Australia’s Changing Workplace: A Generational Perspective

A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Roslyn M. Sayers

School of Economics, Finance and Marketing
Business Portfolio

RMIT University
June 2006
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgment has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of the work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

........................................

Roslyn M. Sayers

30 June 2006
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of the Australian Government, in providing the Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) which contributed substantial funding enabling me to conduct this research and complete my doctorial studies. I would like to acknowledge RMIT University’s School of Economics, Finance & Marketing and the Research Development and Innovation Units for their support and funding, with special thank to Prof Tim Fry (Research Director) and Prof Tony Naughton (Head of School). To Prof Robert Brooks and Prof Sinclair Davidson for believing in 2003, that I would complete this research.

To my supervisory team, Dr Roslyn Russell (first supervisor), thank you for your continuing support and interest in my research. Your time and effort over the past three years are greatly appreciated and something I will never forget. To Dr Jenny Diggle (second supervisor), thank you for your support and encouragement over the past five years, through my Honours and PhD. I greatly appreciated all that you have done for me. To Prof Bruce Wilson (consultative supervisor) thank you for providing me with much needed advice and direction at a very difficult time in my data collection stage.

Special thanks and acknowledgement goes to the four Australian organisations and their employees who took part in this research. To the staff that assisted in coordinating the 75 employees and 15 executives, thank you for your assistance. Thank you to the participants and executives for your openness and frank insight into your world of work. Also a special thanks to the ten expert practitioners - Suzanne Jessup, Jo Mithen, Bernard Salt, Sarina Sorrenti, Ben Hudson, Angela Gamble, Peter Sheldrake, Katrina Hudson, Anna Razza and Garry Doyle. Your insights were invaluable and assisted greatly in moving this research into the second stage.

Thank you to Margaret Emery and Sean Walsh for proof reading my thesis prior to submission, your time and effort is greatly appreciated.
To Dr Paul Noone, thank you for keeping me on-track and for mentoring me through the “PhD process”. Thanks also to Steven Clavey, Dr Freya Bennett, and Drs Vicki and Kingsley Anthonisz for your support.

I wish to acknowledge a number of people who have assisted me in completing my PhD through their support and friendship over the past three years. In no particular order; Michael Gangemi, Charlotte Scarf, Paige Webster, Eloise Linklater, Catherine Hardie, Vanja Jocic, Emily Chapman, Stevan & Emily Quenette, Andrew Bode, Dr Carlos Rodriguez, Dr Heath Spong, Tristan Masters, Paul Jens, Bronwyn Coate, Alison King, Aruna Nair, David Southwick, Rosemary O’Connor, Pamela Hanney, Gillian Stainforth, Bradley Wilson, Kathleen Griffiths and Associate Prof. Michael Schwartz.

To my family, special thanks to my parents Martin and Mary for their love and support and constant encouragement, not just over the past three years, but my whole life. Thank you to my sisters Katrina and Annette and my brother Gerard for their love and support. To my nephew Jacob and niece Chelsea-Louise, thank you for providing me with so much love. You are both the future of the Australian workforce – watch out 2025! To my Nanna Theresa thank you for your love and encouragement. To my extended family, thank you for all your words of encouragement.

To my partner Colby, thank you for your love and support over the past five years and especially over the past three “PhD years” of our life together - persistence is the key!

To everyone who has showed interest in my research and who has encouraged me along the way, thank you - you’re kind words of support have been fantastic and what has kept me on track to completion.

Thanks Team!

Roslyn M. Sayers
4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN .......................................................................................................................... 68
  4.2.1 Triangulation of Data .................................................................................................................. 71
  4.2.2 Convergent Interviewing ......................................................................................................... 72
  4.2.3 Group Discussions ...................................................................................................................... 74
  4.2.4 Realist Interviews ...................................................................................................................... 74
4.3 THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS ............................................................................................... 75
4.4 STAGE ONE – ELITE INTERVIEWS .................................................................................................. 76
  4.4.1 Recruiting Elite Interviewees ..................................................................................................... 77
4.5 Stage Two – Group Discussion: Gen Y, Gen X and Baby Boomers ................................................ 78
4.6 Stage Three - Executive Interviews ................................................................................................. 82
4.7 MANAGEMENT OF DATA ............................................................................................................... 83
4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .......................................................................................................... 85
4.9 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH .............................................................................................. 87
4.10 CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................... 88

CHAPTER FIVE  TRENDS SHAPING THE AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACE ........................................... 89

5.0 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 89
5.1 TRENDS SHAPING AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES ........................................................................... 90
  5.1.1 Impacts of a Multigenerational Workforce ............................................................................. 91
  5.1.2 The Impact of the Changing Demographics ......................................................................... 93
  5.1.3 The Knowledge Economy ......................................................................................................... 96
  5.1.4 Increased Pace of Change ......................................................................................................... 97
  5.1.5 Technology ............................................................................................................................... 99
  5.1.6 Globalisation .......................................................................................................................... 100
  5.1.7 Casualisation .......................................................................................................................... 103
  5.1.8 Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Governance .................................................. 104
5.2 WORKFORCE ISSUES IN AUSTRALIAN ORGANISATIONS ....................................................... 106
  5.2.1 Changing Expectations, Demands and Values ....................................................................... 106
  5.2.2 Work/Life Balance ................................................................................................................... 108
  5.2.3 Employee Attraction, Engagement and Retention ................................................................. 111
  5.2.4 Training and Life–Long Learning ........................................................................................... 114
  5.2.5 Workforce Planning ................................................................................................................ 116
  5.2.6 Management and Leadership Styles ...................................................................................... 119
  5.2.7 Loyalty and Life-Long Employment ....................................................................................... 124
5.3 CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................................... 125

CHAPTER SIX  GENERATIONS AT WORK .............................................................................................. 128

6.0 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 128
6.1 OVERVIEW OF GENERATIONAL PARTICIPANTS .......................................................................... 129
6.2 WORK ENVIRONMENT .................................................................................................................... 132
6.3 SOCIAL IMPACTS ............................................................................................................................ 133
  6.3.1 Increase in Level of Education ................................................................................................. 133
  6.3.2 Casualisation ........................................................................................................................... 134
  6.3.3 Gender Balance ...................................................................................................................... 135
  6.3.4 Flexibility in Work Practices .................................................................................................. 136
  6.3.5 Attraction and Retaining the Australian Talent Pool ............................................................... 137
  6.3.6 Ageing Population ................................................................................................................... 137
6.4 IMPACT OF THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT ............................................................................ 138
  6.4.1 Globalisation .......................................................................................................................... 138
  6.4.2 Regulatory and Changing Structures ....................................................................................... 139
  6.4.3 The Work Contract ................................................................................................................ 140
6.5 TECHNOLOGY IMPACTS ................................................................................................................ 141
6.6 WORKING STYLES ........................................................................................................................ 142
  6.6.1 Relationships at Work ............................................................................................................ 143
  6.6.2 Work/Life Balance .................................................................................................................. 146
  6.6.3 Challenges Faced in the Workplace ....................................................................................... 150
  6.6.4 Communication at Work ....................................................................................................... 152
  6.6.5 Organisational Loyalty – Fact or Fiction? .............................................................................. 154
  6.6.6 Rewards .................................................................................................................................. 157
  6.6.7 Career Progression ............................................................................................................... 160
  6.6.8 Attraction ............................................................................................................................... 164
LIST OF TABLES, FIGURES & DIAGRAMS

TABLES
Table 1: Working Styles of the Different Generations ....................................................................................19
Table 2: Technologies to Remember................................................................................................................20
Table 3: Who is Generation X? ........................................................................................................................23
Table 4: What it Takes to Attract, Retain, and Engage Employees .................................................................53
Table 5: Data Collection Schedule...................................................................................................................76
Table 6: Details of the Elite Interviewees ........................................................................................................77
Table 7: Breakdown of the Number of Employee Participants ........................................................................81
Table 8: Gender Break-down of Participants .................................................................................................129
Table 9: Highest Level of Education ..............................................................................................................130
Table 10: Household Structure of Participants ............................................................................................130
Table 11: Country of Birth .............................................................................................................................131
Table 12: Classification of Current Position ..................................................................................................135
Table 13: Workforce Generational Segmentation .........................................................................................205

FIGURES
Figure 1: Generations in the Australian Workplace 2001 .................................................................................45

DIAGRAMS
Diagram 1: S.E.T Model...................................................................................................................................35
Diagram 2: Research Layers – Un-Tapping the Reality .........................................................................................70
Diagram 3: Triangulation of Data .......................................................................................................................72
Diagram 4: Convergent Interviewing ................................................................................................................73
Diagram 5: Documents and Coding used to Analysis Stage One .......................................................................84
Diagram 6: Documents and Coding used in Stage Two and Three .................................................................85
Diagram 7: Layers of Workplace Impacts .......................................................................................................142
Diagram 8: The S.E.T Flow on Effect on Generational Diversity ....................................................................203
Diagram 9: Employee Expectations .................................................................................................................209
AUSTRALIA’S CHANGING WORKPLACE:
A GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE
ABSTRACT

This research investigates generational differences in Australian workers. In particular it focuses on changing trends and influences in the workplace and how different generations view and deal with these changes. The study focuses on Baby Boomers (born 1945-1963), Generation X (born 1964-1977) and Generation Y (born 1978 - 1994) across four industry sectors: Corporate, Education, Government and Not for Profit.

The Australian workforce currently consists of four generations - all having distinct characteristics, working styles, needs and expectations. These differences pose challenges and opportunities to workforce management. The first step in managing the generations and their differences is to identify where the differences lie and to understand how best to cope with and exploit these differences. This research, in taking a generational cohort perspective towards analysing the modern workplace, seeks to explore how the different generations view the trends and influences that impact their work; and their attitudes towards technology, communication, work/life balance, organisational loyalty, attraction, engagement and retention.

The study uses a multi-phase qualitative approach and includes in-depth interviews with a range of Australian industry experts; discussion groups held with Gen Ys, Gen Xers and Baby Boomer employees, in four organisations across four industry sectors; and in-depth interviews with senior executives in the same four organisations.

This research will have significance to all organisations especially those that employ workers from across the generations and who are managing a multigenerational workforce. The findings will have practical application to organisational policy development in areas
such as, work/life balance, attraction, engagement and retention of employees, reward and recognition systems, technology in the workplace and training and development.

The study adds to the body of knowledge in workforce management, and in particular to the emerging body of knowledge on generational cohort analysis of the workplace in the Australian context. The study found significant generational differences that when harnessed and managed effectively, can contribute to the output and performance of the organisation as a whole.
Chapter One

A STORY OF THREE GENERATIONS

1.0 Introduction

Workplace harmony presents itself as key to success for managers and their staff. With four generations in the workplace and the constant pressures from globalisation and competition, Australian workplaces have become a unique test-bed for deciphering what elements come together to ensure growth and prosperity for both individuals and the organisation. Differing values, varying work styles and often opposing attitudes towards work amongst the generations within the workplace have seen the emergence of a quest for understanding exactly what is required to ensure the four generations in the workforce work together successfully. This thesis explores Australia’s changing workplace from a generational perspective, people’s attitudes towards the role of work in their lifestyle, the factors influencing the changes between the generations and the role organisations play, through policy making, in influencing the workplace. Understanding the changes between the generations will encourage better management of multigenerational employees in the workforce.
1.1 Background

We live in a world that is driven by technological innovation, surrounded by global trends, where competition is fierce, knowledge is “everything,” our work and life more complex. We are bombarded with concepts such as globalisation, internationalisation, mass customisation, specialization, technological advancements, innovation, the Internet, the knowledge-based economy, the borderless world, air travel, space travel, terrorism, outsourcing, downsizing, reengineering – to name a few. The world we live in and the work we undertake has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, as have our perceptions of how to deal with these changes.

One aspect of organisations that has remained constant is the value of human capital. ‘The most critical resource wears shoes and walks out the door around five o’clock everyday’ (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000 p. 34). Great organisations of the world develop people and equip them with skills and knowledge to be able to manage in this complex world. The people in the current workforce have greatly changed from years gone by with differing generational attitudes being present and influencing people’s views and attitudes of the society they live in.

The current day workplace consists of four generations all working together at the same time. This situation presents challenges and opportunities for organisations and this research highlights the needs and ambitions of employees and their managers in attempting to achieve a meaningful existence in their respective work lives.

Through analysing the preferences and working styles of the generations and the societal, environmental (economic, political and legal) and technological changes, we are better
able to understand the impact that these effects are currently having and will continue to have, on organisations.

1.2 Rationale for Undertaking this Research

The rationale for completing a generational assessment of workplace issues had its genesis in an Honours’ Research Project. That research assessed the organisation’s ability to bring about change, moving from a “nuts and bolts” engineering organisation to a more client centred, solution focused organisation. While undertaking this action research project within the organisation, many ideas and initiatives to develop the base finding were born. One such initiative was to bring about the change required through a “bottom up” approach and use the organisation’s young graduate recruits to filter the change message through the organisation. The project team saw this as a remarkable way in which to bring about change and to address the problems they faced in the communication “bottle neck” that existed in the organisation. The reality of the situation was somewhat different. When asked to assist in communicating the change through the organisation, the young graduates were less than willing to assist - stating that they would not be listened to by older workers and that they did not feel empowered to bring about change. It was later discovered that the organisation’s graduates were facing intergenerational differences in their teams and they felt that their older managers, team members and supervisors would not take kindly to recent graduates telling them how to manage the future direction and changes occurring in the organisation (Sayers 2002).

Subsequent to that project, it became apparent that there was a need for further research to assist in understanding the current generational climate shaping the Australian workforce. There are a number of factors impacting on the modern workplace including: a new generation of workers entering the workforce, the intergenerational conflict that is apparent
with four generations now working together, the increased pace of change, the pressure to retain employees, a changing definition of loyalty, the decline in the number of new entrants in the workplace, and a large number of workers exiting the workforce through retirement.

This research identifies how generational differences impact on preferred working styles of modern workers and will provide insight for managers trying to get the best from their employees using generational based cohort analysis. In doing so, the research identifies the driving societal, environmental and technological forces behind what has shaped the current workplace and how these factors have changed and influenced the way that people from different generations work.

1.3 Research Design

The primary research question of this research is:

How do generational differences impact on preferred working styles of the modern worker?

The secondary research questions are:

- How have the effects of societal, environmental and technological change impacted on the generations at work? and
- What are the implications of generational change for organisations and how can managers’ best mitigate the negative impacts and exploit the positive differences?
1.4 Approach

This research is qualitative in nature and employs a multi-stage approach. Stage one of this research consisted of ten in-depth interviews with a cross-section of expert practitioners involved in the area of Human Resource Management (HRM), Leadership, Strategy, and Demography (the “Elite” interviews). Stage two of the research involved undertaking research in four large Australian organisations across four different sectors comprising of the corporate sector, the education sector, the government sector and the not-for-profit sector (the “generational group” interviews). A total of 13 discussion groups were held across the four organisations, three in each organisation and one pilot discussion group. Groups were segregated on the basis of generational cohort defined by year of birth. In stage three of the data collection, fifteen executives from the four organisations participated in semi-structured interviews (the “executive” interviews) to assist in triangulating the data collected from the expert practitioners and the generation groups in stages one and two respectively.

1.5 Scope of the Research

Stage one of the research was conducted with expert practitioners, with Australia-wide experiences, but who were primarily based in Victoria. Stage two of the research was undertaken with organisations whose head office was located in Victoria. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, with ten expert practitioners and 75 employees participating in discussion groups from four organisations. Fifteen executives were also interviewed from the same four organisations. All organisations employed over 500 people. In all, 100 participants took part in this study with data being collected between October 2003 and June 2005.
This research investigates three of the four generations currently in the workplace. This is due to a large portion of the Mature generation - the oldest generation in the workforce either already being in retirement or set to retire in the next five years. The generations being defined and focused on in this research are the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y who will dominate the workplace over the next ten years.

1.5.1 Victoria at a Glance

Victoria has a strong and diverse economy that experienced approximately an 18% growth from 2000 – 2004. Victoria’s economy is based on a wide range of industries from manufacturing to biotechnology. However, the high growth sectors that have shown particular strength in the Victorian economy have included financial services, construction, retail trade, health services, business services and education. Victoria exports around $26 billion of goods and services primarily from the food and manufacturing industries, tourism and education (Business Victoria, 2006).

Victoria’s population grew approximately 6% from 2000 to 2004, on par with national growth figures. Half of this population growth came from overseas migration, contributing to Victoria’s already large multicultural population. Victoria has a highly skilled workforce, with the number of managers and other professionals increasing by over 20% from 2000 to 2004. Employment also rose to approximately 12%, or 260,000 jobs, from 2000 to 2004 reducing Victoria’s unemployment rate to approximately 5% (Business Victoria, 2006).

However, Victoria is in the midst of a changing demographic composition with low future fertility rates projected and more women delaying starting a family. At the other end of the scale, the large population of Baby Boomers are retiring and there is an increase in the
ageing population. All these factors are set to impact the Victorian landscape to produce a radically different population and workforce in 2031 to that of 2004. It is projected that by 2031 the Victorian population will increase by 1.4 million people with the majority being aged over 40 years (VIF, 2006).

