate individual rights over family needs and the rights of the team or organization. Free agents demand and receive choices, opportunities and input into the rules of the games. They value speed for its competitive edge; leisure to offset the pressure of fast paced lifestyles; and money and material goods. Businesses met Boomers’ demands for a “personalized economy.” A personalized economy rewards
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innovation more than loyalty, instant action rather than analysis, and short-term rather than long term gains. The Boomer generation redefined maturity to mean opportunities to find oneself. Boomer employees bring many abilities to their work, including consensus, mentoring, and effective change.

Some research (Carlino, 1994) points out that there is a slight difference between the early years and the end of the Boomer era. In the beginning most of the Boomers were workaholics, but towards the end the Boomers are described as yearning for more simplicity and re-evaluating definitions of work and success. In the early 1960s their work attitudes may resemble more those of their Generation X peers than their workaholic first wave. However, just as they devalued the opinions and input of their parents and other adults, they may devalue the input and opinions on their Generation X managers and co-workers.

The Depression Era workers think that the Baby Boomers are egotistical. The Generation Xs think that they are workaholics and have a holier-than-thou attitude.

Work Expectations of Generation X Workers

Generation X employees are multi-tasking thinkers. They are able to do several things concurrently. They tend to be risk takers and entrepreneurial. They are resourceful, independent, and fond of technological advancements (Corsini, 2002). Generation Xers learned not to take anything for granted because the future is uncertain. They know that there is no such thing as job security. They have adapted a new employment bargain: if employers will meet their job demands, then they will do a good
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job while employed at the organization. They expect to attain and maintain career security and enhance their marketability through challenging jobs in which they are constantly learning and expect employer provided on-the-job training and opportunities to continue their formal education.

In some research (Atkinson, 2003) Generation X workers have been described as slackers who do not want to work and who are unwilling to play by traditional work rules. However, recent surveys show that they are willing to work but their work demands are different from the Boomers. They expect balance between work and leisure and they expect work to be fun. They demand a technologically up-to-date work environment, competent managers and co-workers and managers who coach and mentor rather than command and micromanage.

Generation Xers bring many strengths to work, and they also bring many challenges. They are realistic with practical approaches to problem solving. They are technically competent and comfortable with diversity, change and competition. However, their resistance for authority may result in inappropriate behaviors that reflect negatively upon managers and peers. They have unrealistic expectations for assuming leadership roles. Their focus on the present and the emphasis on practicality may result in resistance to learning from the past (Atkinson 2003).

The Depression Era employees view the Generation Xs as lazy and don’t follow the rules and don’t respect their elders. The Boomers refer to them as slackers who are always wasting time on the internet.

In summary, today’s multigenerational workforce brings different values and demands to work. An important challenge for today’s managers is to bring these
employees together in ways that provide fair opportunities for each individual to contribute his/her best and to achieve his/her personal goals in alignment with the organizational goals. They must create an environment in which employees are resources for each other.

**Literature on Managing Generational Diversity**

Generationally understanding managers value differences and view them as strengths. They try to create a generationally comfortable environment in which the environment has strong communication.

Communication is very important because assumptions and unintended criticism are the root cause of most generational frictions. Bringing them to the surface is the first step toward a resolution. Managers must address these generational differences. They must foster open discussions of what different groups are looking for in a job. They need to ask: what makes work rewarding and what organizational factors attract and retain employees from different generations? Discussing these differences redirects employees from complaining and negative behavior to focus on work efforts that usually benefit from different perspectives. Managers must make employees understand how different experiences influence beliefs and attitudes about matters such as job security, organization loyalty, and the view of the work manager (Zemke, Raines & Flipczak, 2000)

“Be a gardener, not a caretaker”. (Silver, 2001, p. 90) Translated from Latin, “Supervisor” means Overseer; the supervisor oversees and functions primarily as a maintenance person, babysitter, or caretaker. Gardener, when translated from ancient Greek, means “to help grow”. Overseers tend to nit-pick, micro-manage, and treat
subordinates with little respect or encouragement. Keeping the status quo is the guiding value of a caretaker manager. That’s because overseeing implies neatness to simply carry on what is, not planning for what should or could be.

“A Gardener looks for ways to stimulate growth; how to plant seeds of ideas; and how to prune and weed to prevent flowers from being choked off by the weeds of malcontent, apathy and disdain. Overseers will miss opportunities to stimulate the growth of their teams and achievement of goals. Gardeners strive to leave a legacy of bright, dedicated people who pull together to be a team that achieves goals” (Silver, 2001, p. 90).

Difference Planning validates and uses employees’ generational differences: experiences, skills, and points of views are regarded as generational strengths. ACORN is an acronym to describe generationally savvy managers as managers who accommodate employee differences, create workplace choice, operate from a theoretically sound, sophisticated management style, respect competence and initiative, and nourish retention (Zempke, Raines & Flipcak, 2000).

Generationally savvy managers accommodate employee differences by learning about and working with employees to address their specific needs. They create workplace choice by encouraging risk-taking that allows employees to focus on the customer and adding an element of humor into the work when possible. They nourish retention by internal postings and providing training and education that respect individual competence and initiative. These managers tend to be more direct. They give the big picture and provide feedback and recognition, then assume a flexible, situational leadership style. This flexibility has less dependency on power, and a willingness to flex policies. They use a generational outlook when matching individuals for teamwork
Depression Era and Baby Boomer employees may be motivated by pep talks; Generation Xers are more motivated when they can have fun while accomplishing specific goals.

