

GENERATIONS@WORK:

Implications on Culture, Technology and Organization in the U.S. Workplace

Date: Monday, October 5th
Time: 11:15AM – 12:30PM
Location: IST 113 (Cybertorium)

Presented By:
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Abstract:

With the impending retirement of Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) and the mass entrance of Gen Y's (born 1977-2000), special attention is being focused on implications associated with the enormity and rate of shifting demographics within the U.S. workplace. Such a focus on demographic changes in the workplace is particularly acute in the context of generational differences, where rapid changes in U.S. society over the past half century have exposed individuals to starkly different historical worlds. Implications of such a dramatic introduction of new attitudes, beliefs and behaviors into the workplace are cause for conflict and social change, including potential shifts in corporate culture, organization and management practices, and technology use.

To explore these generational differences in the U.S. workplace (with an emphasis on Gen Y) a team of researchers from the Workspace Futures group at Steelcase along with two Penn State researchers conducted a large multimodal and qualitatively-driven study during an 8 month period in 2008. In total, the research team conducted 162 onsite interviews, collectively observed over 500 hours of workplace activities, and created 298 collages with 149 participants. Data collection was conducted across 13 U.S. locations that consisted of 10 large national and international organizations. The industries represented include computer software and hardware, aerospace, finance and banking, office furniture, management consulting, and education.

The following presentation draws from these findings along with an extensive review of the literature (1) to introduce the topic of generations in the workplace, (2) to provide a characterization on each of the four generations currently in the workplace, as well as a comparison of their differences, and (3) to identify resulting implications for the future of work, workers and the workplace.

Bio:

Phillip Ayoub is a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Information Sciences and Technology at the Pennsylvania State University, where his research focuses on sociotechnical aspects of work, organization, and creativity. His dissertation will examine the dynamics of innovation in the human-information age; specifically, in what ways do social networks shape the emergence of ideas at the front-end of technology development. He has also worked at Boeing and Steelcase in their advanced research & product development groups, as well as a consultant to a number of international firms on various topics of management, innovation, and workplace organization and design. The following presentation is drawn from research on generational differences in the workplace that was conducted over the past year and a half with the WorkSpace Futures group (R&D) at Steelcase, Inc.