1.6 Significance of the Research

Currently, the media and industry journals are recognising the need to understand the differences across generations in the workplace, but a limited number of publications exist in the academic literature to date, especially from an Australian perspective.

…How to manage intergenerational issues in the workplace …is less rigorous in its approach and generates copious amounts of literature in management magazines and books extolling the virtues of older workers and recommending various “myth busting” activities intended to destroy the stereotypes of old age (Teh 2002 p. 55).

While there is a growing body of popular literature on the different characteristics of the generational cohort, there is little substantiated research on generations within the Australian workforce that explores the issues in great depth. There is an urgent need in organisations across Australia to understand the expectations of their employees from across the generations. Organisational strategies need to be implemented to address the external and internal factors changing the nature of work.

The dynamics of the Australian workplace is changing. In 2001 it was reported that Australia had around 175,000 new entrants to the labour market in the average year. For the entire decade of 2020 to 2030 it is predicted that Australia will have only 125,000 new entrants in to its workforce (Access Economics 2001).
This illustrates the growing concern of labour shortages and increased competition in the labour market as organisations vie for talent in a shrinking labour pool.

There is also the significant issue of the ageing population influencing the shortage of skilled labour, along with an increasingly mobile workforce entering the labour market. The dynamics of the workplace have changed and will continue to change. Organisations that are pro-active in managing these changing dynamics will be the employers of choice in the future.

**1.7 Structure of the Thesis**

The literature review is presented in two chapters - Chapter Two and Chapter Three. Chapter Two is a review of the generational literature including cohort analysis. This chapter identifies recent research on generations at work and outlines the stereotypes and generalisations of three of the generations that currently dominate the workplace - Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y.

Chapter Three is a macro perspective of the literature on the work environment which then advances to discuss the micro perspective of the work environment and issues and factors affecting the working styles and preferences of Australian workers.

Chapter Four explains the research methodology approach and framework and includes details of the rationale and procedures for undertaking the multimodal qualitative techniques and the use of triangulation.
Chapter Five discusses the results from stage one of this research – the Elite interviews, which assisted with the development of the key themes used in stage two of the data collection.

Chapter Six presents the findings from the 13 discussion groups with participants from three generational cohorts across four organisations.

Chapter Seven discusses the data collected from the 15 interviews conducted with executives and senior managers from the four participating organisations in this study. This chapter draws on the generational management issues faced by the executives and illustrates the work environment from the organisational perspective.

Chapter Eight, in drawing together the findings, discusses the implications of a multigenerational workforce for organisations, management and employees. Chapter Nine provides the conclusion of this research and gives an indication of the way forward for future investigations.
Chapter Two

UNDERSTANDING GENERATIONS

2.0 Introduction

Generational cohort theory is based on the segmentation of a population by age or experience with the intent of identifying experiences, attitudes and preferences that cohort members have in common due to their shared life experiences (Meredith, Schewe & Hiam 2002; Ryder 1965; Schuman & Scott 1989). This chapter explores the complex nature of generational cohorts, the factors shaping a cohort, and how these factors impact on the work environment. The literature regarding generations is discussed, including a number of recent studies on generations and the workplace. Various events and phenomena have occurred which influence generations and these shared experiences have shaped their desired working styles and preferences. The generational cohort literature is multidisciplinary and reflects the broad exploratory nature of this research. The literature encapsulates the diversity and widespread interest in generational cohorts, their characteristics, values and attitudes. Most literature referring to generations and cohort analysis emanates from the United States of America (USA).
2.1 The Concept of Generational Cohorts

A cohort is a group of people who have lived through similar experiences and time, causing them to develop similar values, perceptions, ideas and attitudes. In 1928 the German philosopher and sociologist Karl Mannheim first raised the notion of “cohorts” noting that groups of people are bound together by historical events. Ryder (1965) defines a cohort as:

…the aggregate of individuals (within some populations’ definition) who experience the same event within the same time interval… suggesting that …each cohort has a distinctive composition and character, reflecting the circumstances of the unique origination and history (p. 845).

The concept of a “generation” has been viewed differently from a number of disciplines hence a number of varying perspectives have evolved.

There are three dominant perspectives: sociological; biological and cultural. The sociological perspective of a generation is centred on the circumstances in which people grew up being a part of - where they are divided according to their place within the family and where they fit into a generational structure of first generation, second generation, or third generation (Teh 2002). The biological approach is thought to be the simplest and is the one which observes only the years of birth or the biological age of the person to determine the cohort to which they belong. Teh (2002) believes that the ‘popularity of the biological approach is related to its convenience for age related studies where populations can be neatly configured according to the needs of the research’ (p. 18). The cultural perspective comprises generational cohorts being formed through formative years, that are shaped by major events and common life experiences (Applebaum, Serena & Shapiro 2004; Hankin 2005; Mackay 1997; Meredith et al. 2002; Ryder 1965; Teh 2002; Yu & Miller 2005; Zemke, Raines & Filipczak 2000). As a result of these events, generations
manifest similarities in their values, attitudes and preferences towards work. Mackay (1997) states that ‘new experiences create new attitudes and values’ (p. 181), within a cohort, citing new technology as having changed attitudes to work, leisure, money and shopping. This study uses a mix of biological and cultural perspectives to provide a greater understanding of generations in the Australian workforce.

2.1.1 The Value of Generational Cohorts

Modern cohort segmentation is a tool used in many disciplines including sociology, psychology and demography. In business it has historically been a tool used by marketers and other demographers when analysing market segments to target consumer groups for specific brand or product placement, and in the targeting of the preferred consumer group.

Smith and Clurman (1997) refer to members of a generation as being linked through their shared experiences, sensory perceptions, visual memories and technology. Because of these shared experiences, cohorts develop and retain similar values and life skills. This affects everything from the way they save money, relationships and sex, dietary choices, the purchase of a new car and their work habits. Ryder (1965) suggests that:

…the intimate relationship of education and social change is properly emphasized in programs of social and economic development. It is the modern world’s cutting edge. Changes through time in the proportions completing various stages of education are familiar trends in the modern life which provide an indelible differentiation of cohort character and behaviour (p. 846).

The literature (Howe & Strauss 2000; Meredith et al. 2002; Ryder 1965; Smola & Sutton 2002; Yu & Miller 2005) suggests that cohorts are generally viewed as having shared life experiences which have been formed in their formative years from early childhood through
to early adulthood. They are a group of people who have experienced similar events and changes, who transport similar values, attitudes and expectations into their adult lives. As people adapt and change to suit their surrounding environment, and engage in the workplace with other like-minded people who have also come of age in similar times, distinguishing features between generations become evident. It is the nature of human beings to be attracted to and to form bonds with those to whom we feel a similarity. Hence, generational cohorts are formed and these differences are noted.

Generational differences have been recognised in many societies, as far back as the 8th century BC. It is believed the Greek poet Hesiod wrote:

I see no hope for the future of our people if they are dependent on frivolous youth of today, for certainly all youth are reckless beyond words. When I was young, we were taught to be discreet and respectful of elders, but the present youth are exceedingly wise [disrespectful] and impatient of restraint - Hesiod 8th Century BC¹.

It is important to note however, that generational analysis (looking at the world with only a generational lens) is only one perspective. People are complex and using a generational lens only does not take into account psychological, socio-demographic, or many cultural factors that also are important to understanding individuals. Cole, Smith and Lucas (2002) warn against generalising about generations, as if gender, culture and personal preference don’t exist. Studies focusing on generations in the workplace, are doing so, and are

attempting to illuminate common characteristics of particular cohorts, but should not attempt to over-ride or replace other methods of analysing organisational behaviour.

Researchers who have defined the generations by the year in which they were born, and have therefore set in place a feeling of homogeneity about a cohort, base this classification on a flawed perception that age drives similar opinion. Even though the generations have been exposed to the same global events and social trends, differences do exist within the generational cohorts. Differences in cultural up-bringing, religion, socio-economic circumstances, family structures, and individual personality traits all impact on members of the generation and their perceptions of what is important (Meredith et al. 2002; Ryder 1965).

Meredith, et al. (2002) notes that ‘…generalizations about cohorts never hold for all members of a cohort. Inherent aspects of personality and formative experiences that shape personality also drive a person’s character. …within any group of people of the same age, you will find some people who are not typical of their cohort’ (p. 240).

Meredith, et al. (2002) identifies that generational cohorts exist due to the sharing of “defining moments”. External events such as economic cycles, wars, political ideologies, technological and social change act to redefine social values, attitudes and work performance. The redefinition of these values and attitudes has caused the differences we see from generation to generation. Whilst most people throughout their lives experience the same milestones such as: a first bike, school years, entering the workforce and retirement, their social, political, technological and economic environment can differ dramatically. ‘…rarely are changes so localized in either age or time that their burden falls
exclusively on the shoulders of one cohort’ (Ryder 1965, p. 847) in any one particular
country or region.

There is a significant body of research about the differences between the sexes, differences
between cultures (Hofstede 1980, 1991) and differences between generations (Applebaum,
Serena & Shapiro 2004; Burke 1994; Foot 2001; Howe & Strauss 2000; Inglehart & Baker
2001; Meredith, et al. 2002; Miller, P. & Yu 2003; Murphy 2000; Ryder 1965; Salopek
(1996) states that ‘these generational differences are no different from racial or gender
differences, and should be treated the same – as a diversity issue’ (p. 88). Flynn (1996)
also suggests that the more time a company’s leadership team discusses and airs its issues
between older and younger employees, the ‘less likely grudges against work styles will
fester’ (p. 88). Just as there are differences in gender and cultures there are also
similarities. Just as gender literature attempts to understand the sexes so they can live and
work more harmoniously together, generational literature for the most part addresses the
differences and identifies the similarities in order for people from all generations to work
and live together more harmoniously and effectively.

In recognising that generational cohort analysis on its own may not provide the complete
solution to workplace harmony, this study identifies the benefits for the workplace from
such analysis. The literature on generations has identified these differences and the
cohorts and has assigned labels. The term “Baby Boomer” – defined in this study as those
born between 1945 and 1963, can be traced back to 1961 to the American Economic
Review, had an article by Richard Easterlin titled “The American Baby Boomer in
Historical Perspective.” The label of “Baby Boomer” remained when identifying the
generation born in the 15 - 20 years following World War II (Ryder 1965 p. 847).
The label of Generation X was first attributed by author Douglas Coupland in 1991, in his book titled “Generation X: tale of an accelerated culture” (Coupland 1991; Salt 2004) and is used to describe those succeeding Baby Boomers born 1964 to 1977.

The label of Generation Y was assigned to the generation succeeding Generation X, mainly out of lack of originality in assigning a more appropriate and creative label. Many other labels have been given to this group including: Generation Why, the Millennials, Generation Tech, Generation Next, Generation.com, Generation 2000, Echo Booms, Boomer Babies, nGen, the Nintendo generation, Generation XX, Netizens, IGeneration, Gamers and Nexters (Applebaum, Serena & Shapiro 2004; Burke 1994; Cole, Smith & Lucas 2002; Harris 2005; Howe & Strauss 2000; Meredith et al. 2002; Salt 2004; Sheahan 2005; Sujansky 2002; Walsh 2003; Wolburg & Pokrywcynski 2001; Zemke et al. 2000).

While different authors have labelled these generations differently and varied the biological birth date boundaries of the generations, the definitions and their trademark stereotype-life events all remain similar across the literature.

It has been suggested by some researchers that four cohorts are insufficient to depict the changes between the groups and that the cohorts should be divided into seven groups. Meredith et al. (2002) suggest that the demographical differences of the generational cohorts would be better reflected by seven groups: the Depression Era, World War II Era, Post War, Leading-Edge Boomer, Trailing-Edge Boomer, Gen-Xer and N-Gen. Meredith et al. (2002) labelled these groups based on cycles. The notion of cohorts moving in cycles is consistent with the research of Strauss and Howe (2000):

[they] hypothesize that a predictable cycle of social change repeats itself every 80 years or so: A crisis period is followed by a high, which is then followed by
an awakening, then an unravelling, leading to another crisis. These cycles, in
turn, play a major role in forming the values that generational cohorts adopt as
they come of age (Meredith et al. 2002, p. 239).

2.1.2 The Generations

This research focuses on three of the four generations depicted by years of birth – Baby
Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y. Table 1 summarises the four generations
currently in the workforce and gives examples of some of the generalised work values that
have been attached to these four generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Working Styles of the Different Generations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from (Meredith et al. 2002; Smith & Clurman 1997; Zemke et al. 2000)

A major factor influencing the generations is the changes in technology in each
generational era. Table 2 summarises the distinction in technology advancements between
the four generational groups.
Table 2: Technologies to Remember

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matures</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Xers</th>
<th>Ys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slide-rule</td>
<td>Calculator</td>
<td>Desktop computer</td>
<td>Graphics calculator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimeographing</td>
<td>Photocopying</td>
<td>Scanning</td>
<td>Bluetooth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>DOS to Windows</td>
<td>Linux/ DVD / USB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switchboard</td>
<td>Touch-tone phones</td>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>Instant messaging/ SMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party lines</td>
<td>Conference calls</td>
<td>Video Conferencing</td>
<td>VoIP &amp; web cam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Post</td>
<td>Telex</td>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>Email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tape reel to reel</td>
<td>Cassettes</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td>MP3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from (Smith & Clurman 1997, p. 123)

What is interesting to note from Table 2 is the significance of technology alone on today’s workplace. The influence of technological innovation has changed the way work is done and how people interact with each other in and out of the work environment. The impact technology has had on communication across the generations can be noted, from traditional post to telex, Facsimiles and now email, as well as the advancements that have occurred in the replication of documents from photocopying to the present day ability to beam a document via Bluetooth.

2.2 Characteristics of the Generations

In focusing on only investigating three of the four generations in the workplace currently, this research highlights the relevance to the near future of the workplace culture. The Matures, the older of the four generations are either in retirement or near to retiring in the coming five years. The generations being defined and focused on in this research, the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, are those who will be in the workforce for the next ten years.
2.2.1 Baby Boomer Generation

The Baby Boomer generation is defined as those born between 1945 at the end of WWII to somewhere between 1960 and 1966 (Hicks & Hicks 1999; Karp, Fuller & Sirias 2002; 2002; Ryder 1965; Salt 2004; Smith & Clurman 1997; Talgan 2000; Zemke et al. 2000). The boom in population after WWII saw much of the industrialised world populate rapidly, as well as an increase in the standard of living brought about by economic boom, hence the Baby Boomer generation - babies born during the economic boom (Foot 2001). Ryder (1965) one of the earliest to comment on the Baby Boomers cohort noted that:

…today the cohorts entering adulthood are much larger than that of their predecessors. In consequence, they were raised in crowded housing, crammed together in schools, and are now threatening to be a glut on the labor market. Perhaps they will have to delay marriage, because of too few jobs or homes and have fewer children (Ryder 1965 p. 845).

This is an interesting perspective from 40 years ago and indicates how the mature generation viewed this large group of young people advancing upon them in the workplace and threatening to be a “glut” on the labour market. Similar comments are now made about this age group heading into retirement and exiting the workforce.

The Baby Boomer generation grew up in prosperous times in the booming 1950s and entered the workforce in the 1960s and 1970s riding the “long boom” after WWII. The 1980s proved to be particularly fruitful for some of the Boomer generation due to prosperous economic times. Hankin (2005) states that, ‘the Boomers gave us hippies, communes, and free love. They also gave us the 80-hour week’ (p. 51). Mackay (1997) views the Baby Boomer generation in Australia as:

…a generation obsessed with the idea that ‘we’re not here for a long time, we’re here for a good time’. This is a generation who have become famous for
their need of instant gratification: the generation who believe that, whatever they want, they had better have it now (Mackay 1997, p. 62).

If this is how the Matures viewed the Baby Boomers it is little wonder that Baby Boomers children (Generation X and Y) have grown up with a stronger desire for instant gratification, and live in a world which facilitates their every need through the increases in technology and mass consumerism.

Baby Boomers in their workplace are generally loyal to the firm, but with retrenchments and redundancies that accompanied corporate downsizing in the 1990s, this loyalty has been tested. However, this is a generation of workers who now hold the majority of decision-making power in most organisations and the sheer size of this generation is far greater than any other generation in the workforce.

The Baby Boomers are now the ageing workforce, with the oldest of the generation already in early retirement or approaching retirement in the coming ten to 15 years. Due to the size of this group, their departure from the workforce both by retrenchments or retirement will continue to affect the skilled labour pool as well as impacting the organisation’s stores of tacit knowledge.

2.2.2 Generation X

Generation X is broadly defined as those born in the early 1960s through to the early 1980s. Table 3 illustrates the differences researchers make between the birth year boundaries of Generation X.
Table 3: Who is Generation X?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Date published</th>
<th>Year boundary Xers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smith &amp; Clurman</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1960 to 1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hicks &amp; Hicks</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1965 to 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmon, Webster &amp; Weyenber</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1965 to 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulgan</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1963 to 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zemke, Raines and Filipczak</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1961 to 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karp, Fuller &amp; Sirias</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1963 to 1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meredith, Schewe, &amp; Hiam,</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1966 to 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yu &amp; Miller</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1965 to 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applebaum, Serena &amp; Shapiro</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1961 to 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayers</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1964 to 1977</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The defining moments and shared life experiences that have shaped Generation X are focused on the technology boom with the introduction of personal computers, mobile phones, faxes, email, and the Internet. The growth in the size of global companies and the increase in a corporation’s global reach have also had an enormous impact on the characteristics of Generation X in the workplace. In Australia the 1990s recession we “had to have” led to high unemployment throughout the 1990s. In the new millennium there has been a continuation of mergers, downsizing and collapses of large corporations both in Australia and globally. The Xers have grown up in a period of domestic and global uncertainty.