Generation X managers need to focus on the contributions of the Depression Era and Baby Boomers and to use direct, personal communications.

Depression Era & Baby Boomers must understand Generation X’s characteristics in order to work effectively with their younger co-workers. They must acknowledge that motivation and commitment are not tied to loyalty to and from the organization. Generation Xers’ loyalty to work teams and professions does not necessarily lower their loyalty to their organizations. Employees can perform excellent work without a guarantee of long-term employment.

Leadership

As Generation Xs take over more positions of leadership there needs to be more research on how this group interacts with older workers, and their approach towards leadership in general. While leadership has been studied extensively, (e.g.: Burns, 1978; Bennis, 1990; Sashkin, 2003) what has not been looked at much is the clash of styles and resulting challenges of when younger managers are placed in leadership roles over older baby boomer or even post-war workers. The researcher examines what dimensions of leadership and managerial practices are most effective for these younger managers to employ in order to be respectful and also effective with their older workers and attempts to identify leadership style gaps.
Managers need to address employees’ needs by creating a balance between security earned through productivity and alignment with company goals and anxiety over the loss of job security. To create this balance there needs to be a set of business and leadership practices (Bardwick, 1999).

Bardwick (1999) explains that leaders need to create a sense of urgency for change and innovation in the work processes to assure that employees understand that it is in their best interest to change and grow. Every job must add value in this new economy. The organization and its jobs are all at risk if the firm is not productive. Leaders must communicate the core business and that the employees are aligned with the business goals, eliminating unnecessary processes, procedures and polices. Leaders must expect, encourage and foster collaboration built upon an understanding of and respect of generational differences.

“They read your behavior like a book of instructions” (Silver 2001 p. 104). As a manager, you communicate and reveal who you are, what you think and feel, and which priorities and expectations are important. Managers give a clear picture of their values, beliefs, attitudes, ideals, standards of conduct by their specific actions and behaviors. Employees are good at listening to the words that are used, tone of voice and watching body language. As they look and listen to what a manager says and does, they decide on how they will respond.

In every interaction, a manager gets to choose which specific behaviors he/she want to communicate. However, the manager doesn’t get to choose the consequences of that behavior. Employees will decide what actions and consequences they will provide based on and or the managerial behavior they receive. (Silver 2001 p. 104).
Transaction management occurs primarily in the short-term, with reciprocity among people and groups. In other words, “You do this for me and I’ll do that for you.” (Burke, 1992). Transactional issues typically focus on structure, systems, management practices, climate and performance.

Kouzes and Posner (1987) say that there is a lack of attention to the soul and spirit in organizations today. Most employees do not get much recognition for a job well done because most managers don’t give it. Believing that employees need to be appreciated for who they are and what they do, they recommend leadership strategies to encourage the heart. They group their strategies by categories of setting clear standards, expecting the best, paying attention, personalizing recognition, telling stories, celebrating, and setting the example.

Standards must be clearly stated and based upon values that are sensitive to the generations to bring out the best in each employee. Leaders must expect the best and believe in each employee’s ability to achieve their best. When leaders expect people to achieve, they usually do (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). Managers should ask employees what rewards they prefer to personalize recognition. Stories teach, and provide context, touch and move people. Celebrations act as transitions for changing circumstances, affiliation and reinforce values.

The number of Baby Boomers in the workforce is almost twice the size of Generation X. There are approximately 90 Million Baby Boomers and only about 40 million Generation Xs. Retiring Depression Era and Baby Boomers will leave a significant leadership gap in the upper levels of management for many organizations.
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Turnover rates are increasing which leads to reduced morale and efficiencies. Companies will experience the loss of knowledge and history. Depression Era and Baby Boomers will start to feel like they don’t fit in and will decide to either leave or not be on board with change. This then escalates the generational differences.

Technology will aggravate this situation further. The internet is rapidly changing the way companies do business and it will further divide the generational gap from those who are attempting to learn and those who have grown up with the computer as an everyday tool.

This situation is not going to go away, and it will only get worse if we don’t look at the implications more seriously. There has been much research on Leadership/Management but very few have touched on this seemingly growing generational divide. Many companies will need the collaboration of the different generations because they do see their work differently and diversity is a virtue. However, at the same time, different generations won’t become more alike which will cause anxiety and create tension in the workplace.

In this chapter the different styles of the generations were identified from a brief review of the literature, providing the conceptual framework of this study. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology used to conduct this qualitative research study.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the different dimensions of what happens when younger managers have older direct reports. The study sought to find practical suggestions that are satisfying and effective to both the younger bosses and the older worker.

Interview participants

This was a convenience sample of seven Generation X managers at the Democrat and Chronicle newspaper. The participants in the two focus groups consisted of 20 direct reports who are from the Baby Boomer and/or Depression Era generations. All participants were selected from the newspaper’s Human Resource Department. A consent letter was provided to all participants (Appendix A). The participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary. They were conducted face-to-face. The individual interviews lasted 30 minutes and the two focus groups lasted 50 minutes each. Survey questions and open dialogue were used in each session.

Data collection

One-on-one interviews was conducted with the Generation X managers. The researcher informed the department VPs via e-mail that members of their staff were selected by Human Resources to voluntarily participate. The managers were provided a copy of the questionnaire beforehand and the researcher took notes during the interviews. The questions that were asked were:
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1. How would you describe your leadership style?
   What has influenced it?

