Is It Ethical?

John Wensink

ORG300 Applying Leadership Principles

Colorado State University-Global Campus

Dr. Augustine Amenyah

September 19, 2018

Is It Ethical

In the infographic “Generation Matters,” (JPCL, 2015) the author highlighted generational differences that regularly impact the communication, motivation, and even financial preferences of workers from different age groups. The author summarizes his position in his introduction:

While using stereotypes and generalizations can be very dangerous, some of the following may help you deal with each generation in your workforce. Ignoring the trends represented by generations of workers who grew up in differing environments can be a mistake. The time periods and attributes are just approximate guides, but some generalizations can be informative. (JPCL, 2015 p.1)

While the author is at first careful to point out the dangers of stereotyping, he then continues to cite generalizations he claims are typical of people of a certain age. In this critical analysis, I will argue that these kinds of prejudices are dangerous, unethical, and a hazard of morals. I believe that this kind of sandboxing ignores the unique complexities that make us human. If too much credit is given to these styles of thought, the result could range from inefficient leadership at best, to illegal ageism at worst.

**Leadership and Diversity**

When considering age diversity in the workplace, one is prudent to remember the benefits that come with a diverse workplace. Life experience plays a key factor. A common stereotype is that older employees’ value is bringing a lifetime’s worth of experience to the table. The converse is true in that younger employees have more recent educational experience. But is it true to say that a senior can not still study and that a young adult can not have wisdom? The job of leadership is to find groups of people whose strengths and weaknesses complement each other, regardless of the age of the individual wielding such talent. Imagine, if you will, that you have been tasked with a new project at work. It is your responsibility to choose a team from a pool of employees that you believe will accomplish your stated goal. Wouldn’t you pick the most qualified candidates regardless of their physical attributes? Age should be viewed no differently than gender, or ethnicity in this respect. A diverse team will compliment each other in ways that will lift everybody up.

**Change is the Only Constant**

The JPCL infographic divides the entire population of Earth, into four broad age categories, and provides generalities as to what preferences they are likely to have. Communication preferences are outlined, and when comparing the oldest (traditionalists), to the youngest (Gen Y) the author suggests that digital communication is only relevant if you were born after a certain date. When speaking of traditionalists, the author says “They may be slow to adapt to, or are uncomfortable with, technology. Tweeting, SMS, IM and blogs will mean little or nothing to them.” (JPCL, 2015) This very constraining statement summarizes my objection to the article. Does the author really not know any seniors on Facebook? I work with many older colleagues at an insurance company. Many times, it is the senior leadership driving the push to digital, as they see the changing trends in modern global society and the potential for benefit that they bring. Older employees are not naive in thinking that we are still living in the 1950’s. Quite the opposite, older leaders leadership have been successful because of their ability to adapt throughout many decades of change. They are the pros at adaptation. I honestly worry more about the younger generation and their ability to flex with changing times. With a diverse workplace, the entirety of the staff can benefit from each others experience and character.

**Human Factors**

What the author fails to emphasize is that on a level that is deeper than our physical bodies, we all have a unique perspective that is unlike anybody else’s on the planet. What makes a human a person is not defined by his or her physical characteristics. Rather, it is the sum of our successes and failures, and how that has shaped our decision-making process. When we forget about the people inside the body, we are opening ourselves up to linier, plastic thought processes. It is dangerous to exclude a person based on their perceived inability to grasp technology that is critical to a successful project. Excluding whole groups of people that could have vast knowledge and experience, only because they may need to spend an hour learning Skype is short-sighted and potentially illegal. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 is enforced by the Department of Labor. The law prohibits discrimination of people whore are age 40 or older in the workplace. It is a cornerstone of equal opportunity employment, and it exists to protect older employees from unfair labor practices. I am in Generation Y. I am comfortable dialing a telephone, I write insurance claims letters every single day, and send them in the mail. I do not agree with the author of Generation Matters, that it is important to consider a persons age when making work decisions because we are all humans capable of great change.

References

[Generation matters.](http://search.ebscohost.com.csuglobal.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=101631280&site=ehost-live) (2015). Journal of Protective Coatings and Linings, 32(3), 52.