Generation X has also experienced an increase in drug abuse and an awareness of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases within society. Other key societal events include an escalating rate of divorce in their parents’ generations influencing social structures, the rise in the number of dual income families and of single parent households.

Generation X in the past has been labelled the “new pragmatists” and the perception that Gen X is full of twenty-some-things [now thirty-some-things] that are not interested in anything besides Music Television (MTV). Smith and Clurman (1997) suggest Gen X
were a generation of slackers, whiners and yuffies (young urban failures) with little expectations beyond “Mc Jobs” – being ‘low-pay, low-prestige, low-benefit, no future jobs in the service industry’ (Coupland 1991 p. 3). This negative perception is shifting as the Generation X cohort ages. Hornblower (1997) suggests that once upon a time, ‘Gen X were classed as slackers, cynics, and drifters,’ however lately Gen Xers are seen prowling tirelessly for a better deal, a better opportunity, flocking to technology start-ups, founding small businesses, pursuing education, making waves on the Net. Gen Xers are now seen as “X-citing, X-igent, X-pansive” (p. 58). These more positive images present Xers’ as individualistic, entrepreneurial, flexible, and socially responsible, embracing diversity and valuing a balance between family life, work life and leisure - a far cry from the description once given to Xers in the 1990s. More recent studies still refer to Xers as ’…those quirky kids who have turned the workplace upside down in recent years’ (Meredith et al. 2002 p. 121).

Cetron and Davies (2005b) believe that Gen X should be re-named ‘Generation E’ to reflect their entrepreneurial nature stating that ’throughout the world they [Gen X] are starting businesses at an unprecedented rate’ (p. 46). While Gen X is now firmly entrenched in the workplace, a new generation is starting the journey – Generation Y.

2.2.3 Generation Y

Generation Y is referred to often through the research by terms such as the N Generation. ‘N’ because they have grown up on the “InterNet” and are an engine “(n Gen)” for change over the next 20 years (Meredith, et al. 2002, p. 143). For the purpose of this study they have been classified as those born from 1978 to 1994.
Despite the “Newest Generation” only recently embarking on their first career or even their first job and some still pursuing their high school and tertiary education, there is a small but growing body of literature about their work preferences, mainly derived from the USA. As yet there is not a clear perception of their characteristics. Cole, Smith and Lucas (2002) caution that:

What is abundantly clear by now is the difficulty facing anyone who attempts to predict the work values of a generation before most of that age group actually enters the workforce (p. 9).

Some suggest that Generation Y and Generation X have many similarities, however, Wolburg and Pokrymczynski (2001) see Generation Y having more in common with Baby Boomers who are in most cases their parents and tend to feel a close affinity with the Mature generation – their grandparents. Hankin (2005) attributes Gen Ys close affinity to Matures and Boomers to their close relationship with coaches and other sport leaders in the many team sports their super competitive Boomer parents had them involved in throughout their childhood, plus the time they spent with grandparents when both parents were working (Hankin 2005).

Generation Y have been labelled as optimistic, structured, self-confident, socially responsible and impatient. An Australian based study undertaken by Quantum Market Research asked the question, ‘What are today’s young people thinking and what are the implications for today’s and tomorrow’s leaders’? The research found that despite the bad press about young Australians being unhappy and unmotivated, Australia’s next generation, aged 11-17 years of age (some of the Gen Y cohort) saw themselves quite contrary to the stereotypical characteristics placed on them. They are positive, optimistic and generally happy. However, the research also showed that Australian young people
have ‘absorbed the value of economic rationalism’ and have centred themselves heavily on jobs, money and success. This group is also ‘exceptionally socially liberal and tolerant’ (Quantum Market Research 2003, p. 3).

Defining events for Generation Y are the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in America, the Bali bombings in Indonesia in October 2002, the Asian Tsunami at the end of 2004, and the latest war in Iraq. Experiencing so many unpredictable and chaotic events will perhaps aid Gen Y in coping with change and uncertainty before them in the ever changing workplace.

Generation Y have a more global perspective on life, partly due to the emergence of the Internet and ease of global travel. The Internet and mobile phones and features such as Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), as well as an increased awareness of the environment and social responsibility are all concepts and ideas that have shaped a generation through the continuing leaps in technology and shared life experiences (Meredith et al. 2002).

For Australian Generation Ys this has meant that the isolation from the rest of the world once felt by older generations is not something they experience. Generation Y have grown up in an ever-changing world and therefore seem to embrace change and ride the waves of change with great ease.

Hankin (2005) suggests that Gen Ys are not afraid to work hard and that they will be more efficient, working smarter not longer, a trait that is said to cause friction between the generations. Historically, employees have been measured on hours worked and not on
output; this is likely to be the cause of some tension in the management of employees in the future with differing expectations of measuring performance.

2.3 Recent Studies on Generations at Work

In recent years a number of researchers have examined the generation’s effects on the workplace from a number of different perspectives and disciplines. Schuman and Scott (1989) explored the notion of collective memory and generational effects by asking people to recall events or changes over the past 50 years. The findings revealed that different cohorts recall different events and changes and that the memories that they discussed generally came from their adolescence and early childhood. This led to the conclusion that ‘generational effects are the result of the intersection of personal and national history’ (p. 359).

Daboval (1998) undertook a comparative study comparing Baby Boomers and Generation X employees’ bases and foci of commitment. The qualitative study conducted in the manufacturing sector used data from a mix of 167 Boomers and Gen Xers employed full-time in a private American company. The study found that employee commitment differed between the two generations. Baby Boomers showed a higher level of commitment to the organisation and their supervisors, while Generation X were more focused or committed to improving their marketability. The study found that Generation X valued autonomy, flexibility and expected immediate promotions, something not found in the more traditional Baby Boomer employees, who seemed to be driven by a need to feel affiliation or identification with the organisation. The study concluded that ‘…organisations should identify non-traditional bases for commitment and develop programs to support the culture’ (Daboval 1998, p. 82).
Murphy (2000) conducted a study into the career values by generation and gender. The quantitative study assessed the similarities and differences of career values for college-educated members of Gen X (n=60), Boomers (n=73) and Matures (n=30). A range of career values were measured in this study. Murphy found that while some career values positively correlated with the generation’s preference, gender and age played a greater role in understanding career values, with gender playing a key role in influencing 12 of the 15 career values of the participants (Murphy 2000).

Valenti (2001) undertook a study from a psychological approach addressing Generation X, organisational commitment and career stage perspectives. Valenti’s study was quantitative and involved surveying 315 Gen Xers who completed three surveys: the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (ACCI), the Organisational Commitment (OC) scales (that measure affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment) as well as a demographic survey. The findings of this study found that the intention to turnover (move jobs) significantly decreased in the older group. Valenti believes that the results of the study ‘challenges the generalizability of popularly touted management strategies for Gen X employees’ (p. v), as it was found that Gen X did not display less commitment than past generations and this was applicable to both males and females in the study.

Jeffries (2002) conducted a small qualitative study addressing the question of differing values, behaviours, attitudes and leadership styles of Generation X managers in the high technology sector. The phenomenological study included 16 interviews with Generation X executives who were asked nine questions that correlated to five research questions. The findings of this study concluded that ‘Generation X executives [in the high-technology sector] do have a peer personality, grounded in their shared humanistic values, a strong
work ethic, a participative leadership style, and a willingness to seek out and accept leadership opportunities and challenges’ (p. ix).

Smola & Sutton (2002) addressed the changing nature of the workforce from a generational perspective. They revisited early work conducted in 1974 and compared the results of a similar study they conducted with 350 individuals from across the USA in 1999. The findings of the study indicated that generational work values do differ, especially in regards to work ethic. This research found that younger employees in 1974 held an idealist view of work, while the younger employees studied in 1999 had a less than idealist view of work. The older participants from the 1999 study tended not to believe that hard work will pay off and that how hard someone works does not influence their worth. The findings of this study ‘strongly suggest that work values are more influenced by generational experiences than by age and maturity’ (Smola & Sutton 2002, p. 379). The results also revealed that there was an increasing number of American workers with a desire to balance work and personal goals (p. 363).

Teh (2002) conducted research in Australia on the generations in the workplace by investigating intergenerational tension. The primary aim of the study was to develop an instrument to measure generational difference in organisations, by undertaking a multi-disciplinary and factor-analytic approach. Teh undertook the study with the Western Australian Police department and received 500 complete responses. The finding revealed that younger workers (<40 years of age) on average displayed less intergenerational tension than workers older than 40 years of age. ‘The finding supported the notion that organisations should not assume that they are treating all workers equitably’…with ‘older workers feeling disenfranchised and angry at their treatment by organisations which in their opinion, favour younger workers’ (Teh 2002, p. iv). Teh recommends that
organisations should treat the cohorts (Boomers and Xers) independently and cater for their special needs and expectations. Strategies recommended included training methods catering to the expectations of the generations and conducting age diversity training in a bid to raise awareness among the cohorts (Teh 2002).

Ferres, Travaglione & Firns (2003) used both qualitative and quantitative approaches in their research investigating the attitudinal differences between Generation X and older employees. The study investigated the differing levels of trust, commitment, procedural justice and turnover intention, between a sample of 83 Gen Xers and 151 people in either the Boomer or Mature cohorts dubbed ‘older age group employees’. There were no differences found between the participants in regards to trust and commitment. However the study revealed that Gen X employees ‘displayed a lower continuance commitment, exhibited stronger turnover intentions and had lower scores for perceptions of procedural justice’ (Ferres, Travaglione & Firns 2003, p. 1).

Miller & Yu (2003) conducted a study, comparing the western generational cohorts to generational groups in Taiwan’s workplace. This cross-cultural, cross-generational research revealed that generational groups in Taiwan’s manufacturing sector held different work values from those studied in the western research, but generational groups working in the educational sector in Taiwan held similar work values to those found in the western research (Miller, P. & Yu 2003).

Merkes (2003) conducted a study of the female Baby Boomer population and their views of work after the age of 65 years. The importance of choice and of obtaining work/life balance was prevalent throughout the findings of the research. Women with higher status occupations were interested in continuing paid work more than women in lower paid work.
Both however were equally interested in partaking in volunteer work in the future. The findings suggested that policies for the ageing Boomer female workforce are more effective when based on the values of social justice, fairness, inclusiveness, self-determination, and when they address the issues of:

- Flexibility
- Equality
- Recognition for work undertaken in a volunteer capacity
- Life-long learning
- Complexity and inequities of superannuation systems and retirement planning (Merkes 2003).

A summary of the recent studies on generations at work can be viewed in Appendix A.

2.4 What Does this Mean for Modern Workplaces?

Inglehart & Abramson (1994) believe that the ‘…future intergenerational population’s replacement would bring about a shift towards new value priorities’ (p. 336). This is supported by the generational literature, which highlights that values and attitudes have changed and are influencing the workplace.

Sheahan (2005) reflects that in his experience, despite all generations agreeing that they value a “good work ethic”, ‘once you dig deeper it is revealed that a good work ethic has a very different meaning to a Gen Y than it does for a Boomer – 30 hours per week different to be exact’ (p. 5). Gen Y believes that a good work ethic is showing up to do the work and doing their 36 hour week, where as Boomers have traditionally believed putting in a 60 to 70 hour week is a good work ethic.
Cetron & Davies (2005b) suggest that employers will need to adjust virtually all policies and practices to fit the values of Gen X and Gen Y including providing innovative ways and ideas on how best to motivate and reward them. They ‘thrive on challenge, opportunity, and training – whatever will best prepare them for their next career move’ (p 46). Sheahan (2005) believes that when “…managing Generation Y, it is all about communication, communication, communication’ (p. 223) and having fast, effective reliable tools with which to communicate with them.

Younger generations are looking for an experience and unless organisations are offering that, Generation X and Generation Y will seek it out elsewhere. ‘In terms of skills, the difference between young and old people’ has never been greater (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000, p. 114) finding that:

…most young people certainly don’t want to grow up like their parents, having a steady job in a big organisation where you get a gold watch and a pat on the back after 40 years of loyal service (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000, p. 114).

### 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has established the parameters of the current body of literature on different generations in the workplace. The difference between generations will continue to be debated and the discussion around the boundaries and dates in regards to generational cohorts will continue to emerge. Keeping ahead of the changing demographic trends will require new and imaginative ideas to keep different generations on the job, active and engaged in accordance with their values and expectations. However, the research thus far on generational cohorts presents a real gap in the understanding of the complexities of the differing cohorts and highlights the need for organisations to consider the varying values, expectations and attitudes in the workplace changes and events such as societal,
environmental and technological arenas have shaped the generations. Their opinions are being formed by their environment. This will continue to occur as change becomes accelerated. So too will the changes occurring in the workplace.

The next chapter examines the changing workplace and the impact that societal, environmental (economic, legal and political), and technological changes are having on the changing world of work and how these changes are impacting on the opinions, values, attitudes and expectations of employees from all generations.
Chapter Three

THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK

3.0 Introduction

The modern workplace incorporates a range of complex issues and continuous change. This chapter presents the literature surrounding the changing nature of work and the impacts of these changes. These include how society, the environment (economic, legal, and political) and technology have driven change, the way work is undertaken, and how this has impacted and brought about a difference in working styles and preferences among the generations at work. The literature covers the key areas surrounding changing working styles include communication, work values, technology, employee attraction, retention, and engagement, work/life balance, career progression and organisational loyalty.

3.1 The S.E.T Model

To illustrate some of the complex issues surrounding the modern workplace, the social, the environmental (economic, legal, and political) and technological (S.E.T) model (see Diagram 1) has been adapted from Johnson & Scholes (1989) PEST analysis. The S.E.T model illustrates the complex interplay and changes occurring from the perspectives of the generational cohorts and their work environment. While the analysis is similar to that of
PEST, the S.E.T model is a summary version, investigating the impacts on the generational cohorts and not organisations. Diagram 1 illustrates this with the generational filter being layered over the social environmental and technological aspects. These areas directly and indirectly impact on the way work is carried out on a day-to-day basis. To understand workplace change it is vital to identify the changing aspects of the world around us. The driving force and impact of societal, environmental and technological (S.E.T) changes brings about shifts in attitudes and influences generations and their preferred working styles and preferences, the faster the pace of change occurring in S.E.T, the larger the impact on the generational shift. The pace and magnitude of change correlates with the impact of the generational shift, which takes place in the work environment.

**Diagram 1: S.E.T Model**

Through gaining a greater understanding of S.E.T changes occurring in the workplace and by applying a generational filter, organisations and individuals can better manage, adapt
and facilitate generational differences in the workplace. While all generations have experienced change, the impact is different for each generation, and will affect their ability to cope with change and adapt their working styles and demands of the work environment.

### 3.2 Dominant Trends Influencing the Work Environment

The increasing pace of change has had multiple effects on the nature of work and when and how work is done. This has also impacted on the various generations in the workforce as to the way they have adapted their working styles to the changing environment in which they work. Impacts such as the pace of change, globalisation, technology, changing demographics (including the ageing workforce and the looming labour shortage) shape the current and future work environment. Charles Darwin is quoted as saying: ‘It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change’ (Galor & Moav 2002, p. 1).

In this changing world it seems that Darwin’s insights regarding the need for responsiveness are still as relevant as they were when written in the mid 1800’s. Over the past 20 years there has been a radical re-organisation of Australian business practices and the labour market. Lewis and Seltzer (1996) suggested that the most significant causes of structural change are ‘technological change, microeconomic reform and internationalisation of product markets’ (p. 43). These changes have influenced the demand for skills, changed the composition of employment and ‘increased the demands for a “flexible” labour force’ (p. 43).

In the mid 1990s theorists argued that there are six trends that will shape the future of work:

1. The size of the average company will decrease in size and will employ less people
2. A variety of new organisational models will form along with a decline in the traditional hierarchical organisation structure

3. The manufacturing worker will decline, giving way to technicians as the worker elite

4. A horizontal division of labour will replace the traditional vertical division

5. Business models will shift toward services and away from manufacturing

6. Work will be redefined with constant training and re-skilling (Tyson 1995)

It appears that these predictions are fairly representative of what has occurred and the above six trends have all impacted and shaped the current workplace. So what for the future – more of the same? Or something totally different? Malone (2004) suggests that there are many buzz words out there trying to encapsulate what the future of work will be. Terms such as ‘self-organizing, self-managed, empowered, emergent, democratic, participative, people-centred, swarming, and peer-to-peer plus decentralization’ (Malone 2004, p. 5). Exactly what the future will bring is hard to predict from the current literature – but what we can be sure about is that the increasing pace of change in the workplace will continue to affect the trends shaping the workplace of the future.