2. How would you describe your relationship with older employees?
   What are the points of friction/misunderstandings

3. In what kinds of situations do the different generation perspectives come into play? Ex. Team meetings, reviews etc.

4. How do you believe the older workers react to your Leadership style?
   Likes v Dislikes

5. What have you learned about being effective as a manager to older workers?

6. What advice would you offer younger bosses managing older workers?

7. What advice would you offer older workers with a younger boss?

8. What would make this relationship more effective for both younger bosses and older employees?

Two focus groups were held with the direct reports and the responses were recorded on a flipchart by one of the participants and these questions were asked:

1. How would you describe the Leadership style of a younger boss?

2. How would you describe the relationship with a younger boss?
   Points of friction/misunderstandings

3. What issues/situations are caused by different generations?

4. How do you believe that the younger manager reacts to the “older” work style?

5. What is your model of a good leader?
   Compare/contrast current situations
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6. What advice would you give Generation X bosses who manager older workers?
7. What have you learned about working for a younger boss?
8. What should be done to make this relationship more satisfying for both younger managers and older employees?

Data Analysis Procedures

The researcher compiled all feedback from the direct reports who attended the focus groups over a two-week time. The feedback was based on key points, summarizing the feedback that was consistent with both groups. This information was used to determine the top key themes.

The researcher compiled all feedback from the one-on-one interviews from the Generation X managers over a one-week time. This information was used to identify the leadership gaps between the two generations.

The findings are included in this document and a summary report will be given to the Democrat & Chronicle, VP Human Resources for their reference.

Limitations

Limitations are areas of the study that limit the generalize ability of the study’s findings. Only a single organization was studied. This eliminated the ability of the researcher to compare and contrast different leadership styles and generational differences in different locations.

A second limitation of the study was that there was no quantitative data collected. This means that there were no numerical facts to support the researcher’s results.
The third limitation was that the sample was not random, but selected by the HR group.

Delimitations

Delimitations form the basis for how the study was narrowed in the scope. A limited number of Generation X managers were interviewed. To gather a more in-depth look at different leadership styles within a generation, additional interviews would have enhanced the credibility.

A second delimitation of this study was the number of interviews and focus groups were limited. They were conducted over a two-week period. To gather a more comprehensive overview, additional interviews would have enhanced the credibility of the data.

A third delimitation was the limited timeframe of the project. Further interviewing was not practical for the researcher.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology for this research project. The researcher used Qualitative research and reviewed literature to lay the groundwork for this. The next chapter will show the findings.
Notes from Interviews

In this chapter are the notes from the individual Generation X manager interviews and the two focus groups that were held with direct reports. A summary of the responses to each question is documented (Figure 3).

Generation X (6 managers individually)

Responses from Generation X Managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Describe your Leadership style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relax, Balanced, Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coaching, Task focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>consistent, equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>open door, willing to listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>results driven, versatile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Open to ideas if it defended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Describe your relationship with older employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>no problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>good, respect their knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>seeks their advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>most are firm, but flexible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>What situations do different generation perspectives played</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>different perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>team meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>brainstorming sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>open format meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q4</th>
<th>How do you believe the older workers react to your Leadership style?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>supportive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>grow impatient without a show of enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>unsettling, too laid back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>general differences from predecessors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>calming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>non accusing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q5</th>
<th>What have you learned about being an effective manager to older workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>keep emotions out of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>give &amp; receive, mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>treat everyone equally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>patience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>What advice would you offer younger bosses managing older worker?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>be mindful of past experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>be respectful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>be patient during learning curves with technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>listen to the historical perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>patience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>What advice would you offer older workers with a younger boss?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Give them a chance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q8</th>
<th>What would make this relationship more satisfying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>remember that its all about people, not just prod</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RUNNING HEAD: Younger Bosses

2. Be open to new ways of doing things
3. Be open to learn new technology
4. Balance, don't get stuck in old ways
5. Be patient
6. Be supportive

Coaching where needed
Presently company has a good mix of employees
Help them to realize what they really want
Communications, not everyone prefers emails
Open communications, can't be afraid to speak

Two focus groups were held with the direct reports with open-ended questions.

Responses from Depression/Baby Boomer Direct Reports

Q1: Describe the Leadership Style of a younger boss
   1. hands off attitude, their way or no way
   2. know it all
   3. delegates work, just wants end results
   4. free roam, not looking over shoulder
   5. micro managing
   6. feeling of control of tasks and deadlines
   7. poor communicator
   8. lack of communicator
   9. too many meetings
  10. not mature

Q2: Describe the relationship with a younger boss
   1. open
   2. not comfortable
   3. respect
   4. reliable
   5. not flexible
   6. controlling
   7. friendly
   8. too friendly
   9. arms distance
  10. two way
     all business

Q3: What issues are caused by different generations?
   1. different work ethics
   2. attitudes
   3. unfair treatment
   4. poor assumptions
   5. new perspectives
   6. change
   7. new opportunities
   8. new knowledge
   9. difference in what is important
  10. closed minded

Q4: How do you believe that the younger manager reacts to older styles?
   1. There is always an easier way of doing things
   2. too rigid
   3. afraid to try something new
   4. workaholics
   5. too slow to react
   6. responsible
   7. dedicated
   8. should give younger employees a chance
   9. too set in their ways
  10. obsessive

Q5: What is your model of a good leader?
   1. open
   2. fair
   3. empowering
   4. commitment

Q6: What advice would you give Generation bosses who manage older workers?
   1. listen, we know what hasn't worked in past
   2. be compassionate
   3. understanding
   4. don't assume they need less work
5 Key Findings

The researcher analyzed the data, which suggests five Key Findings that surfaced from the interviews.

