CHAPTER 5

Workforce Forecasting and Planning

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# Suggested answers to quiz exercises

# Quiz 5.1: Implementation Barriers*[[1]](#endnote-1)*

The message is that Generation Y workers are not as different as we think they are. Research offers the following evidence. The first three items focus on work and career engagement, demand for instant feedback even when applying for a job, and are more techno savvy.

1. Generation Y people score the same on measures of career engagement as Gen-Xers and babyboomers.
2. They are willing to go through the long waits of a job application process.
3. While they might prefer on-line tools, so do other people.[[2]](#endnote-2)

The next questions focus on multi-tasking tendencies, being obsessed with work-life balance, being self-absorbed and more collegial.

1. They desire and ability to juggle several things at once seems to be the same when we compare those aged 25-29 with those aged 40-49.
2. While they might want work life balance, so does everyone else. They also score similarly on their desire for learning, self development and being stretched.
3. Researchers found no major differences on being self-absorbed or self-inflated views of themselves. They seem to be similar to other age groups.
4. Both groups place working in a collegial, friendly environment as important. [[3]](#endnote-3)

It is not clear whether older and younger workers in today's organizations are any different than those in the past. Perhaps the employee-employer contract has changed where organizations are no longer the guardian of an employee's career, as individuals find themselves involved in careers involving frequent changes, requiring them to be more adaptive.[[4]](#endnote-4) A person's career might be a more internally-directed career. It is “a career driven by the person, not the organization, and that will be reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and the environment change.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

The slight differences of Generation Y workers compared to other groups could be the same as differences between all generations. [[6]](#endnote-6) Our expectations of "who we are" are partially formed by our upbringing. Researchers suggest that younger generations are more connected to their parents than other generations. Their parents are their friends and advocates. As a result of this connection, they have learned to be more assertive, self-confident, independent, and questioning of authority. They will not suffer many of the same workplace abuses as previous generations did, such as tyrannical bosses, unsafe or unhealthy work conditions, or work that is demeaning and uninteresting. In an economy where workers are in greater demand, they can easily find another job.

# Quiz EL 4: What are the Top Human Capital Challenges?

Transfer your scores to the following table to show how you ranked these challenges. The Conference Board rankings are based on the frequency of HR managers identifying three key challenges. The rankings are in parentheses ( ).

Conference Board Ranking Your Ranking

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Challenges | Key challenges in the short term | Key challenges in the long term | Key challenges in the short term | Key challenges in the long term |
| 1. Leadership capability | 87(1) | 79(1) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 2.Employee engagement | 63(2) | 34(4) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 3.Skills shortage | 45(3) | 56(3) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 4. Capacity to respond to change | 44(4) | 30(6) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 5. Productivity improvement | 39(5) | 30(7) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 6. Aging workforce | 38(6) | 78(2) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 7. Structural change | 30(7) | 31(5) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 8. Labour cost containment | 28(8) | 20(11) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 9. Health benefit costs | 28(9) | 24(9) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 10. Capacity to innovate | 18(10) | 24(8) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 11. Learning capability | 14(11) | 14(12) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 12. Increasing diverse workforce | 13(12) | 21(10) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 13. Other | 10(13) | 7(14) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 14. Impact of technological change | 7 (14) | 12(13) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |
| 15. Disasters/threats | 21(15) | 1(15) | \_\_\_ | \_\_\_ |

The most serious challenge is leadership capacity, suggesting that the availability of good leaders is relatively thin in these respondent organizations.

A second challenge is the aging workforce (for the next 3-5 years). A high proportion of seasoned senior people are ready for retirement, as are people at other levels.

Employee engagement (for the next 12 – 18 months) is a key challenge. Keeping existing people engaged is an important challenge in motivating people and improving performance.

Review these rankings within your present context or organizations you are familiar with. These challenges might be more or less important at different times for different organizations.

1. Review your group ranking and compare them with the Conference Board rankings. The above results reflect the perception of HR managers during 2005. Are these results valid today? Why or Why not?

Note that skill shortage was ranked high (before 2008). Is this as true today?

These results reflect Conference Board research in Canada. What would be different in the U.K. EU, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, or other country?

2. If your rankings were significantly different, ask other groups if they share your views.

3. Note the general importance of the soft skills (leadership, engagement, skill shortages, and capacity to change). Do you agree?

4. Note the low importance of technological change, a challenge that was so dominant years ago. Do you agree?

5. Note that there does not seem to be significant differences in the importance of these challenges in the short and medium term. Do you agree?

6. Given the top three challenges, what strategies and objectives should organizations adopt in their workforce plans?

# References

1. House, R.J., Hanges, P.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W., & Gupta, V. (2004*) Culture, leadership, and organizations,* Thousand Oaks: Sage, 193. Ratings from 1-3 are low; 4 and 5 are medium: 6 and 7 are high. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Dube, R. (2008) Gen Y wants to work it out. *Globe and Mail*, April 14: 1-2; Moses, B. (2006) *Dish: Midlife women tell the truth about work, relationships, and the rest of life*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart; Moses, B. (2006) *Dish: Midlife women tell the truth about work, relationships, and the rest of life*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Moses, (2006) ibid.; Moses, B. (2008) Oh why the outcry about Gen Y. *Globe and Mail*, March 28 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Spenser, L., & Spenser, S. (1993) *Competence at work: Models for superior performance.* New York: John Wiley & Sons; Brousseau, K. R., Driver, M., Enroth, K.,& Larsson,R. (1996) Career pandemonium: Realigning organizations and individuals. *The Academy of Management Executive,* 10: 52-56. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Hall, D. T. (1996) The new Protean career: Psychological success and the path with a heart. In D. T. Hall & M. H. Mirvis (Eds.), *The career is dead - long live the career*. 1, 15 – 45. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Moses, (2008) op. cit.; Moses, (2006) op.cit. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)