3.2.1 The Pace of Change in the Workplace

The current literature gives the view that this increased pace and continual rapid change that we are experiencing has been occurring for quite some time and that change is a continuum. As a society we are continually evolving. However, the speed of change in the workplace is gaining pace, and becoming faster than ever before. There are many factors driving the pace of change through workplaces and organisations globally. Savall (1981) stated that: ‘The purpose and meaning of work in the post-industrial society will be determined through a complex and subtle interplay of human, technology, and economic
factors’ (p. i). It is this inter-play of human, technology and economic factors that drives the pace of change. Each subtle inter-play is becoming more complex, becoming more volatile, more efficient, with expectations increasing and technological developments surpassing what most could ever imagine.

Tyson (1995) examined the factors driving change in the area of human resource (HR) management and believes that it stems from changes: ‘…to jobs, organisations, employees’ values and commitment. Demographic shifts, the globalisation of business and capital investment, and new forms of organisation’ (p. 1) are also influencing change. Organisations changing radically due to external forces such as an increase in global capital, the increase in and mobility of the global labour market, the flattening of traditional organisational structures, the increase in the service and knowledge based economy and the disappearance of the notion of “jobs for life”’ (Tyson 1995 p. 4).

Meredith, et al. (2002) attribute the change in the workplace over the past 20 years to the changing corporate climate and the emphasis placed on global competitiveness. They believe that ‘lifetime employment has become a relic’(p. 37) and that the coming 20 years will bring about dramatic change in the workplace.

The pace of change is showed on the enhancement by the culture and environment of the workplace. To harness the effectiveness of change managers need to be aware of what is impacting on the culture and workplace. Burgess and Connell (2003) cite the factors impacting on the Australian workforce as:

1. An increase in females in many workplaces
2. High rates of underemployment
3. More highly educated workforce
4. The increase in casualisation
5. Growth in the service sector
6. A higher proportion of employment in Australia’s capital cities
7. More jobs that are characterised by either too few hours or very long hours
8. More people holding more than one job

The notion of a “job for life” is in hot contention, as is the need for a flexible workforce. There is a rise in job turnover and employee mobility and an increase in the number of people willing to change careers multiple times. The presence of provisions for long service leave in an organisation is declining, assisted by the attitude that people should get a life instead of a career and that work is a series of projects and flexible contracts (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000). A growing issue for organisations with people undertaking a series of different projects and flexible contracts across multiple organisations is its inability to retain tacit knowledge and maintain or gain a competitive advantage through this.

Cetron and Davies (2005a) suggest that ‘knowledge turnover in the professions is a growing challenge that will require continuous retraining and lifelong learning’ (p. 29). So not only is there the issue of retaining tacit knowledge but from an employee and organisational perspective, there is also the need for continual training and for employees to engage with the concept of life-long learning. Tyson (1995) adds that ‘stresses imposed by endless waves of change within organisations have left their mark on all management functions’ (p. 2). Another factor which should be added to the “endless waves of change” is the increase in regulations and compliance in which managers have to cope with on a daily basis:
Government regulation will continue to take up a growing proportion of the manager’s time and effort. …regulations are both necessary and unavoidable, and often beneficial. Yet it is difficult not to see them as a kind of friction that slows both current business and future economic growth (Cetron & Davies 2005b, p. 48).

3.2.2 Globalisation

Globalisation can be defined in many ways, but from a business and economic perspective it is seen as ‘the international integration of goods, technology, labor, and capital’ (Slaughter & Swagel 2000). Over the past 20 years, ‘foreign trade and cross-border movement of technology, labor and capital have been massive and irresistible’ (Slaughter & Swagel 2000, p. 175). Cetron & Davies (2005b) write that with the globalisation of the economy, a greater number of independent specialists are needed and that organisations ‘will turn to consultants and contractors who specialize more and more narrowly as markets globalize and technologies differentiate’ (p. 42).

The local and national economies now walk hand-in-hand with the global economy. It is little wonder that work in the post-industrial society is determined through the various complex and subtle global interplay, that the pace and speed of change will continue to increase and that globalisation will continue to impact on many areas of business, society and culture.

Patel (2005) suggests that ‘despite the ebb and flow of politics and cultural tensions, global economic interdependence will continue’ (p. 27) and that globalisation is added to by the advancements in technology, such as telecommunications and the spread of the English language, the spread of regional free trade agreements and trading blocs, which have
increased the mobility of labour and the flow of human capital. Moreover the cross-border acquisitions and mergers which continue to occur are unprecedented and are creating ‘a truly global marketplace of goods, capital and labor’ (Patel 2005, p. 27).

### 3.2.3 Technology at Work

A flow-on from the impact of globalisation is the influence and factors driving technological change in the workplace. Cetron and Davies (2005b) believe that the impact of technological breakthroughs will have far reaching consequences and will ‘…continue to play a major role in shaping the way we work and manage our institutions’ (p. 37). Green, Felstead & Gallie (2003) agree, noting that a central finding of their research found that ‘the input of IT [Information Technology] on the labour market appears to have been even more important than one might have expected’ (p. 1567). Patel (2005) reflects that ‘at the dawn of the 21st century, it is difficult to fathom that such ordinary workplace tools as laptops and cell phones were exotic luxury items…and email and the Internet were not commercially available’ (Patel 2005, p. 26).

Popcorn & Hanft (2001) discuss the notion of the impact of technology on our lives, by predicting that just as we now have environmental impact studies into all types of areas of work and life, in the coming years there will be a growing discipline of ‘Technology Impact Studies’ (p. 323) which will study the impact of technology on our lives, culture, psychological patterns and behaviours, as well as the impact on the family, the economy, productivity and innovation. Computers are fast becoming part of the environment and are playing an increasingly dominate role in the economy and society (Cetron & Davies 2005b).
Since the coming about of the technological revolution many of today’s work norms are under review. There has been a creation of new occupations, but a decline in the number of people employed, especially in the manufacturing sector. The nature of work has changed. Technology replacement has meant clear career progression seems to have disappeared for many people. “Rationalisation”, “downsizing”, “rightsizing”, have greatly impacted many segments of the workforce especially underemployed middle-aged males whom since being retrenched from long-serving jobs are unlikely to work full-time (Tyson 1995). It is expected that the advancements in technology and subsequent impacts on the workplace will continue. This is evidenced by Cetron and Davies (2005b) claim that there is an increase in Internet use throughout the world has grown to 945 million users worldwide in 2004 and ‘the world’s population of Internet users is expected to grow to 1.35 billion by 2007’ (p. 41).

The acceptance of new technology and innovation has been difficult for many employees to adopt especially as the pace of change has increased the need for them to re-train and re-skill themselves more often. Ryder (1965) suggests that for older workers new technology and innovation in the work environment raises fear of job losses and redundancies:

   It is to be expected that the old hands will resist innovation; otherwise they may be displaced before they are ready to retire. Resistance may be successful for a while because the oldest workers are most likely to occupy positions of authority (Ryder 1965 p. 857).

The structural changes that have occurred in the work environment born from technological innovation have changed many aspects of how, where and who conducts work – ‘we no longer have a workplace; we have a workspace’ (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000, p. 45).
Luff, Hindmarsh & Heath (2000) argue that technology will transform the structure of organisations with the increase in mobility.

Workers will be more mobile when all the technology support [employees] need, can be provided wherever they are located and it may even be no longer necessary for individuals to travel to a particular site when they can work from home. The actual “organisation” for which they work will become fragmented, geographically dispersed and possibly “virtual”, being transformed into a business with no physical location and little organisational structure (Luff et al. 2000, p. 1).

3.2.4 Communication at Work

Communication at work has also changed, with the increased mobility of workers and the advancements in technology. The modern day worker has multiple modes of communication tools to assist them in achieving their desired outcome. The mobile phones, Short Message Service (SMS) and Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS), Enhanced Messaging Service (EMS), E-mail, Facsimile, video conferencing, speakerphone, web camera, instant messaging (IM), blog, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP), intranet, traditional mail, telephone, face to face – the modes of communication are now numerous.

Peterson (2005) believes there needs to be a ‘fundamental shift in mind-set’ (p. 146) among the business community to embrace new forms of communication to remain competitive in the “communications’ revolution”. However the new communications mediums such as VoIP need to be designed for the business model and embedded into the business process from the start. The new technologies needs to converge and not be seen as just voice and data, but as a communication tool built into the business process.
With so many modes of communication tools available, Popcorn & Hanft (2001) predict that in the near future businesses will adopt what they call an “Email Coach” to address the communication issues surrounding email in today’s workplaces:

…businesses are finding that employees who lack the proper writing skills are creating problems by sending harsh, insensitively worded email and instant messaging. Thus, a new job titled – Email Coach will be created to help people learn to communicate effectively given the compressed, immediate and risky nature of email (p. 310).

Sheahan (2005) concedes that while some of the younger generation may lack the business etiquette when communicating in the business setting, this should not imply they don’t communicate or that they are not connected to large social networks of people. Sheahan (2005) believes that the speed in which communication can be delivered is what is driving the multimode of work-armed communication, suggesting that ‘Generation Y are so desperate to be ‘connected’ [to social networks of people] that even email is considered too slow. Instead, they have Instant Massaging [services]’ (p. 23).

### 3.2.5 Changing Demographics – the Ageing Population

It is well established that the Australian population is ageing and that fertility rates have been on the decline since the 1970s (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999). The current composition of the Australian population is not dissimilar to other western countries that also experienced a boom in their birth rates following WWII:

During the 25 years after World War II, the median age declined, reaching a low of 27.5 years in 1971 as the first of the baby boomers began to have children of their own. Since then it has risen to 34.3 years in 1997 and is projected to reach between 42 and 43 years in 2031 (as the youngest baby
boomers turn 65). The proportion of the population aged 65 years or older (12% in 1997) is projected to increase to between 21% and 22% by 2031 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999 p. 2).

Figure 1 has been adapted from age range data gathered in the Australian Census held in 2001 and grouped to best fit the generational cohort ages used in this study. This graph illustrates the distribution of workers in Australia’s workforce as at 2001.

Figure 1: Generations in the Australian Workplace 2001

Since 1983 there has been an increase in the number of people aged 45-64 years participating in the labour force. In 2003, 32% of the people participating in the Australian labour force were aged between 45-64 years which was an increase of 8% from 24% in 1983. Between 2011 and 2030 the Baby Boomer generation will be aged 65 and over (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004). With such a large number of people at retirement age, the potential strain on the economy from a declining income taxes and consumptions combined with a looming labour skills shortage, the retention of mature workers in the labour market has been noted as a potential solution.
The notion of “true retirement”, meaning the permanent end to work, is predicted to be delayed by many people until later in life. Instead of retiring at 60 to 65, many won’t retire until well into their 70s (Cetron and Davies 2005b; Hankin 2005). If this projection comes to fruition, the Australian Baby Boomer population may be in the workforce for a little longer than was previously thought and historically expected. However, they may opt for a new career and downshift, which is fast becoming a trend among the Baby Boomer cohort in Australia (Salt 2004).

The postponement of retirement is due to healthier ageing and the higher level of income desired than what would be provided from a pension. There is also now an increasing chance that people are divorced, in a second marriage, or have had children later in life and therefore responsible for dependent children for longer. In addition, younger adults are taking up the option to stay in the family home for longer while undertaking tertiary studies (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004). With a growing number of people opting to defer retirement or downshift and remain in some form of paid employment, there is a growing body of literature aimed at helping organisations to better understand and manage the ageing workforce (Drake International 2005; Hankin 2005; Jorgensen 2004; Merkes 2003).

3.2.6 Labour Shortage

With the demographic changes occurring in the workforce, the threat of labour shortage in the trade and blue collar sectors seems real. This shortage has come about from a decline in population together with an increase in participation rates in the tertiary education sector (Clark 2005; Green & Tsitsianis 2005; Rose 2005), and government policy highly focused on the knowledge and service economies (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003; Green & Tsitsianis 2005).
In more recent years there has been a strong demand for more skilled labour and an increased desire for education which has driven the participation rate up in the university sector and in vocational education and training (Commonwealth of Australia 2002). The proportion of employed people with a bachelor degree or higher increased from 3% to 19% during the period from 1971 to 2001. Also 35% of 15-24 year olds participated in some form of education in 1971, compared with 54 per cent in 2001 an increase of 19% in 30 years (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003).

The focus of the government policy towards a service-based economy has also impacted Australian industries, with an increase in the number of people employed in the service sector from 57% in 1971 to 75% in 2001. While the growth in the service sector provided increased employment opportunities across all generational groups, many of the positions are being offered on a part-time or casual contract basis which has contributed to yet another change in the Australian labour market - an increase in casualisation of labour contracts. In the 30 years from 1971 to 2001 there was a decline in the proportion of the people employed full-time, which decreased by 20% from 89% in 1971 to 69% in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003).

The external environment has seen great changes over the past 30 years, and so too has the internal mechanisms of the workplace. Many organisations and sectors have seen changes to the way people work, when they work, and how they work. Employee’s attitudes, values and behaviours have changed, influenced by the environment in which they have been living and working. The next section of this chapter outlines the changes which have occurred and the values and attitudes which have changed the workplace.
3.3 The Changing Workplace Culture

Trends, such as the pace of change in the workplace, globalisation, technology, advances in communication, and labour shortages previously discussed have all had a direct impact on how people work, and their values and attitudes towards work. Cultural change programs and new management practices, such as Six Sigma\(^2\) have brought about change in the organisational culture and the expectations of employers and managers. The changing workplace culture has impacted many organisations through the differing modes of communication, the changing work values and the desire by many employees to obtain work/life balance, the need to define organisational characteristics that attract, engage, and retain employees, the changing views on organisational loyalty and career progression. While many of these topics rightly deserve to be addressed on their own, by focusing on the interplay and complexity of the changing workplace phenomena provides an interesting snap-shot of the today’s workplace.

One characteristic noted by Hankin (2005) is that all generations share a desire for individual dignity, which in the workplace translates into ‘respect, fair treatment; equality; balance; flexibility; appropriate feedback; job enhancement and advancement of opportunities’ (p. 61). Ryder (1965) noted that the modern society of 40 years ago was formed along a hierarchical, age-grade continuum. Ryder illustrates that in the 1960s, structure and hierarchy ruled as they did in most areas of life. The Baby Boomer generation grew up surrounded by structure and being ruled by an age-grade society, where you “did your time” in an organisation. In today’s modern society of 2006, both organisations’ and communities operate within a flatter structure, less people attend the structured environment of church, less people are members of a structured labour union or

---

\(^2\) Six Sigma is about encouraging sweeping cultural change through an organisation assisting in positioning a company for greater customer satisfaction, profitability, and competitiveness (Pande, Neuman & Cavanagh 2000, p. ix)
members of community clubs in Australia, indicating a desire for individuality and freedom.

On reflection it is a very different modern society from that of 40 years ago and a clear distinction can be made between the behaviours of younger generations, who snub hierarchy and who don’t necessarily assign respect based on position or stature. The dot.com era of the 1990s has brought about a new generation of workers who have not had to “do their time” in organisations to reach the top, with many being Directors and CEOs of their own companies in their 20s and 30s. Younger generations on average have a higher level of education, which has facilitated the climbing up the corporate ladder more rapidly, turning up “work ready” for their first full-time employment.

The Australian federal government’s Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) believes the differing work values as one aspect of “workplace diversity”. Organisations that identify workplace diversity and appreciate differences while adapting work practices and create an inclusive environment in which employees’ diverse skills, individual perspectives and backgrounds are valued and appreciated, will be preferred employers of the future (DEWR 2005).

3.3.1 Working Styles

Over the past 20 years the notion of workplace culture has taken on greater significance to organisations. There has been a growing realisation that ‘culture’ is powerful and can dramatically affect productivity and profit. Recent popular publications on workplace culture such as Working with Emotional Intelligence (Goleman 1998); Fish (Lundin, Paul & Christensen 2000); Funky Business (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000); Good to Great (Collins 2001); The Seven-Day Weekend (Semler 2003); and Toxic Emotions at Work
(Frost 2003) have all sparked debate in organisations regarding workplace culture, organisational change and the notion of work, fun, contentment and satisfaction in the workplace. These ideas have become more relevant as organisations are downsizing, retrenching, and merging to recreate themselves (Miller, R. 2000).

This era of organisations proactively recruiting employees follows on from the high number of redundancies in the 1990s where organisations were suffering from low morale and high turnover of employees. Cetron and Davies (2005b) believe that this will continue, suggesting that ‘…downsizing, restructure, reorganization and cutbacks of white collar workers will continue through 2006’ and that ‘…outsourcing will continue to grow until at least 2010’ (Cetron & Davies 2005b, p. 48). They suggest that ‘…a typical large business in 2010 will have fewer than half the management levels of its counterparts of 1990, and about one-third the number of managers’ (Cetron & Davies 2005b, p. 48).

Organisational culture is also influenced by generational shifts in attitudes and values. Often referred to as a “young” or “older” culture, these cultures influence the ages and attitudes of the people working in the organisation, the management structures and freedom of decision making, as well as the type of people attracted to the organisation. King (1997) notes that ‘…the best and brightest young …professionals will gravitate towards companies with an egalitarian environment’, rather than to ‘a place where you don’t speak until spoken to’ which is viewed as the “old” workplace culture (p. 28). King (1997) also believes that ‘…generational issues are bound to crop up between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers in today’s team-orientated, work hard/play hard corporate cultures’ (p. 28). Studies in the past have examined the person-job-fit and the person-organisation-fit, finding that individuals are attracted to a match with their personality, attitudes and values as well as that of the ‘organisations values, goals, structures, processes
and culture’ (Schneider, Goldstein & Smith 1995 in Carless 2005, p. 412). It is also suggested that person-organisation-fit also influences an individual’s selection of an organisation (Bretz, Ash & Dreher 1989; Carless 2005; Keon, Latack & Wanous 1982; Tom 1971).