1<sup>st</sup> Key Finding

No Difference in leadership styles due to different generations/ages.

2<sup>nd</sup> Key Finding

Communications between generations is utilized differently

3<sup>rd</sup> Key Finding

Managing change

4<sup>th</sup> Key Finding

Technology between Generations
5th Key Finding

Diversity

In the next chapter, these key findings are discussed. As well, the importance of Leadership is reviewed; evidence in support of managing generational differences is offered; recommendations for the HRD practitioner as well as implications for future research on this topic are provided.
Chapter 5

Summary of Interviews

Conclusions and Recommendations

Through a review of related literature, this paper supports the argument that different generations do see their work differently and have their own way of approaching their jobs (Tracey; Nathan, 2002) Different generations also have different expectations of their managers and direct reports. Although there is much research and articles on leadership, (e.g.: Burns, 1978; Bennis, 1990; Saskin, 2003) more research needs to be done to address younger bosses managing older workers. However, being aware of these differences is one of the first steps in managing a generational gap.

This chapter will identify and discuss the five key findings from the study. Then the researcher will address whether there is a Leadership Gap and end the report by summarizing the study and give implications for HRD as well as thoughts on remaining unanswered questions.

As noted, the data suggests five Key findings.

1st Key Finding

No Difference in leadership styles due to different generations/ages.

2nd Key Finding

Communications between generations is utilized differently

3rd Key Finding

Managing Change

4th Key Finding
RUNNING HEAD: Younger Bosses

Technology between Generations

5th Key Finding

Diversity

Discussion of Key Finding #1

Results

Key Finding #1 is that different generations did not appear to have any difference on leadership styles. The researcher did identify 3 different Leadership styles, but found that they were situational and interchangeable among the managers.

Implication

The implication of Finding #1 to the participants was that many of us fall between two generations and therefore, so do our leadership styles. This could have a positive effect because as a leader you can identify with two out of the three generations. This makes understanding what style of leadership is needed at a critical capability for today's managers. Whether it is directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating (Blanchard, 1999) the different styles make it easier for the manager and for the direct reports to understand each other because there is a common understanding among the direct reports. Additionally, situational leadership allows the manager the flexibility to work with a diverse workgroup.

Relationship to Literature

Finding #1, supports the findings on Situational Leadership. In the Blanchard/Hershey model (Blanchard; &Hersey, 1969) a Situational Leader is one who can adopt different leadership styles depending on the situation. These models allows for us
to analyze the needs of the situation you are dealing with and adapt the appropriate leadership style. Effective leaders are able to move around the square depending on the situation.

Therefore this research supports the theory of situational leadership. Although there is no right style, we tend to have a strong preference (Blanchard, 1999)

Leadership Behavior

Blanchard and Hershey (1960) characterized leadership style in terms of the amount of direction and of support that the leader gives to his or her followers, and so created a simple grid:

- **Directing** Leaders define the roles and tasks of the 'follower', and supervise them closely. Decisions are made by the leader and announced, so communication is largely one-way.
- **Coaching** Leaders still define roles and tasks, but seeks ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader's prerogative, but communication is much more two-way.
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- **Supporting** Leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader facilitates and takes part in decisions, but control is with the follower.

- **Delegating** Leaders are still involved in decisions and problem solving, but control is with the follower. The follower decides when and how the leader will be involved.

**Development**

The right leadership style will depend on the direct report. Blanchard and Hershey (1960) extended their model to include the Development Level of the follower. By adopting the right style to the direct report’s development level, work gets done, and relationships are built up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level (D)</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D4</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Experienced at the job, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. May even be more skilled than the leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Experienced and capable, but may lack the confidence to go it alone, or the motivation to do it well / quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>May have some relevant skills, but won’t be able to do the job without help. The task or the situation may be new to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Generally lacking the specific skills required for the job in hand, and lacks any confidence and / or motivation to tackle it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6

**Researcher’s View**

The researcher went into this study believing that there was a difference in leadership styles depending on the generation that managers were in. The managers that were interviewed along with their direct reports verify this finding.

a) Depression Era   Directive

b) Baby Boomers   Collegial/Consensual

c) Generation X   Fair, Competent
This finding did not surprise the researcher. Situational Leadership reinforces that everyone is different and therefore, must be managed differently to achieve the end results. Other factors and variables that impact behavior would influence a manager’s decision-making process.

**Discussion of Key Finding #2**

*Results*

The 2nd finding was that Communications between generations is utilized differently. Communications skills help you to lead others. Efficient communication is not a one-way street. It involves both speaking and listening on everyone’s parts.

*Implication*

The implication on the part of the participants was that everyone seemed to have their own preferred way of communicating. This is clearly aggravated by the generational gap. The Depression Era and the Baby Boomers tend to lean towards face-to-face conversations and the use of the telephone. On the contrary, the Generation X managers preferred the quick use of email or even instant messaging. It became apparent during the interviews that this is not communicated to the direct reports. On occasion, the manager had sent an email and wondered why he never got a response. The Baby Boomer, who was the direct report, was more comfortable using the telephone and voicemail. Tensions then rose between the manager and the direct report. The misunderstanding could have been avoided had they both communicated their preferences.
Relationship to Literature

Zenger-Miller leadership training course (1996) is based on “The Basic Principles for a Collaborative Workplace.” These five principles serve as an excellent foundation upon which all generations can build their communication skills for Leadership. They are:

- Focus on the situation, issue or behavior, not on the person
- Maintain the self-confidence and self-esteem of others
- Maintain constructive relationships
- Take initiative to make things better
- Lead by example

The researcher agrees with this key finding because if you focus on the situation and not on differences like generations or any other bias, you will be a more effective leader.