3.3.2 Increased Female Participation Rate

A trend which has impacted on organisational composition and culture is the increase in female participation rates over the last 30 years. This in turn has influenced management styles and organisational culture. The increased participation of women in the labour market also contributed to an increase in overall labour force participation from 59% in 1971 to 63% in 2001 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). The rise in female participation in the labour market has been supported by policy around workplace diversity and equal opportunity.

The number of women obtaining executive and board level positions in the past 15 years has increased. Cetron and Davies (2005b) predict that this is a trend in the US which will be increasing, suggesting that:

> The glass ceiling has been broken by one-fourth of upper executives today, and nearly 20% of corporate board members, are women [in the USA]. While this is still too few, it is far more than in any previous generation, and their numbers can only grow (p. 43).

However, research commissioned in Australia by “Women on Boards” in 2003 found that of the 412 organisations participating in their research, which included 338 of the top publicly listed companies in Australia, only 7% of all board members were women, 29% of the participating organisations had one female board member, 6% had two female members, and only 2% had three female board members. In all, 37% of responding
organisations had no female members on their board (Rosner 2003). Whilst numbers of women participating in the workforce has increased it seems that there is still a way to go in reaching equality between the sexes in the boardrooms of Australia, but the progress to date has been noted.

3.3.3 The Deal Breakers - Attraction, Retention and Engagement

It is now critical for leaders and managers to understand how to successfully attract, retain and engage employees in their organisations. The cost of recruiting, training, compensating and providing workplace services has increased commensurate with the rise in technology and skilled labour shortages. Further, it is important that managers do not assume a “one size fits all” policy when they are dealing with the four generations in the workforce. The method of attracting, engaging and retaining the different generations will vary according to their preferred working styles, their values and attitudes. Table 4 gives a summary of what it takes to attract, retain and engage employees (adapted from Towers Perrins (2003)).
### Table 4: What it Takes to Attract, Retain, and Engage Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction Drivers</th>
<th>Retention Drivers</th>
<th>Engagement Drivers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Health insurance</td>
<td>1. Career advancement opportunities</td>
<td>1. Senior management interest in employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Competitive pay</td>
<td>2. Retention of high-calibre people</td>
<td>2. Challenging work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Career advancement opportunities</td>
<td>5. Adequate resources to undertake job</td>
<td>5. Career advancement opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Pay increase linked to individual performance</td>
<td>8. Challenging work</td>
<td>8. Resources to get the job done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Reputation of the company</td>
<td>10. Overall satisfaction with benefits needed in day-to-day life</td>
<td>10. Senior management vision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: (Towers Perrin 2003, p. 23) Exhibit 16

#### 3.3.4 Employee Attraction: ‘Attractive to Whom’?

Kable (1988) believes that managers need to understand what makes people tick and then ‘try to set up the conditions that will assist, and not hinder, that person’s [or generation’s] performance’ (p. 56). Moodie (2004) states that Gen X and Gen Y are seeking an employment contract which promotes ‘flexibility in their working life, …offering a range of benefits from travel, subsidised education, career breaks and sabbaticals’ (p. 31). The issue is whether organisations are picking up on this and understanding what makes the younger and older generations “tick”.

The first interaction employees have with an organisation is in the recruitment and selection phase, and if this process is long and arduous it will be unattractive to Gen Ys (Sheahan 2005). Generation Y applicants will not wait around long enough to wade...
through the red tape and bureaucracy. Ridderstrale and Nordstrom (2000) suggest that leadership is the key to attraction:

…this implies that leadership is a matter of attracting and retaining great people – managing the attention flow. In turn, this means providing meaning and identity for a certain tribe [or generation]. And, as leaders, we must constantly re-create this force-field of attraction and attention (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000 p. 214).

3.3.5 Employee Engagement –‘Challenge Me, Motivate Me, Value Me!’

Employee engagement ‘…involves both emotional and rational factors relating to work and the overall work experience. The emotional factors tie to people’s personal satisfaction and the sense of inspiration and affirmation they get from their work and from being part of their organisation’ (Towers Perrin 2003, p. 4). Although money is important to employee satisfaction, money can never compensate an employee if they are undertaking work that they are not passionate about. In many cases this leads to dissatisfaction and a reduction in productivity, absenteeism and poor performance (Kable 1988). Research into job satisfaction has found that productivity is positively correlated with employee job satisfaction (Patterson et al. 1997) and it is negatively correlated with employee absenteeism (Clegg 1983).

The importance for employees to be satisfied in their work has been noted for many years and has been studied from a variety of aspects. The theoretical and empirical constructs of job satisfaction were developed by sociology and industrial psychology (e.g Blauner 1964; Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman 1957). The notion of job satisfaction has also been examined by organisational behaviourists (Spector 1997) and more recently economists
have made links between economic output and the satisfaction of employees (Clark 1997; Clark & Oswald 1996; Hamermesh 1977, 2001; Sloane & Bender 1998).

A 2003 study conducted by Towers Perrin found that among the industries they surveyed, engagement was substantially higher in the non-profit sector than in any other. The study drew the conclusion that people are generally attracted to the sector with ‘…a sense of mission and passion, rather than from any prospect of higher pay or wealth accumulation’ (Towers Perrin 2003, p. 7). Job security and money are not as important as motivators as they once were. Cetron and Davies (2005b) suggest that ‘social mobility is high and people are seeking job fulfilment’ (p. 45). Employees are wanting to feel a sense of accomplishment from the work they undertake (Cetron & Davies 2005b). Moodie (2004) suggests the way to ‘…engage with employees is to be better than the other employers: to work out ways to retain the young people and to get the older people to work longer on terms that suit the company and themselves’ (p. 32).

Green & Tsitsianis (2005) note that ‘a further major change with implications for job satisfaction is said to be that of the rising skills of jobs and workers, which is a result of skill-biased technological change and expanding education systems’ (p. 402). It is interesting to note that, an increased level of skill and knowledge through education has not been associated with an increase in the level of satisfaction among workers (Green & Tsitsianis 2005). Researchers suggest that this may be due to employees’ skills not fitting the job and vice versa. The mismatch of skills, employee qualifications and ability, as well as the needs of the role can be applied to differing skill levels and preferred working hours (Spector 1997). This can cause people to be unhappy about the nature of their work, the size of their workload, their boss, their pay etc., thus causing them to feel that they aren’t allowed to use their own initiative on the job (Bunting 2004).
A study on happiness and the human development of the country, ranked Australia low on the scale regarding job satisfaction. Australia averaged 5.04 on a 7 point scale compared to Japan (4.89) and Taiwan (4.96) - the only other countries lower on the world job satisfaction scale were six Eastern European nations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Russia, and Slovak Republic) (Blanchflower & Oswald 2005). Clearly there is room for improvement in the management of Australian workplaces when it comes to employee engagement.

### 3.3.6 Career Progression

What impacts have these external changes of globalisation, technology and other environmental shifts had on the individual’s career? Some believe that the traditional career path through an organisation has been made redundant.

> Progression through the hierarchy according to seniority and/or merit, with security of employment, has all but gone. Instead, careers are becoming self-managed. People assess their own worth and think strategically about placing themselves in the best possible employment position, acting as their own agent in a competitive market-driven environment (Gollan 2003, p. 14).

Organisations need to be offering employees training and developing their skills instead of being able to offer a job-for-life. Employees need to be continually trained to handle the situation of not having a job-for-life. The employment contract is now one that allows an employee to be developed as a person, not just on the skills they require for a particular task (Moodie 2004).

There is also an increase in the number of career changes the average person will have in their working life. Cetron and Davies (2005b) suggest that younger generations could
reach as many as five or six career changes ‘…as dying industries are replaced by new opportunities’ (p. 45). Also self-employment is also seen as an attractive option ‘…as being your own boss makes it easier to set aside time for career development. This is especially true for Gen Xers and millennials [Gen Y’s]’ (p. 45).

3.3.7 Training and Life-Long Learning

Ridderstrale and Nordstrom (2000) argue that ‘thirty years ago, we had to learn one new skill per year. Now, it is one new skill per day. Tomorrow it may be one new skill per hour’… ‘Inevitably, new roles demand new skills’ (p. 34). The skills required by employees have also changed and adapted to new ways of conducting work. Skills such as networking have even changed:

…in 1960, the average manager had to learn 25 names throughout their entire career; today we must learn 25 new names every single month. Tomorrow, it may be 25 new names per week - and half of those are likely to be names from different languages (Ridderstrale & Nordstrom 2000, p. 34).

Traditionally training has provided the knowledge and facilitates the teaching of the skills necessary to perform a job well. Employee development, however, focuses and prepares an employee for jobs in the future (Kennedy 2004). Ryder (1965) draws on Mead (1953) who suggests that: ‘The difficulties of learning new skills are more formidable for one who has acquired and utilized traditional work practices’ (Ryder 1965 p. 857). This implies that training for mature workers may need to be different from the training provided for younger less experienced workers with differing expectations. Cetron and Davies (2005b) note that there has been an increase in adult education as ‘[there is a] need to train for new careers as old ones are displaced or boomers grow bored with them. The other is the need for healthy, energetic people to keep active during retirement’ (p. 42).
Sheen (2000) suggests that a culture of life-long learning needs to be adopted by all workers, by ensuring that they are:

…acculturated to the concept of life-long learning so that their skills are continuously upgraded to meet current and emerging business requirements. It is the responsibility of individuals to continuously upgrade their skills. It is the responsibility of employers to ensure that workers of all ages and at all levels have opportunities to pursue relevant training (Sheen 2000, p. 9).

Cetron and Davies (2005b) recommend that ‘life-long learning is a necessity for anyone who works in a technical field – and for growing numbers who do not’ (p. 40). They suggest that:

…life-long learning is nothing new [to Gen X &Y]; it’s just a way of life. Companies that can provide diverse, cutting-edge training will have a strong recruitment advantage over competitors that offer fewer opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge base (p. 46).

In regard to management training in the future, Cetron and Davies (2005b) suggest that ‘Information-based organizations will have to make a special effort to prepare professional specialists to become business executives and leaders’ (p. 48). They also believe that, the new generation of workers cannot simply be hired and ignored. They must be nurtured, paid well, and made to feel appreciated. Training is critical. Without the opportunity to learn new skills young people will quickly find a job that will help them prepare for the rest of their career’ (Cetron & Davies 2005b, p. 45).
There has been a change of attitude in many large organisations that now describes a departing high potential employee as “regrettable turnover”. The cost of training and recruiting is an expense the organisation has already born, but with perhaps minimal return on their investment. The trend seems to be that ‘if employees don’t see the potential for career advancement—particularly in the treatment of the best and brightest within their companies—they are likely to bolt when they can’ (Towers Perrin 2003, p. 16).

Frank, Finnegan & Taylor (2004) suggest that retrenchments and the moving of positions off-shore have directly affected both employee retention and engagement. There is a transformation in the employer-employee contract. In the past an employment contract was characterised by a “fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay”. The new employer-employee contract implies that employees are expected to continuously develop and apply their skills to what the company needs. In return, the employer will provide a challenging work environment. It is widely acknowledged that there is no guarantee of continuing employment, but by supporting the development and training of the employee, it enables the workforce to become employable by other companies (Frank et al. 2004).

The idea of the new work contract works well for Generation Ys. Sheahan (2005) suggests that ‘future benefits are not something that Generation Y are motivated by. They want it now, not later’ (p. 30). With the new work contract Gen Ys are able to be motivated by the short-term nature of the work. They receive the training that is transferable and they are encouraged to be mobile. When Gen Ys are placed on an “old deal”, they generally become frustrated with the cyclical nature of this work and seek out more from the situation; they require the challenge and need to be motivated with short-term rewards.
If organisations fail to address “regrettable staff turnover”, they face increasing costs including the direct expenses associated with recruitment, training and the placement of the new recruit into the job, affecting the bottom line and resulting in declining profits. This can be far reaching with many organisational factors impacted including a decline in staff numbers; loss of tacit knowledge; employee morale; additional training costs; customer dissatisfaction; increased stress in the workplace; and a loss of productivity (Frank et al. 2004).

3.3.9 Organisational Loyalty – ‘What’s That?’

The notion of organisational loyalty has come under much scrutiny over recent years, with the literature stating that loyalty as a workplace concept is either on the decline or is disappearing. Gollan (2003) suggests that loyalty has largely disappeared to be replaced with ‘organisations and individuals …. embracing market liberalism, with market-driven premiums paid to motivate formerly committed and loyal employees’ (p. 14). While Frank et al. (2004) believes that it has been declining trust in organisations that has attributed to the decline in loyalty stating that ‘loyalty starts with trust and trust is clearly on the decline’ (p. 17).

Flynn (1996), in an interview with Bruce Tulgan³, embarked on the discussion of traditional notions of loyalty and paying dues as inapplicable to the newer generations. Tulgan remarked that he doesn’t believe that Gen X is disloyal, but that ‘we’re [Gen X] 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’ (p. 88). The notion that loyalty should be a two-way street and that both parties should mutually benefit from the relationship is fast becoming the expected norm.

³ Founder of Rainmaker Thinking, Inc. a think tank which researches the working lives of Americans born after 1963.
3.3.10 Work/Life Balance

‘...is it possible that there is a fundamental conflict between the demands of work and home, and that work-life balance is a tautology?’ (Edger 2005, p. 13). It could very well be. The promised leisure time that was going to come with the advances in technology is yet to be delivered effectively in the modern workplace. There is a higher demand for child care, a decline in leisure time, an increase in the average number of hours worked and an increase in the number of health issues brought on by stress and lack of exercise, as well as family and marriage breakdown (Edger 2005). These are not signs of a more relaxed, time-rich workforce which was promised by advances in technology.

Rance (2005) agrees that if companies are to remain competitive in the attraction and retention of employees, then ‘companies need to move towards more flexible, family-friendly work policies to attract and retain talent from a shrinking [available labour] pool’ (p. 23). Organisations need to take into consideration that the Australian family unit has changed and is now much more diverse:

...less than a quarter of Australian families are of the “traditional” type: full-time male breadwinner, full-time housewife-homemaker. The most common pattern today is a one-and-a-quarter income family, with close to two million women in part-time jobs. Since the average earnings in June 2003 were $49,000 a year, a second wage is essential for people to qualify for a mortgage and to cover the cost of [having and raising] children (Edger 2005, p. 10).

To manage the conflict of time available to work and family, employers also need to be aware of what is the modern family unit. The traditional mix of what constitutes a family, is that workers from all generations ‘...are beginning to assert that their lives outside the workplace are equally important, and employers are having to listen’ (Edger 2005, p. 27). Edger (2005) also notes a new phenomenon occurring in Generation X and Y, with their
focus on ‘self-development, career growth, and financial success’. …and it is estimated that 28% of the generations of marriageable age (20-35 years) are unlikely to be married or have children at all (Edger 2005, p. 19). So dual income, no kids equals less constraints, more spending and high mobility.

Data collected in the USA in 1997 found that ‘Members of dual-earner couples without children and male breadwinners without children are most likely to desire fewer hours. This analysis suggests that work-family conflict is more likely to produce a desire for fewer hours when employees are well off economically’ (Reynolds 2003, p. 1171). People without community and family ties are more likely to take risks with their employment.

Sahibzada, Hammer, Neal and Kuang (2005) investigated the relationship between family-friendly workplace support and job satisfaction in 1997. They found that ‘the relationship between availability of workplace support and job satisfaction varied depending on the types of work-family role combination and levels of work-family culture [within the organisation]’ (Sahibzada et al. 2005, p. 820). A study undertaken by Winslow (2005) examined data from the 1977 “Quality of Employment” survey and the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce and ‘found that work-family conflict has increased during this [20 year] period, particularly for men’ (p. 727).

Hyman, Scholarios & Baldry (2005) suggest that ‘accommodating employer family-friendly policies can be viewed as contributing to this personal control and are usually thought to have positive outcomes for employees’ (p. 708). This is especially true with an increasing number of people seeking autonomy in their work and in their personal lives. Opiela (1996) notes that ‘…working from home—even part-time—can improve the
balance between work and personal life’ (p. 74), leading to a more contented worker. King (1997) agrees that the fun and enjoyment lead to a sense of balance which people obtain from their work which makes them more willing to go the extra mile when needed.

While talking about the importance of work/life balance and writing a family-friendly policy for an organisation are important steps to bringing about a more balanced, contented workforce, Edger (2005) argues that:

…managers will say the shareholder or the customer must come first, not seeing that unless the employee comes at least equal first, the whole social system of the workplace comes unstuck and profits go out the door (p. 15).

Bernardi (1999) raises an interesting dilemma by arguing that ‘family-friendly policies aren’t worth the paper they’re written on if managers don’t give them life’ (p. 12). Edger (2005) suggests that while there have been some attempts by Australian business to become more family-friendly and promote work/life balance that ‘there has been little effort to build philosophy of a more balanced life into the culture of the entire workplace’ (p. 21) and that the policies have become just another workplace “fad” (Edger 2005).

Kinnie, Hutchinson, Purcell, Rayton and Swart (2005) note that the link between HR policies, such as work/life balance, and the commitment of the organisation can be viewed from two perspectives known as “best practice” and “best fit”. The best practice more commonly known to Pfeffer (1994; Pfeffer 1998) ‘identifies a set of HR policies that, it is argued, is associated with improved performance in all types of organisations and, by implication, for all types of employees’ (Kinnie et al. 2005, p. 9). The opposing side of the debate resonates from the “best fit” argument (e.g Miles & Snow 1984; Schuler & Jackson 1987) being ‘that performance is maximised when HR policies adopted are consistent with the business strategy’ (Kinnie et al. 2005, p. 9).
The validity of both of these approaches has been questioned (Paul & Anantharaman 2003; Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton, & Swart 2003; Wright & Boswell 2002) due to both approaches assuming that the organisation’s HR policy will be operationalised and implemented throughout the organisation and have the intended effect and impact on all employees who work for the organisation (Kinnie et al. 2005). But the nature and complexity of organisations, the different types of employees and the different forms and means in which policies are communicated, creates an issue for how consistently accepted any HR policy could be (Melian-Gonzalez & Verano-Tacorante 2004; Wright & Boswell 2002). What is clear is that how policies are perceived by all organisational stakeholders, how they are implemented and the overall experience of the implementation and operationalisation of the policy into the organisational psyche is what is critical to any policy living in an organisational setting (Kinnie et al. 2005; Purcell et al. 2003).

Grandey, Cordeiro & Crouter (2005) suggest that as ‘men are unlikely to use parental leave and other policies designed to decrease work-family conflict, more societal-level changes may be needed to influence job satisfaction for both members of a dual-earner couple’ (p. 319). A multiyear action research project undertaken in a company in the USA in 1997, found that even though the company had an array of policies and processes promoting flexible work arrangements for employees, the policies were barely used. The research found that this was for two reasons. Firstly, employees made the assumption that the organisation’s family benefits applied only to a small group of employees, namely women with young children. Secondly, employees felt that they would suffer negative career repercussions if they took advantage of the organisation’s family benefit programs. These assumptions and feelings led the organisation’s policies relating to work/life balance to be underutilised, particularly by male employees, single workers and career-oriented females with children (Bailyn, Fletcher & Kolb 1997).
The issues for successful work/life balance policies are apparent from the literature. There is a need for organisations to understand the dynamics of their employees’ family unit and appreciate that it is not always the people with a traditional family unit that need balance. Management and organisational culture need to reflect this. Management needs to be more accepting and understanding of employees’ needs. Leaders of organisations need to actively embrace the work/life balance message and respond to the demands of employees. By promoting a positive attitude to employees who seek balance in their lives, leaders can actively promote balance in the organisation. The positive outcomes will lead to a more balanced employee who is more productive and innovative in the work environment, thus resulting in a more engaged workforce and for the most part increased organisational outputs. The links between effectiveness of policies and the management of generations in the workplace is a key theme of this research.

3.4 Conclusion

The awareness that there is a difference and a change in the working styles and preferences of employees is prevalent in most of the literature. It is clear from the literature that strong leadership is required for effective organisational cultures and management styles need to be examined and realigned with the needs and demands of today’s workplace. The drawing together of the external factors and the internal happenings of the work environment encourages a greater understanding of the nature of the work environment at present. As change continues and organisations react to the changing environment, employees also evolve and change with their surrounds.
This study will draw on these conclusions and focus on the generational impact of the issues outlined in the literature. The next chapter details the methods used and approach taken in this research.
Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological constructs and approaches used in undertaking this research. Details of the methods used to collect data, the tools and approach used to code, store and organise the data is provided in this chapter. The participants who took part in this study are listed, as is the process and enquiry undertaken along with the themes and the questions discussed with participants. In line with the aims and objectives of the research the methods are qualitative and designed to capture rich, in-depth data at all three stages of the study.

4.1 Research Aims and Questions

Epistemology relates to how truth and knowledge are defined in the research context (Lincoln & Guba 2000). How the researcher views epistemology is defined by the term “paradigm”. A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (metaphysics) that guide action. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world”, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its regions (Guba 1990, p. 19). The epistemology supporting the methodology for this investigation
is grounded in “Interpretivism”. Interpretivism suggests there are multiple realities, and
realities can differ across time and place (Neill, 2003) or even generations.
From this view of the world the aim of this research is to capture a snapshot in time of the
working styles and preferences of employees in selected Australian organisations from a
generational perspective. The aim is to gain an insight into the participants’ work
environment and to understand their place in the world of work and their place as a
member of their generational cohort.

The primary question of this research is:
How do generational differences impact on preferred working styles of the modern
worker?
The secondary research questions are:
- How have the effects of societal, environmental and technological change impacted
  on the generations at work? and
- What are the implications of generational change for organisations and how can
  managers’ best mitigate the negative impacts and exploit the positive differences?

4.2 Research Design
Due to the nature of the exploratory questions and the nature of the information being
sought in this study, qualitative methods have been used to explore and gather rich, in-
depth data to tap into the working lives of the generations at work. The research design of
this study incorporates a number of qualitative methods and approaches:

   Qualitative methods are based on the premise that social reality exists as
   meaningful interaction created by individuals and is known through
   understanding the meanings people give to their human experiences. …This
   method is usually employed when the researcher is attempting to understand the
phenomena under study in order to develop conceptual insights rather than test hypotheses (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander 1995, p. 164).

Myers (2000) suggests that ‘a major strength of the qualitative approach is the depth to which explorations are conducted and descriptions are written, usually resulting in sufficient details for the reader to grasp the idiosyncrasies of the situation’ … ‘or describe the corresponding phenomenon’ … Myers notes that ‘one of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions’ (p. 4).

The key feature of applied qualitative research is that the sample of participants is small in number but intensely studied and that it typically generates a large amount of information, which is coded and analysed. Qualitative studies are also designed to make possible analytical generalizations and allow for selected cases to fit with general constructs but not statistical generalisation (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn 2000).

An underlying assumption of the interpretivism paradigm is that the breadth and in-depth nature of the study assists in examining a situation and is needed in order to understand a phenomenon in its entirety. ‘Interpretivism proposes that there are multiple realities, not single realities of phenomena, and that these realities can differ across time and place’ (Neill, 2003 p. 1) or generations and life experiences.

The complexity of organisational and business activity can be likened to an onion with complex layers that make up the culture and the true reality of a social system, such as work (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000). Diagram 2 illustrates the design of this study using the analogy of an onion and how, through investigating the reality of different layers, the research un-taps the reality of a multigenerational workforce.
The global nature of the research in this study is described as an interpretive constructivist approach in the research methodology literature. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), ‘all research is interpretive, guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied’ (p. 26).

Lincoln & Guba (1985) initially described this approach as “naturalistic inquiry” whereby reality is constructed in the minds of the individuals who participate in a natural setting and the human instrument - the participant, is the medium for collecting data through the use of such methods as one-on-one interviews, group interviews, and field notes as opposed to such non-interactive instruments as surveys and questionnaires and other quantitative tools. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) state that constructivism is the more correct term to use when referring to the approach once known as naturalistic inquiry. Constructivism is the term used in the social sciences regarded as the more recent concept for interpretive thinking.

The interactions between the researcher and the participants contribute to the tacit knowledge constructed within the research context, as opposed to objective knowledge.
sourced from other quantitative data-gathering means. The focus of this approach is concerned with portraying the lived realities of the individual or generational cohorts in this study using in-depth interviews and group interviewing methods to obtain an insight into the social phenomena of a multigenerational workforce.

The interpretations and findings from this study represent a snapshot and are not a basis for generalisations across other settings, but more an in-depth investigation into the attributes of the three generational cohorts analysed. However, the rich information gathered will enable deeper understanding of each generation’s experience in the workplace. The literature on generational cohorts includes a number of studies, each adding to the knowledge of this enigmatic phenomenon. The findings of this study are limited to three generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) in large Australian organisations.

The data collection methods of this study were designed to collect “rich” in-depth data. These methods include field notes, two rounds of in-depth interviews, and group discussions with employees from across four industry sectors, and a short questionnaire administered to the group interview participants. Data analysis techniques, including the coding of the findings into themes, were applied to assist in analysing the data collected and assist in the identification of and interpretation of patterns and trends.

4.2.1 Triangulation of Data

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) note that ‘qualitative research is inherently multi-method in focus. However, the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects and attempts to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question’ (p. 5). Thurmond (2001) remarks that triangulation is a combination ‘…of at least two or more theoretical
perspectives, methodological approaches, data sources, investigators, or data analysis methods’ (p. 1).

By using triangulation, researchers ‘decrease, negate, or counterbalance the deficiency of a single strategy, thereby increasing the ability to interpret the findings’ (p. 1).

Triangulation in this study, applies to the data sourced (see Diagram 3), rather than the method, to increase the understanding of generations in the workplace. The researcher was able to view the issues and key themes in contrast with each other and from ‘divergent vantage points’ (Dooley 1995, p. 260).

**Diagram 3: Triangulation of Data**

4.2.2 *Convergent Interviewing*

As noted earlier a number of approaches have been undertaken in this study, by way of methods used to gather data from various sources and to seek out the reality of the current workplace environment. The first technique used in this study, to identify the issues and trends surrounding the changing nature of work and the factors that influence and impact of generational cohorts in Australia was convergent interviewing. This tool for the most part is employed by action researchers and in pilot studies to identify issues and trends (Dick 1990). Convergent interviewing provides more precise and detailed information than can usually be expected from unstructured interviewing methods, due to the
interviewing method using structured process, unstructured content, and a procedure for increasing the rigour of qualitative information (Dick 1990).

Convergent interviewing is the bringing together of initial ideas and refining them to assist in directing the method and approach used in the subsequent stages of the research. ‘Convergent interviewing proceeds by way of “successive approximation”: questions, answers and method are each slowly refined’ (Dick 1990, p. 3). This is illustrated in Diagram 4.

![Diagram 4: Convergent Interviewing](image)

**Source:** Adapted from; Dick, R. 1990. Convergent Interviewing, p. 3, Fig 1

The convergent interviews were conducted using “Elite Interviewing”, a technique borrowed from political sciences when conducting semi-structured interviews with “Elite” decision makers or persons, who are able to inform on a particular area under enquiry (Burnham et al. 2004). Elite interviewing is ‘used whenever it is appropriate to treat a respondent as an expert about the topic in hand’ (Leech, 2002, p. 663). Expert practitioners were interviewed in stage one to establish the relevant themes and topics to be discussed with the generations in the workplace in the second stage of the research. Much of the literature on generations in the workplace is USA based and this exploratory
approach was needed to identify issues and trends that were relevant to the Australian context.

### 4.2.3 Group Discussions

Having a discussion with a homogeneous group of people is an effective means of gaining insight into a range of themes and issues and is for the most part a focused interview between six to twelve participants. Similar to focus groups, a technique developed in the 1940s by marketers to assess consumers’ attitudes and opinions of advertising and marketing activities, the researcher takes on the role of the group moderator, facilitates the discussion and encourages participation and input from the participants in the group. Conversation is centred on a list of scripted questions (Minichiello et al. 1995). Cassell & Symon (2004) suggest that from a social and organisational research perspective, focus groups are now being used more frequently for brainstorming social and organisational problems.

Saunders et al. (2000) warn that one issue of gathering people together in a group discussion or focus group is that the group setting may inhibit the individual contribution to the conversation. ‘This may be related to lack of trust, perceptions about status differences or because of the dominance of certain individuals’ (Saunders et al. 2000, p. 269). Minichiello et al. (1995) also caution the researcher to be aware of the presence of ‘group think’ (p. 66) due to the participants not being independent in their thought while present in a group situation.

### 4.2.4 Realist Interviews

In the second and third stages of the data collection “realist interviews” were employed to undertake the data collection phase in the four participating organisations. Realist interviews tend to be more structured than other forms of qualitative interviewing
techniques due to the need to compare and contrast, ‘…the need to ensure that different participants’ accounts and different types of data can be systematically compared’ (Cassell & Symon 2004, p. 12). These stages of the research were undertaken in order to understand the reality from the generational employee groups and from the organisational perspective (through the executives).

Kinnie et al. (2005) notes that it is ironic that so few studies ‘actually collect data directly from the very people who are seen as central to organisation performance - the employees’ (p. 10). Wright and Boswell (2002) argue that any research attempting to demonstrate a relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) and an organisation's performance stands on firmer ground when assessing the actual practices rather than the intended policies. This may imply that there are validity issues by only asking those that develop policies and not seeking opinion from those that use them (Wright and Boswell, 2002). Kinnie et al. (2005) agrees, stating ‘that research on HRM and performance needs to be employee centred rather than policy focused if the chain between policy and performance is to be understood and measured’ (p. 11). It is for this reason that this research has examined and enquired through various means and levels of the organisations, tapping into the intended policy versus practice debate, which is alive and well in many organisations. The richness of data gained through this process has come from all sides of the debate and from all corners of the organisation.

4.3 The Data Collection Process

This section outlines the processes used to collect the data for the research. The data collection process and the research schedule are explained, as is the three stage process of the research, along with the aims and objectives of each stage. The ethical considerations observed through this research are explained along with the limitations to the research.
Stage one of the data collection incorporates the Elite interviewing, while stage two was conducted within four organisations and included the generational group discussions with employees. Stage three was also held in the same four organisations using interviews with senior and executive level management.

The data for this study was collected between October 2003 and June 2005. Stage one interviews were conducted at times that were convenient to the interviewee. Stage two was undertaken in its entirety in September 2004 with 13 group discussions being conducted. Stage three was undertaken in the months following, from late October 2004 to March 2005 (see Table 5 – data collection schedule).

Table 5: Data Collection Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>04</th>
<th>05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Nov</td>
<td>Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 Stage One – Elite Interviews

Stage one of this research involved undertaking individual convergent interviews with experts working in the areas of human resource management, strategy, leadership development and training and social demography. The semi-structured convergent interviews took place from October 2003 to June 2005.

The aim of this stage was to refine the themes to be used in the second stage of this research. In particular the objectives were to:

- Identify the main workforce issues facing Australian organisations
• Identify the changes occurring in the Australian workforce including preferred working styles, and attitudes towards organisational loyalty
• Gain an insight into leadership training in Australia’s larger organisations
• Identify the challenges when working and managing across generations
• Identify key trends in staff retention
• Identify employee expectations across generations and assess if there are differences noted by the expert practitioners.

4.4.1 Recruiting Elite Interviewees

Industry expert practitioners were individually selected by the researcher who identified them through networking relationships or through their reputation in the mainstream media as experts in their field. Each participant received either a phone call or email explaining the objectives of the research and an invitation for them to contribute their insights according to their area of expertise. The purpose of the recruitment of the participants in this stage of the research was to gain a broad cross-section of experts from the areas of human resource management; strategy, leadership development and training and social demography (see Table 6 – details of the Elite interviewees).

Table 6: Details of the Elite Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
<th>Position Title</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>Hudson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr</td>
<td>Bernard</td>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>KPMG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Jo</td>
<td>Mithen</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>AHRI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Sarina</td>
<td>Sorrenti</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Engaged Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Suzanne</td>
<td>Jessup</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
<td>Mahlab Recruitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Sheldrake</td>
<td>Author of “Inclusive Leadership”</td>
<td>RMIT University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Razza</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>Talent2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr</td>
<td>Garry</td>
<td>Doyle</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Garry Doyle &amp; Ass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>SEEK.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms</td>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Gamble</td>
<td>Manager Compliance &amp; Training</td>
<td>IOOF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ten interviews were semi-structured and ranged in length from forty minutes to seventy-five minutes. Prior to the interview, the interviewees all received a copy of the five themes around which the interview would be structured, giving them time to reflect and or prepare answers to the questions. They also received a Plain Language Statement and a copy of the consent form as requested by the University ethics committee. The themed questions (Appendix B) were asked in each interview in the same order. Other questions were also asked of the interviewees depending on the answers given to the scripted questions, giving the interviews a more semi-structured conversation style at times. Following are the themes discussed in the interviews:

1. Main issues facing Australian organisations
2. Major changes in the Australian workforce
3. Leadership in Australia
4. Working across generations
5. Retention

4.5 Stage Two – Group Discussion: Gen Y, Gen X and Baby Boomers

To gain access to the generations in the workforce, four organisations were chosen to participate in the second stage of this research. In order to prevent a sector style bias across the generations, four different industry sectors were chosen: Corporate, Education, Government and Not-For-Profit. The organisations were selected based on the following criteria:

1. An Australian organisation
2. A large organisation of more than 500 employees
3. Based in the Melbourne area
4. A workforce that included all three generations (Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y)
In order to identify common trends and issues it is important that participants be as homogeneous as possible. Therefore it was decided that participants should hold similar roles such as manager, administrator, and office workers. For example, in the education sector the workforce includes academics as well as general administration staff, so to preserve the homogeneity of the group only general staff were included.