Discussion of Key Finding #3

Results

The 3rd Key Finding is Managing Change. Participants from the managers and the direct reports stated that it was not so much a generational issue, however it seems to be more on the issue of Change in general. How change is managed is critical to the day-to-day operational functions in all departments. Leaders not only need to be able to relate to their employees but they need to be able to facilitate change in the working environment and communicate the process to explain what is happening and why. But more importantly, they need to communicate how the change will impact each employee.
Implications

The implication to the participants and the organization is that the newspaper business is perceived as a declining industry and this is a factor in attracting and retaining younger workers to the business while keeping the more experienced workforce. Older categories of jobs are shrinking, such as letter-type setters, plate-making and telemarketing or disappearing and new types of jobs are appearing, such as Online media, imaging centers and information technology.

The issue then becomes how to relate the skills of what the older employees had been doing to the challenges of facing change. In times of uncertainty or anxiety, generational differences create tension. In the newspaper business the nature of the work demands that they have collaboration from numerous departments and co-workers.

Relationship to the Literature

This key finding agrees with previous research that has been done (Burke, 1992) There are three planning phases for managing change. In planning change you first have to assure that a need for change is determined if not developed. Managing the change effort is essentially transition management and concerns from the past, communicating with direct reports about the change, involving people in implementation planning, organizing a transition management team, using leverages, providing feedback and creating symbols and language to help focus the effort. The final phase is to stabilize the change. Utilizing the reward system to reinforce the “new ways of doing things”

Values are difficult to change. Managers must identify the values and then provide ways for the new values to be incorporated within people’s behavior (Burke, 1992).
Researcher's View

The researcher agreed with this finding. Change is never easy. "Involvement leads to commitment" (Burke 1992). To have the change affective, you need to get people on board from the top down.

Discussion of Key Finding #4

Results

Due to an increase in technology, such as personal computers, the Internet and the use of pagers and cell phones, employees are working longer hours than ever before. Companies have the ability to keep their employees on the clock at all hours of the day and night. Therefore, employees have a difficult time leaving their work at the office (Verespej, Traynor, 1999; Gardyn, 2000; withers, 2001). For Baby Boomers and Depression Era employees this is a huge change on how companies are conducting business every day.

Implications for participants and organization

The technology is driving the wedge into the generational divide. Either you take the time to learn the technology or you get left behind; and because this is how the 21st century office is operating, many Baby Boomers who are not willing to learn and not ready to retire will be out of jobs. Jumping into the 21st century, the newspaper industry has relied on new, creative ideas focusing on technological advances from this Generation X. group.
Sims (2005) is an employment specialist at Lifespan and works in the Bridge Employment Services. She assists in matching older workers with employment opportunities. She instructs her clients on knowing and being able to access a computer for email. "Technology is key to matching them with jobs". They don't have to own their own computer, but should be willing to go to the library and use one for free.

**Relationship to Literature**

"There's a dramatic revolution taking place in the news business today...The future course of the news, including how we gather and consume news and information in society is being altered by technology-savvy young people"(Brown 2005). This shift in how young people access the news raises a question on how the flow of information will be in the years ahead. Young people don't want to rely on the morning paper at their doorstep; they would rather have it "on demand".

Jumping into the 21st century, the newspaper industry has relied on new, creative ideas focusing on technological advances from this Generation X. It has become apparent that news has to be produced specifically for the audiences of the future, and reach them in ways that they want it. In developing new products for this audience employees have to keep in mind that the old way of doing things is yesterday's news and tomorrow's news needs an approach focused on techniques that will take them outside of their comfort zones(Brown, 2005)

**Researcher's View**
The researcher agrees with this key finding. Customers will always want news, however, with technology, the main focus becomes how fast you can get it to consumers. Whatever source gets it to them “on demand” will be their primary source.

It is the researcher’s hope that people will get “snapshots” of news on different mediums, however for in depth material, they will continue to get the newspaper in print.

**Discussion on Key Finding #5**

**Results**

Finally, the fifth key finding is Diversity. The generational divide then becomes a diversity issue to appreciate ones differences and to learn to compromise in order to get the job done is the first step in managing the new generational workforce.

*Implications for participants and organization*

Managing diversity involves recognizing and respecting those differences and making them a powerful resource to achieve our business goals. Diversity has to do with respecting individual differences(Thomas 2004). When we make value judgments, they should not be based on judgments you have already made about a group a person may represent.

If social or cultural differences are leading to conflicts, disruptions and lower productivity, then diversity is a major business issue we must address(Gannett Corp, Inc. 2005).

There is a Diversity Committee at the Democrat & Chronicle. Their Mission statement is:

*The Diversity Committee goal is to create an environment that embraces diversity, promotes and enhances the understanding of each other's differences and eliminates barriers*
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that could prevent individuals from reaching their full potential. (Democrat & Chronicle, Intranet 2005).

Relationship to Literature

Diversity is more than equal employment opportunity or affirmative action. It is recognition of all the differences among workers and the variety of perspectives and values that are a part of the package (Gannett, 2005).

Researcher’s View

The researcher agrees with the final key finding. The researcher can’t imagine a world without diversity. It takes only a few seconds to realize how remarkably bland our human lives would be without the diversity that we take for granted. Diversity in the workplace means creating an environment where people from different backgrounds and lifestyles can work productively together. Diversity, like exercise, is good for us, but embracing it takes a lot of hard work.