The recruitment of participants for the second stage of the research was undertaken in two parts. Firstly, the four organisations were recruited and secondly the participating organisation’s employees from three generational cohorts were recruited. Organisational executives and senior managers were also invited to be interviewed in stage three of the research.

Recruitment of organisations to take part in the research was undertaken by approaching each organisation, firstly through contacting the HR Director formally, in writing with a letter of invitation (Appendix C) to participate in the research. The invitation also included a copy of the research proposal outlining the objectives of the research and methods to be used.

The proposal outlined what was required of the organisations and the benefits that they would gain through participating. The benefits included a report on the findings of the research conducted in their organisation and that each of their employees who participated in the group discussion would be given a double movie pass at the conclusion of the session. These benefits may have enticed the organisations to agree to participate, however after speaking with the organisational representative, all commented on their excitement about being involved in such current and interesting research as the key reason they chose to participate. Of the initial four organisations identified in the four industry
sectors, all four notified the researcher in the week following the receipt of the letter and proposal agreeing to take part in this research.

After contact was made with the organisations, one person from each organisation was appointed to liaise with the researcher regarding the recruitment of the generational groups and executives in the organisation. These people held titles such as Diversity Manager, Deputy Director HR, Manager – People, Work and Culture or Head of HR Projects. Across the four organisations, recruitment of participants was conducted by the organisation’s representative. This was mainly due to privacy laws which prevented the organisation from disclosing employee information to an external party. Recruitment of the participants was mostly conducted through a search of the employee database by year of birth, while others chose self-selection or advertised in the staff newsletters and on posters around the workplace asking for interested people to take part.

The 75 participants who took part in this stage of the research were categorised according to their year of birth into three generational groups. In total, 13 one-hour group discussions took place across the three cohorts (three groups in each organisation and one pilot group of Gen Xers). All received a Plain Language Statement explaining the research prior to commencing the discussion (Appendix D). Along with participating in a one-hour group discussion, participants of this stage also completed a short questionnaire aimed at capturing the individual’s personal information (see Appendix E). Table 7 provides a breakdown of the participants of the generational group discussions.
Table 7: Breakdown of the Number of Employee Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Y</td>
<td>1978-1994</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>1964-1977</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1945-1963</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 to 58 year old</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By undertaking a number of initiatives when conducting the group discussion and setting out some rules at the commencement of the discussion, the researcher hoped to address issues such as trust, status differences and dominance in the discussion.

Firstly, the groups were divided into their generational cohorts so as to ensure ease in the conversation. There were three groups - Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. Secondly, groups were conducted within their own organisational setting so for the most part people were familiar with each other and felt comfortable speaking in the group. Thirdly, at the commencement of the discussion a set of rules was discussed with the participants outlining the following:

1. What is said in the group discussion stays in the room
2. You may remove yourself from the group at any stage throughout the discussion without giving a reason
3. Take time to listen to other comments in the group and give everyone a chance to speak and contribute
4. Have fun and relax, this is a safe environment, and anything you say in this room will not be attributed to you as an individual, but as a generational representative from the sector you work in

By having these rules and stating those at the commencement of the discussion all groups were managed with ease, with good contributions from all participants.
The group discussions were formed around eight themes:

1. Past and future trends in the workplace
2. Generational difference
3. Interesting and challenging work
4. Work-life balance
5. Communication
6. Technology
7. Loyalty
8. Career progression

Appendix F includes the specific questions asked in the discussion groups.

4.6 Stage Three - Executive Interviews

Following the group interviews with the employees, interviews with executives of the same organisations were conducted to obtain the ‘management/organisational’ view (Kinnie et al. 2005). Fifteen executive level and/or senior managers participated in a one hour semi-structured interview with the researcher, and were asked to make comments on the similar areas to that of the generational discussion groups (see Appendix G for coding classification). The aim of this stage was to gain a greater organisational perspective and to assess any disconnect between executive level management and employees. The core issues of generational workplace management being faced by the organisation from a strategic perspective were discussed.

The organisational representative also identified the executives to be involved in stage three. The brief to the organisational representative was to select three to five executives from a range of areas within the organisation to assist in gaining a greater breadth of understanding of the perceptions and ideals of the organisations policies, strategies, and
culture. Some organisations had problems in gaining acceptance from some executives who cited lack of time and relevance as reasons why they preferred not to participate in the research. The executives received a Plain Language Statement (Appendix H) from the researcher seeking their participation in the research and follow up contact was made to schedule the interviews. Overall, four executives each from the corporate, government, and not-for-profit sectors and three executives from education sector participated in this stage of the research. Fifteen executives participated in this stage.

During the interview, the executives were asked to discuss the following topics (see Appendix I for full list of questions):

1. Management challenges
2. Future challenges for their sector
3. Generational difference in the workplace and diversity
4. Work/life balance
5. Organisational culture and loyalty among employees
6. Employee career progression
7. Retention of employees

4.7 Management of Data

The data collected at all three stages of the research were all taped using a digital recorder and transcribed verbatim. The qualitative data collected was managed with the aid of NVivo qualitative software and the small amount of descriptive data gathered from the demographic survey was then entered into Microsoft Excel. NVivo assisted in the coding of themes and the storage, organising, grouping and retrieval of the lengthy transcripts generated in this study.
The NVivo software assists in managing and synthesizing the ideas formed from the collection of data. NVivo is equipped with a range of tools for clarifying and understanding the data and assisting in addressing the research question (Richards, Richards, Barrington, & Bullen 2002). Diagram 5 illustrates the document flow and nodes used in the coding of the data gathered from the Elite interviews in stage one.

Diagram 5: Documents and Coding used to Analysis Stage One

Following the first stage of this research, themes were developed from the Elite interviews to assist in formulating the enquiry with the generational groups in the organisational setting. In the first instance, interviews were coded into general themes used in the interviews as well as themes being added during the coding process, as the need arose.

Following the transcription of the generational group discussion and the writing up of the researcher’s field notes, the group discussions were coded into the original themes and new
nodes were added as new themes arose. Upon the transcription of the executive interviews the same process was undertaken in NVivo. Diagram 6 illustrates the document flow and nodes used in the coding of the data gathered from the group interviews with the generations and the executives in the four organisations.

**Diagram 6: Documents and Coding used in Stage Two and Three**

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is an area of importance in research underpinning the validity of the result. RMIT University has clear and rigorous guidelines for conducting research. All stages in this study were carried out in accordance with the guidelines set out by the University and ethics committee approval was sought and granted for each of the three stages.
Stage one was classified as a medium level of risk due to the nature of the information being sought by the researcher. In stage one of this research, the expert practitioners’ names and organisations were disclosed in the findings. The interviewee’s voice was recorded on a digital voice-recorder and transcribed by the researcher. Participants were advised prior to the interview that the interviews would be recorded. All participants under the ethic guidelines were given the option to view the transcripts. However no participants contact the research over the duration of this research to access this option. NVivo qualitative software program was used to code and organise the interview transcripts.

Data gathered from participants was stored in a secured area. The experts who participated were all required to sign a consent form stipulating that they were comfortable with their name being used to identify them in the findings of this research, all expert participants agreed to their name being cited in the findings.

Identifying the participants of this stage was necessary due to the positions they hold and their reputation as being a reliable source of knowledge in their areas of expertise.

Participation in stage one was voluntary and no payment was made to any of the participants for their time. Interviews were conducted at a range of sites around Melbourne at the convenience of the interviewees.

Stage two was also classed as medium risk due to the nature of the enquiry and the information being sought from the participants and the personal nature of the research directly relating to their experiences, attitudes and preferences. The ethics application required that a formal letter be sent to the appropriate person in the human resource department of the targeted organisations. The letter outlined the needs of the research and the potential benefits for the organisation (see Appendix D). The organisations were asked to select employees from their employee database by age and gender. The selected
participants were invited to participate in a discussion group to be conducted in their organisation and were advised that their participation was voluntary and that they may withdraw from the research at any time.

The group discussions and executive interviews were digitally voice-recorded. Participants were advised prior to the interviews that their discussion would be analysed using NVivo qualitative software. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription company. The employees and executives who participated all received a Plain Language Statement and a letter outlining the research (Appendices D & G). All were required to sign a consent form, stipulating that they were comfortable with the knowledge that they may be quoted in the findings of the research, but that their identity would remain anonymous.

At the conclusion of each of the generational group discussions, each participant received two movie tickets for their participation. All interviews and group discussions were conducted on-site within the organisations, mainly to ensure ease of travel and convenience for the employees.

4.9 Limitations of this Research

All research has limitations and this study is no exception. Being qualitative in nature, the generalisability of the findings is limited. More specific limitations are as follows:

- Only four organisations and four different sectors were investigated in this study.
- Recruitment of participants was limited to self-selection and recruitment by an organisational representative in the four organisations. Privacy policies prevented a structured selection of individuals to participate in the generational discussion groups and executive interviews.
• The research is only a snapshot of the current situation and captures the nature of these generations at this point in time.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter explained the approach taken, the methods employed and the process of this research. The research adopted a multi-method approach incorporating the triangulation of data to bring about a holistic and valid account of the current reality faced by both organisations and employees from three generational cohorts. Ethical issues arising from this research included gaining consent from all participants, designing a research schedule that included organisations in non-competing industries, the varying selection process of participants of all stages of the research, the security of data, and ensuring the identification of the participating organisations remain un-disclosed in the reporting of the findings. The next chapter contains first hand accounts of the changing workplace from the perspectives of ten expert practitioners, focusing on the issues surrounding the management and leadership of multigenerational employees and the trends and influences impacting Australian organisations.
Chapter Five

TRENDS SHAPING THE AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACE

5.0 Introduction

This chapter explores the workplace environment and trends which are shaping Australia’s workplaces. The objective of this stage of the research is to obtain first hand accounts of what is happening in organisations in Australia regarding the work environment and workforce planning. To achieve these perspective opinions of expert practitioners working in a variety of organisations in Australia was sought. Specifically, this stage of the research aims to:

- Identify the main issues facing Australian organisations
- Identify the changes occurring in the Australian workforce including preferred working styles, attitudes and expectations
- Identify the challenges faced when working with and managing a multigenerational workforce
- Identify key trends in staff retention.

The practitioners recruited for this stage of the research are expert practitioners in the fields of human resource management, organisational strategy, leadership development and training and social demography. In all, ten expert practitioners were interviewed over the period between September 2003 and June 2005. The interviewees were asked to comment on the five topics:
1. Main issues currently faced by Australian organisations
2. Major changes in the Australian workforce
3. Leadership in Australia
4. Working across generations
5. Retention of employees

From these discussions a number of trends were noted as having an impact on the shape of the future of the Australian workforce and work environment.

5.1 Trends Shaping Australian Workplaces

The interviews revealed that there are a number of trends influencing the nature of the workforce in large organisations in Australia. These include:

- The impacts of having four generations in the workplace
- The increasing pace of change generally, but especially in technology
- The impact of globalisation of business including employee mobility and increased competition
- The changing demographics of the workforce including the ageing workforce, skilled labour shortages and increased female participation in the workforce
- An increased awareness of corporate social responsibility and corporate governance
- Increases in employee demands and expectations of technology, the organisation, management and co-workers
- The growth in the number of employees striving for work/life balance
- Growing concerns from management regarding employee attraction, engagement and retention
- The increasing need to “up-skill” and train employees and a focus on life long learning
• The challenges surrounding workforce planning for organisations in times of continuous change
• The differing working styles among employees of different generations
• The need to review leadership and management styles and behaviours to reflect current practice
• The changing views of employees, management and organisations, regarding organisational loyalty
• The need to build a strong productive and positive culture to engage employees
• The impacts and challenges of working with and managing a multigenerational workforce
• The rise of the knowledge economy

5.1.1 Impacts of a Multigenerational Workforce

Generational diversity in the workplace has sparked interest in many areas of management, with employers reflecting on the composition of the current workforce. Professor Peter Sheldrake, author of “Inclusive Leadership” and Professor of Entrepreneurship at RMIT University, remarks that there is a ...danger in the [generational] literature, to typify generations and come up with solutions that [hopefully] fit all the generations. The impact of change is what shapes a generational cohort and is what makes a generational cohort unique, hence what makes workplaces diverse and complex.

[It is then a matter of]...understanding. It’s recognizing that you may have to behave differently and the organisation may have to do some things differently.

But not to believe in blanket solutions, like, all generations are the same.

Successfully managing the generations is about recognising the differences between the generations and adopting strategies that best exploit the strengths of each generation.
Sarina Sorrenti, Director of Engage Consulting Group, has coached over 100 Australian executives and believes that:

...there needs to be a balance between recognising that there are some things that are different [between the generations], but then embracing that difference and having it work for you and not fighting against it.

The important element is awareness and gaining a greater understanding of the similarities and differences of the generations, using those differences productively.

Bernard Salt, a prominent Australian social demographer, author of the “Big Shift” and Partner at KPMG, discussed some of the differences he has observed through his work. He believes that Baby Boomers are idealists, who as hippies protested the Vietnam War and then in the 80s became the consumerists, but remained idealists in the search for something more, most focusing on wealth or status through material possessions. In the 1990s, the Boomers took on a sea change (an analogy of move to the seaside to escape the hustle and bustle of the city life), once again averting to the idealistic nature of the Boomer. Salt sees Generation Xers as the realists, an ever so slightly cynical generation, who grew up believing they had to Get real, [things are] unreal, [things happen in] real time, reality television. He suggests that Generations Xers on the whole, are cynical about the whole corporate conveyer belt scene, and are just as likely to say, ‘up yours’, I’m off to Byron Bay. The youngest generation, Gen Y, Salt notes are very different to the other generations. Salt remarks that in his experience, Gen Y, want to know in the job interview:

- What is the work environment like?
- What is the quality of training?
- What is the scope for travel?
I want to know about the experience rather than the hard cash.

Salt also notes they’re also the ethicists, remarking that they comment in job interviews that …well, I’m not going to work for a tobacco company. They [Gen Y] see ethics as very high in their value set. Salt suggests organisations need to address and assess their composition of the generations in their workplaces. Salt recalls that: KPMG employs 4,000 employees, made up mostly of Generation Ys and Generation X, run by a few ‘old fart’ Baby Boomers. So it is vitally important, particularly with organisations with a strong customer interface, client relationship that we [KPMG] are able to understand the people that make up our business and what their aspirations are.

5.1.2 The Impact of the Changing Demographics

The changing nature of the workforce demographics such as the ageing population and expected labour shortage in Australia is a major concern. Jo Mithen the Executive Director of the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) commented that:

...we had approximately 170,000 new entrants entering the labour market in Australia in 2001 and in previous years, by the decade 2020 to 2030 we’ll have 125,000 new entrants across the whole decade (Healy 2003; Sheen 2000).

...there’s no way that kind of a shift can occur without it having a profound impact on the workforce.

The increase in the number of women engaged in paid work after WWII has continued to grow and change the demographic make-up of the Australian labour force, but mainly in part-time low income and low level skill jobs. This increase is partly due to greater education opportunities for women in the 1960s and 70s, while in the 80s and 90s the career woman “came into her own” and the number of females actively participating in the workforce in professional highly skilled positions increased dramatically. For the expert
practitioners, the increase in the number of women in the workforce was a major change and one that impacts on the values, outlook and perceptions of the generations in the workforce today. Salt commented that:

*Women, thirty years ago, would not even necessarily consider completing a tertiary education. Women’s aspirations [and expectations] thirty years ago were to get married and have children. There was no better role in life for a woman in the early 1970s, than motherhood and wifedom, whereas you put that out there now, and women say, ‘come on, there’s more things in life than that’.*

*...and that is now showing through in labour force participation rates.*

Ben Hudson, the Human Resource Manager for Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia from Hudson commented on the rise in affirmative action and equal opportunity for women in the workplace. Hudson noted the increased structural changes that have occurred in organisations due to the number of women reaching executive level positions in organisations:

*...I think that [changing demographics] has been a significant change, affirmative action and equal employment opportunity for women has certainly seen a change in the structure of organisations which has led to… there now being more senior executives that are female than there were ten years ago.*

While Suzanne Jessup, a Lawyer and General Manager of Mahlab Recruitment concedes that now there is less of a social stigma attached to placing children in child care *...women have many more choices now, it is much more accepted now to put your children into child care.* There is now the opportunity for workers to “have it all”, the same as their male counterparts – a good job, a home and a family.
Jessup commented on the changes that have occurred in the workplace since the increase in women’s participation, commenting on the balance and differing perspectives between genders:

*I think it is a much better workforce when you have both genders, much more balanced. They [males and females] tend to work well together and they bring different things to a workplace.*

Angela Gamble, the Training and Development Manager for IOOF Holdings, believes that if women choose to have a career, more doors are open to them now than in the past and that they have greater choice ...*if you really wanted to be a career woman you could do it quite easily, just pin your ears back and do it.*

However, Anna Razza a Senior Recruitment Consultant for Talent2 cautioned the choice and accessibility of some professions and career paths. The planning of children will depend on the flexibility and entitlements offered to keep women in the workforce. The debate over paid maternity leave and the Australian Government’s priorities shifting toward the ageing workforce has focused employers’ attention on these key issues.