Recommendations for the HRD Practitioner

The following are five recommendations to HRD practitioners in the future based on the results of this study.

1. Retention Strategy

An important role of HRD professionals is to create and implement a strategic retention process for both the older and younger workforce (Jordan-Evans & Kaye, 2000). They will need to show the organization the ramifications of loosing talented employees. Also, in response to the problem of turnover, many organizations are implementing new
retention plans and strategies. The goal of these strategies is to match the needs of the employee with the needs of the organization. The buddy system is one of the retention strategies that the newspaper is implementing in 2005 (Gannett handbook, 2005). They are pairing up “seasoned” employees with “fresher” co-workers in an attempt to bridge the generations together.

2. Diversity Training

This should begin by training all employees about different generations. It can be a challenge for the HRD professionals to help managers recognize the responsibility they have in this process and then give them the tools they need to bridge the generations together. It is important to hold managers accountable for building culture retention within their own departments (Jordan-Evans & Kaye, 2000). HRD can begin by assessing the present situation to get a better understanding if there is a generational gap. A newspaper in Colorado (Abe 2004) found out what they perceived as a generational gap, ended up being a sexism issue in the workplace. Several other newspapers, and other companies, have enlisted the help of their Diversity Committees to develop surveys and conduct Generational seminars.

3. Technology Awareness

Recognize that training is a way to help address this technology issue. Every employee should have a competency chart on what computer skills each one has and what is needed on his or her particular job assignment. If there is a gap, then they need to be made aware of either in-house training or off-site locations to assist them in obtaining the skills the company needs. In today’s economy, budgets are tight and there is usually
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little funding for training employees. If there is a tuition reimbursement plan, make sure all employees are made aware.

4. **Leadership Management**

Succession planning and career development plans should be an ongoing process. It ensures organizational capability and prepares future leaders for the organization and facilitates promotions and transfers from within the company. It also helps to identify training needs.

5. **Coaching and Empowerment**

Years ago, employees used to believe that it was the company’s responsibility to keep them interested in the job. In this age, employees must take responsibility for their own careers. Coaching is helping someone get the most out of learning. The main point of coaching is to help others know their goals, values and skills and to learn what it takes to be successful.

Empowering is when a manager knows when to let go of some of their responsibilities and pass it over to a direct report.
Implications for Future Research

Although the literature for this study has many suggestions for Leadership, it does not take into account when younger bosses are managing older employees. There is still a need for more research to be done about this topic. This study provided a basis for further research on the subject of when younger bosses manage older workers. Understanding different generations and learning how to adapt Leadership styles to each of them will become more important.

Future Research Questions

There is still more to learn about how these different generations blend in today’s workforce. The following are three questions that are avenues that remain unanswered.

One possible research question based on the current study is Does the generational leadership style differ if the younger manager is a male or female. The study could use non-profit verses profit organizations. The researcher could seek to find if communication styles and how they are evaluated affects how we are regarded and rewarded. (Tannen, 1994)

A second question could be Is it a generational gap or is it a preconceived bias; such as race? As based by the current study, the researcher could find out if fifty, African American verses fifty Americans Generation X leaders have different managing styles.

The third research question would be if education is equal, is it age discrimination? A poll could be taken with one hundred adult college graduate students, to compare salary ranges.
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These are some questions that still remain unanswered. Future studies should be conducted to learn more about the way companies will be handling this newest Leadership dilemma and what tools could be given to managers to bridge the manager/employee gap.

**Modifications of the Study**

To enhance future study, the researcher recommends that changes be made to the methodology portion that was used. The sample interviews would be more randomly selected. More Generation X subjects would be interviewed over a longer period of time. To gather a more in depth look at different leadership styles within a generation, additional interviews would have enhanced the credibility of the study. Different industries or companies to compare and contrast also would have enhanced the research results. The researcher also believes a quantitative data collection, would have helped to provide a more substantial support for the research.
Conclusion

Different generations have different expectations of their managers and direct reports. Although there is much research and articles on leadership, (e.g.: Burns, 1978; Bennis, 1990; Saskin, 2003) there is a need for more research to address younger bosses managing older workers in today’s workforce. As a result of this qualitative study, it has been proven that generational friction is a growing diversity issue. By implementing strategies that lead to employee growth and development through programs such as retention strategies, diversity training, technology awareness, leadership management and coaching and empowerment, it is imperative that we begin to understand, value and embrace each other’s uniqueness. Being aware of these differences is one of the first steps in managing a generational gap.

This project justifies the importance HRD principles within a changing newspaper industry. As the newspaper continues to find its place in this 21st century, the differences in the generations will cause anxiety and friction. Creating a workplace where these differences are embraced, will definitely increase employee satisfaction. It is imperative that each employee as well as each generation, feels that their contribution to the company matters.

For a last note, the researcher shares a quote from George Orwell (Eric Blair), a British author (1903-1950). “Each generation images itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it”.
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Appendix A
Appendix A – Thesis Proposal
My name is Janet Lovejoy. I am a graduate student at St. John Fisher College and am pursuing a Master of Science degree in Human Resource Development. As part of the program’s requirements, I am conducting a thesis study on the interaction of younger bosses managing older direct reports. The Democrat and Chronicle Newspaper, Inc. has agreed to sponsor my final project. Patricia Rissberger, Training Manager, has also agreed to be my mentor during the project.

In brief, the primary focus of this qualitative research is to explore the different dimensions and dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager in charge of older direct reports. The study will seek to find practical suggestions that help to make the relationship successful, satisfying and effective for both the younger bosses and the older workers.

Data will be collected through face-to-face interviews. The St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board considers the interviews research and has approved this project as posing minimal risks to the participants. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. All response data will be reviewed only by my advisor and me and will be kept in a secure place during the study. Upon the completion of the study, all respondent data will be shredded.

The findings of this research will be presented in a summary format at a community presentation on the St. John Fisher College Campus on April 23, 2005. As well, a summary report with recommendations will be prepared for the Democrat and Chronicle management and HR.

Your participation in the interview is voluntary and implies informed consent to be a part of this study. If you have additional questions, please contact me at 585-482-2017 or my project advisor, Dr. Seth Silver at 585-241-3038.

I appreciate your time and participation in this study. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Janet C. Lovejoy
Abstract

Baby Boomers, those born between 1946-1964, are staying in the workforce longer and are crashing into the “Generation Xs”, those born between 1965-1979. These two generations see the world differently and sometimes come into conflict.

No place is the clash between these two groups seen more than in Corporate America. Most baby boomers are now in late middle age. Due to greater financial strain, a limited retirement budget, and a youthful ethos, they are staying in the workplace longer than their parents did. And now, they are sharing desk space with the “up and coming”, Generation X group. Because of reorganization, mergers and acquisitions, and the growing importance of technology, we are now in a situation where managers in their thirties are overseeing teams of workers in their forties, fifties and even sixties. There is a need for a study that examines what dimensions of leadership and managerial practices are most effective for these younger managers to employ in order to be respectful and also effective with their older workers.
Description of Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to explore the different dimensions and dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager with older direct reports. The study will seek to find practical suggestions that are successful, satisfying and effective to both the younger bosses and the older workers.

Research Questions

The research questions that will be focused on for this study are:

1) What is the general leadership style of the Generation Xs?
2) How do older Boomers react to the X Leadership style?
3) What can Xs, Boomers and HRD professionals do to make leadership more effective for managing direct reports?

Significance of the Study

This study will be useful to the Generation X managers by uncovering many suggestions to become more effective in managing older direct reports. Boomers and war-time born employees will benefit by understanding more of the style of their younger managers and will provide practical suggestions on how to cope and adapt. This study will also be useful to HRD practitioners by providing ideas on how to manage this increasingly common workplace situation.
Younger Bosses

Methodology

As part of the Graduate program’s requirements, I am conducting a thesis study on the interaction of younger bosses managing older direct reports. The Democrat & Chronicle Newspaper, Inc. has agreed to sponsor my final project. Patricia Rissberger, Training Manager, has agreed to be my mentor during this project. In brief, the primary focus of this qualitative research is to explore the different dimensions and dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager in charge of older direct reports. The study will seek to find practical suggestions that help to make the relationship successful, satisfying and effective for both the younger bosses and the older workers.

This qualitative research paper will use different avenues to explore the differences between the two groups and the differences in their leadership styles.

Sample Subjects

There will be a convenience sample of 6-7 Generation X managers at the Democrat and Chronicle newspaper and about 20 direct reports who are from the Baby Boomer and/or War time generations. The Democrat & Chronicle’s training manager gave me possible contact names. Participation in the interviews is voluntary and implies informed consent to be a party of this study.

Data collection

Data will be collected through one-on-one interviews will be conducted with the Generation X managers and I will be taking notes. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. All response data will be reviewed only by my advisor and me and will be kept in a secure place during the study. Upon completion of the study, all respondent data will be shredded. The following questions will be asked of the managers.
Younger Bosses

Q’s for Gen X

1) How would you describe your leadership style?  
   a. What has influenced it?

2) How would you describe your relationship with older employees?  
   a. What are the points of friction/misunderstandings

3) In what kinds of situations do the different generation perspectives come into play? Ex. Team meetings, reviews

4) How do you believe the older workers react to your Leadership style?  
   a. Likes V Dislikes?

5) What have you learned about being effective as a manager to older workers?

6) What advice would you offer younger bosses managing older workers?

7) What advice would you offer older workers with a younger boss?

What kind of training/support, coaching should the company provide to make this more effective and satisfying for both younger bosses and older employees?

The following are questions that will be asked during a focus group with the direct reports.

Qs for Baby Boomer/Depression Era

1. How would you describe the Leadership style of a younger boss?

2. How would you describe the relationship with a younger boss?  
   a) points of friction/misunderstandings

3. What issues/situations are caused by different ages?

4. How do you believe that the younger manager reacts to the “older” work style?

5. What is your model of a good leader?  
   a) Compare/contrast current situations?

6. What advice would you give Generation X bosses who manage older  
   a) workers?
Younger Bosses

7. What have you learned about working for a younger boss?

Data Analysis

The findings of this research will be presented in a summary format at a community presentation on the St. John Fisher College Campus on April 23, 2005. As well, an anonymous summary report with recommendations will be prepared for the Democrat & Chronicle managers with a 180-degree feedback from direct reports and HR.
Appendix B - IRB Approval
April 7, 2005

Janet Lovejoy
25 Highwood Rd
Rochester, NY 14609

Dear Ms. Lovejoy:

Thank you for submitting your research proposal to the Institutional Review Board.

I am pleased to inform you that the Board has approved your Expedited Review project, “When Younger Bosses Mange Older Workers: What Leadership Style Works Best?”

Following federal guidelines, research related records should be maintained in a secure area for three years following the completion of the project at which time they may be destroyed.

Should you have any questions about this process or your responsibilities, please contact me at 385-8219 or by e-mail to ztaran@sjfc.edu, or if unable to reach me, please contact the Administrative Assistant to the IRB, Jamie Henry, at 385-8318, e-mail jhenry@sjfc.edu.

Sincerely,

Zinaida Taran, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

ZT:jlh

Copy: OAA IRB
IRB: Approve expedited.doc
Appendix C – Consent Cover Letter

My name is Janet Lovejoy. I have been employed here at the Democrat & Chronicle for @ 26 years. Currently I work in the Finance Department, as a Finance Analyst, at Canal Ponds. I am also a graduate student at St. John Fisher College and pursuing a Master of Science in Human Resource Development Degree. As part of the Graduate program’s requirements, I am conducting a thesis study on the interaction of younger bosses managing older direct reports. The Democrat and Chronicle Newspaper, Inc. has agreed to sponsor my final project. Patricia Rissberger, Training Manager, has agreed to be my mentor during the project.

In brief, the primary focus of this qualitative research is to explore the different dimensions and dynamics of what happens when there is a younger manager in charge of older direct reports. The study will seek to find practical suggestions that help to make the relationship successful, satisfying and effective for both the younger bosses and the older workers.

This qualitative research paper will use different avenues to explore the differences between the two groups and the differences in leadership styles. There will be a convenience sample of 6-7 Generation X managers at the Democrat and Chronicle Newspaper and about 20 direct reports who are from the Baby Boomer and/or War time generations. The St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board considers the
interviews research, and has approved this project as posing minimal risks to the participants.

Participation in the interviews is voluntary and implies informed consent to be a part of this study. Data will be collected through face-to-face interviews and I will be taking notes. All responses will be kept *strictly* confidential. All response data will be reviewed *only* by my advisor and me and will be kept in a secure place during the study. Upon the completion of the study, all respondent data will be shredded. If you have additional questions, please contact me at 585-482-2017 or my project advisor, Dr. Seth Silver at 585-241-3038.

The findings of this research will be presented in a summary format at a community presentation on the St. John Fisher College Campus on April 23, 2005. As well, a summary report with recommendations will be prepared for the Democrat and Chronicle Human Resources.

I appreciate your time and participation in this study. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,
Janet C. Lovejoy
Appendix D - Generation X Questionnaire

Janet Lovejoy
Q’s for Gen X

1. How would you describe your leadership style?
   a. What has influenced it?

2. How would you describe your relationship with older employees?
   a. What are the points of friction/misunderstandings

3. In what kinds of situations do the different generation perspectives come into play? Ex. Team meetings, reviews

4. How do you believe the older workers react to your Leadership style?
   a. Likes V Dislikes?

5. What have you learned about being effective as a manager to older workers?

6. What advice would you offer younger bosses managing older workers?

7. What advice would you offer older workers with a younger boss?

8. What would make this boss/employee relationship more satisfying?
Appendix E - Baby Boomer/Depression Era Questionnaire

Qs for Baby Boomer/Depression Era

1. How would you describe the Leadership style of a younger boss?

2. How would you describe the relationship with a younger boss?
   i. points of friction/misunderstandings

3. What issues/situations are caused by different ages?

4. How do you believe that the younger manager reacts to the “older” work style?

5. What is your model of a good leader?
   i. Compare/contrast current situations?

6. What advice would you give Generation X bosses who manage older workers?

7. What have you learned about working for a younger boss?

8. What would make this boss/employee relationship more satisfying?
When Younger Bosses Manage Older Employees,

What is the best Leadership Style?

Janet C. Lovejoy
GHRD Colloquium
April 23, 2005
St. John Fisher College
This Material Covers

- Why this topic is important
- The key events & experiences that formed each generation
- Each generations’ values & work expectations
- How generations view each other
- Is one way of Leadership better?
Why is this important?

- My staff is older than I am.....

- Is my boss out of High School yet?

- Different generations won’t become more alike as they age.
The Four Generational Groups

- Depression Era (born 1922-1943)
- Baby Boomers (born 1943-1964)
- Generation Xs (born 1965-1980)
- Generation Ys (born 1980-2000)
What defines a generation?

- A generation is a product of its times
  - What’s popular
  - What’s stylish
  - What’s important and what isn’t
  - What works and what doesn’t
The Depression Era
- Born 1922-1943
- The Great Depression
- WWII
- Pearl Harbor
- Atomic Bomb
- Korean War
The Baby Boomers

- Born 1943-1964
- Civil Rights
- Cold War
- Space
- Kennedy & ML King
- Assassinations
- Vietnam War
The Generation Xs

- Born 1965-1980
- Women's Rights
- Watergate
- Desert Storm
- Energy Crisis
- Challenger Disaster
- AIDS
Multi-Generations at Work

- These different generations working side by side can be a source of creative strength or a sources of stress and conflict
Depression Era
How Others View Them

- Boomers think they are dictatorial, rigid,

- Generation Xers think they are set in their ways, have all the money they will need to retire.
Baby Boomers
How Others View Them

- Depression Era think they are self-absorbed
- Generation Xers think they are self-righteous, and workaholics
Generation X
How Others View Them

- Depression Era think they don’t follow rules and lack respect
- Baby Boomers think they are slackers, rude, impatient and always surfing the internet.
Research

- Rochester Democrat and Chronicle Newspaper
- Interviewed 7 Generation X managers
- 2 Focus Groups with Direct Reports
Results

Is there a difference in Leadership styles?
“Each Generation images itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it.”

George Orwell (Eric Blair) 1903-1950