*It's going to be the human aspect, things like maternity leave, looking at those types of issues that will keep women in the workforce. I find it quite unbelievable, that the Government now is looking at changing tax laws to try and keep more mature people within the workforce, yet they still won't pay maternity leave.*

The replacement cost of diversity management was noted as an area of concern, as the cost are starting to outweigh the cost of changes in policy to accommodate diversity. A senior retiring partner at one of the top five consulting firms commented to Mithen:
…you know, we recruit 50/50 [male/female] out of school and we keep them 50/50 [male/female] right through to management level but from manager to partner they drop off, so that we've got ten per cent of our partners are women. …it costs us A$300,000 to take them from graduate to manager. Every time three of those women walk out of our organisation that's a million dollars lost.

He went on to say why you would let that happen when it just requires a different mindset.

It is interesting that through acquiring a different mindset, the retention of women in the workplace could be addressed. What is interesting to note is that it is not until the hip pocket of the organisation starts to strain and the investment in training isn’t paying the company dividends, that it becomes an organisational concern. In many cases by the time this occurs, years have passed and many people would have left the organisation, due to poor insight and inflexibility on the part of management.

5.1.3 The Knowledge Economy

Sheldrake discussed the rise of the knowledge worker and the knowledge economy as a trend which has impacted widely on the current workplaces specifically on the way in which work is done and the types of work available. Sheldrake spoke of the need for organisations to understand the complexities of the knowledge economy and suggested that:

*Knowledge, to use the words of one famous writer has a number of very strange characteristics – its, tricky, sticky and leaky. You can’t tell when a knowledge worker is working, that is why it is tricky. You can’t extract knowledge out of a person, and they don’t still possess that knowledge. So it is a very curious substance. And most of all, it is leaky, when a person leaves an organisation,*
they take a lot of knowledge with them. And that means that the whole way

that we view people as knowledge workers, requires us to think differently....

For this reason, the way knowledge workers are now managed, motivated and work is very
different from how work was conducted in the past - the old rules seem to no longer apply.

5.1.4 Increased Pace of Change

The rapid pace of change in organisational structures and ownership of the change was
something discussed by the practitioners. The pace in which organisations were being
restructured, transformed, sold off, merged, taken over and revamped was of concern for
the practitioners. For most of them, they felt that the human element was being poorly
handled by organisations. The constant and rapid change, causing insecurities to form for
many employees, especially older workers working in an environment which was unstable
and moving at a pace many employees had not been accustomed to. Garry Doyle, a
Performance Consultant, Instructional Designer and Director of Garry Doyle & Associates,
commented on the challenges for organisations during a change process and the difficulties
cased through the increasingly fast timeframes for change to take place demanded:

...the change is so rapid that the culture change needs to happen in six months.

... We can’t develop our people that rapidly. The other thing is with the change
being so rapid, the proliferation of restructuring etc. is that people are
uncertain whether they have a job. So they [employees] work for today, they
don’t work for tomorrow.

The uncertainty discussed by Doyle and the notion of working for the now or today and not
for the future is a powerful observation and one that is changing the way people work and
why people work, as well as making redundant the notion of a long-term career with one
organisation. This is also endorsed by Gamble who explored the concept of the insecurity
of employees, when undergoing organisational change, describing the constant change as
‘soul destroying’ for staff because of the insecurity of not knowing if they have a job still.

Gamble reflected on an example she is familiar with, commenting that:

There's one large company I know of and they have literally gone through a restructure every nine to 12 months for about the last five years and that just becomes soul destroying on the staff because of the total insecurity of [people thinking], am I going to have a job this time next year or aren't I? Am I going to have a new boss? Do I have to change jobs? Is the direction going to change completely? …another company I know have literally reinvented themselves and their vision and mission …constantly over the last four years. … The people are saying -where do I go? What do I do? They don't know which way to jump.

The uncertainty that Gamble describes is not uncommon and has been occurring more rapidly over the past 20 years. The instability that is occurring in organisations is shaping the future workforce by the effect it is having on all generations in the workplace. Hudson B., who describes himself as a typical Generation X manager, comments that:

…it's naïve to think that you're going to be able to operate a business over the next ten years that will stay the same - same owners, same people, same philosophy.

Salt also notes that the changes occurring in the workplace between the generations is brought about by the changing circumstances. Salt explores the social and economic situation which played out when the Boomer generation joined the workforce, which is different from the economic situation the Gen Ys are experiencing at present and Generation X before them:

… the Baby Boomers, who joined organisations at 22-23 [years of age] and without prompting were happy to just sit there and work their way up. I think that also was made easier by the fact that when Boomers were getting into
organisations in the 1970s at 22, 23 [years of age] everything was expanding so rapidly because of the population growth, then you could join an insurance company or a bank and then just naturally be lifted up by the growth of that business over thirty years. …businesses aren’t growing like that any more. …the ambitious [employees] actually have to move from organisation to organisation and that may well be as we’ve discussed, on a global geography rather than just a city based or Australian based geography.

Not all change is seen as negative, with many expert practitioners commenting that advances in technology and communications has in many cases enhanced the work environment, in particular remote access, mobile phones, and on-line technologies.

5.1.5 Technology

A considerable change which has impacted the workplace in the past 20 years has been the increasing advances of technology. Technology has modelled and shaped the workplace and has influenced job design, position descriptions and the functionality of how work is done. The computerisation of work has had far reaching impacts on productivity, the work environment, the meaning of work and changing proximity of work away from the office.

The early days of technology brought with it the notion of a fully automated world, and a world which would leave people with more spare time, but as Sorrenti explains:

*I think that we have all learned that a piece of technology in itself is not going to be the panacea of everything, but I do think that we need to think a bit smarter on what enabling technologies we can use for people to access knowledge more effectively.*

Sorrenti continued by suggesting that more training and learning needs to happen to make better use of the technologies in workplaces today, and that by doing so, workplaces could be more innovative and productive. Jessup comments that the
... immediacy of client requests and client demands and the immediacy of service expectations and delivery expectations have increased the pressure on everyone, […]as technological capabilities like email have moved through to the workplace, and seem to have increased expectations.]

5.1.6 Globalisation

The breaking down of boundaries between nations and organisations as well as advancements in technology, such as air flight, telecommunications and the internet have driven and facilitated the interconnectedness of many different areas of modern life. The globalisation of work was spoken about widely by the expert practitioners as a phenomenon which has impacted the workplace and shaped the generations - the need for organisations to compete in the global marketplace, and compete for talent with firms from all over the world for the global talent pool, were issues raised by the practitioners.

Mithen commented on the growing awareness in business and in society of a more global environment in which Australia now operates, suggesting that:

In terms of the Australian workforce...we have been forced to think more globally than ever before and that has created a broader political and economic awareness than existed ten years ago... By opening up the labour market, by opening up the financial market, suddenly the awareness has had to expand and it expanded very quickly. So in the last ten years there has been a profound shift in terms of the way all workplaces think. Nearly anybody could tell you what the Australian dollar is relative to the U.S. now.

Razza commented on the challenge of remaining competitive in a global economy and the struggle to remain 100 per cent Australian-owned suggesting that:
I think that's an issue in modern society. To be able to compete without having a global presence and remain competitive in a global economy is definitely a challenge …It's very unique to find organisations that can be market leaders yet still be Australian owned, private and only have 150 employees.

Hudson, B commented on the impact that globalisation is having on the Australian workforce suggesting that Australia’s focus towards the Asia region and away from ties with Britain, has assisted Australia in moving into the global stage and becoming globally competitive in many industries:

*I think globalisation has impacted the Australian workforce. I think we were quite insular in the way that we operated and we now have to play on a global stage and the fact that we're starting to see ourselves as part of Asia, as opposed to Europe. I think that has changed the way we operate because the workforce in Asia is extremely different to that of Europe and the way that we have to interact, the way that we negotiate trade and so on is totally different to what it was, and that has probably been in the last ten years …since the Keating [Prime Minister of Australia 1991 -1996] days when we started to turn our focus a little bit more to our own region."

Doyle made note of the number of downsizings occurring and the decline in good work practices when dealing with such changes brought about by an increase in global competition commenting that:

*... I have noticed over probably the last decade that the number of downsizings have increased and organisations are not following through with good work practices after downsizing.*
The second issue raised by the practitioners in regards to globalisation was the increasingly competitive nature for the global talent pool. Many of the practitioners made comment on Australia’s emerging challenges, of how to keep talent in Australia, to continue to grow and mature the economy while competing with other nations in the western world who are also suffering from a shrinking labour base. Mithen commented that:

...we're going to find it increasingly difficult to keep our best and our brightest here or to allow them the opportunity to go overseas and gain experience but still provide an opportunity for them to come back. Unfortunately they will be sucked overseas and the opportunities there are just so much greater than the ones we have here. I think that's a really big issue because not only is Australia facing this labour supply shortage, so is America, so is Germany, so is Italy, so is England.

Salt has observed that due to the increase in generalist education, more universal labour skills are in greater demand, talent is more mobile and more able to practise their profession across borders, more so than in the past, suggesting that:

…the growing trend in a global economy is where you have universal labour skills, universally applicable labour skills like health sciences, engineering, finance or any other number of disciplines, have a ready market around the globe. ... find a ready [growing or developing] market in the global economy, and a young medical or dental graduate in Australia can be sucked out of here and deposited in Vancouver, the US, the UK or in Shanghai increasingly in the future.

In the past, the notion of an employee “flittering off” overseas to work would have been seen as rare. But Razza explains that is no longer the case and that …we [Talent2] are
seeing more and more of that [people with international experiences] now and global experience is actually seen as an advantage on a resume. The move towards gaining experience from a range of organisations based in a range of countries is shaping the notion of “work experience” for Generation X & Y and will continue to shape the future world of work.

Salt believes that the hierarchical structure of organisations dictated that you started at the mail room and worked up to CEO, believing little thought was given to cultural change and the impact of generational composition.

It’s only recently, modern theory, I would think, late 90s, early 2000s, that the whole notion of a workforce being comprised of different generations who have different values, aspirations, experiences with life exists, and therefore the organisation needs to reflect that.

5.1.7 Casualisation

The casualisation of the workforce has also increased, with more and more roles being offered as fixed-term contracts, or as casual contracts. Jessup noted that the generational cohort you belong to generally determines the reaction of the candidate during recruitment:

Many more roles are offered on a fixed-term contract. Now for the older generation that is an unusual concept. But for the younger generation that is completely acceptable. So you have people who say ‘...what do you mean you are only giving me a job for 12 months’, where others say ‘...great, 12 month contract, terrific!’

Sorrenti believes that the roving independent workforce is the way of the future and that more and more roles will be offered on a contract basis. However, Sorrenti warns that this may result in a potential loss of tacit knowledge with the demise of organisational loyalty.
Sorrenti believes that the concern should be how do you get people who aren’t [permanent] employees to perform just as well as an employee, if not better? Organisations need to devise strategies that will motivate employees by other things besides long-term security and a loyalty to the organisation.

5.1.8 Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Governance

Corporate social responsibility and corporate governance is having a significant impact on organisations according to the practitioners. Publicity surrounding international examples such as Enron and in Australia, the collapse through mismanagement of OneTel and HIH, have brought corporate governance to the fore, resulting in higher levels of regulation and compliance now required of businesses operating in Australia and around the world. Sorrenti suggests this has only just begun to increase:

Corporate governance has just become very popular in the last two or three years, ... in the next ten years it will still be extremely important as we become more and more compliant, and as we make our directors more accountable for their decision making. I think this is a great driver for organisation accountability, openness, transparency and having integrity in what you do. I think we have all seen really bad examples of this with Enron and OneTel. But sometimes we need to see the really bad before we see the really good.

Razza commented that ...a major part of the workforce now is compliance and having to deal with it at all levels. Gamble added that corporate governance, directorship liability, occupational health and safety are all very big issues at present and will continue to be [big issues] for organisations.
The move towards a more transparent organisation has already brought change into workplaces and the effects these changes will have on the workplace are still being determined. An interesting question is what will be the differing reactions of employees from the three generational cohorts regarding these changes and work practices? Sorrenti commented on the need for CEOs and shareholders to expand and re-assess the criteria of success, in order to take a longer-term, more sustainable view of the world in which they operate. *The upsurge in corporate governance and social corporate responsibility ...are good things that will help organisations become more aware.* The increase in compliance and regulation has for the most part driven the changes seen in the organisation’s changing views of corporate social responsibility, transparency, accountability and integrity. These changes are in turn influencing the attitudes and values of the generations in the workplace currently.

Salt commented on the emergence of more organisations adopting socially responsible philosophies, such as “triple bottom line” which takes into account not only the impact of the organisation’s financial results, but also the environmental and social impact of the organisation on the community in which it operates (Elkington 1997). Salt comments on the change that has swept through organisations over the past few years:

*Who’d heard of the triple bottom line prior to 1998? Everyone, every person in society now can say well its sustainability, accountability, transparency, and you need to be seen to be engaged in all of those sorts of things. So it’s almost like the maturation of the consumerist society which has yielded three different layers.*

The rise in awareness of corporate social responsibility and corporate governance will certainly have an impact on younger generations entering the workforce now and in the coming years. It will be a normal part of conducting business for them and not something
that is different or new as it is to the Baby Boomers and some older Generation Xers. It will be interesting to note in the future how Gen Ys, will develop in regards to how they manage and lead organisations, and whether their socially responsible and ethical tendencies will shine through.

5.2 Workforce Issues in Australian Organisations

The changes occurring in the workplace are happening to all employees, but the differing perceptions of the changes and how individuals react to the pace of change is interesting to observe across generations. The workforce issues discussed by the practitioners revealed the issues concerning Australian organisation are:

- The changing expectations, demands and values of employees
- Striving for work/life balance
- Employee attraction and retention
- Training and life-long learning
- Workforce planning
- Preferred working styles
- Leadership and management styles
- Organisational loyalty
- Building a strong productive and positive organisational culture
- Impact of the multigenerational workforce

5.2.1 Changing Expectations, Demands and Values

There has been a notable change in what employees expect from their jobs, and conversely what the organisation expects from them. The demands and increases in expectations have been driven for the most part by technology, but also by restructures, downsizing, an
increase in the pace in which work is done, the immediacy in which things are expected and the changing values of the generations themselves.

Hudson, B identified that the factors influencing the demands and growing expectations are impacting on several areas of organisations:

...people expect more from an organisation, it has forced organisations to change the way they think and it comes back to the terms of engagement,

...leadership development, retention, these are things that perhaps weren't prime objectives in business [or part of] discussions had at an executive level ten years ago.

As Hudson, B. suggests, the factors driving the increase in expectations are being felt across the organisational spectrum, with an increasing number of these issues now affecting the higher level decisions of organisations at a boardroom level.

Both Salt and Sorrenti discussed the differing values and expectations of the generations as having been factors for the changes seen thus far in the workplace - noting that the generations hold differing values, which they both note as having caused friction in the workplace. Sorrenti observes that ... Ys and Xers have a very different value set to Boomers and Matures and go about things very differently in their life. While Salt has observed the younger generations instantaneous attitude, and their perceived lack of value they also subscribe to working hard, paying their dues and getting along in life, suggesting that:

Older employees have more traditional values, and might see things a little more permanently than do younger people. Younger people see it in terms of experience, training, what can you do for me, how can I get to your position as quickly as possible, without paying dues.
Sorrenti similarly notes that Generation X & Y believe they can do whatever they want to do, they don’t have to work with just one organisation any more – there is greater choice now. While Salt acknowledges that Boomers are still of the thinking that:

…people come in and then slowly build up and then reach a high point in the organisation, whereas the Y model is “bugger that”. I think I’ll stay here for a while, and then I’ll move up to a position of authority, rather than climb a mountain. And ...convincing the Boomers that they are different, it [Gen Y] is a different life form, they have different values, and those values are legitimate... nevertheless, this “pisses off” the Baby Boomers who think, now, hang on, we worked hard for twenty-five years to get to this position. You know, there are dues to be paid.

5.2.2 Work/Life Balance

The growing concern and dominance of issues concerning work/life balance was a key theme for all the practitioners. Topics included the increasing number of hours people are still working, despite the call for more balance, the shifts in loyalty affecting the dominance people are placing on their personal lives, the notion of fun in the workplace – blending work and social lives, the social isolation that comes with people working from home and the changes which have occurred in dual parenting with more women returning to the workforce.

Gamble suggested that despite the hype and discussion around work/life balance, people are still working long hours:

I think there are still a lot of people who are working unbelievably stupid hours. I think a lot of it comes back to...technology; it has actually accelerated that...

They're saying you've got to try and get the balance but it's not happening.
Jessup discussed the notion that people were meant to have increased leisure time with the introduction of technology and reflected that it just hasn’t happened:

...we all thought what was going to happen was this increased leisure time and people were going to retire in their early 50s - that is just nonsense. I think people are working harder [now] than they were ten years ago, I think that they are doing longer hours generally.

Salt believes that the discussions around a greater need for work/life balance started in the early 1990s when ...all of a sudden it was out with Gordon Gekko, he dropped dead at his desk in about 1990, and then it was in with work/life balance, life’s too short, look after your health, your wealth, your relationships, your well-being, and so this far more balanced attitude to life, to working life. At least, that’s what’s being espoused at the moment. Sorrenti believes that the importance people place on obtaining work/life balance has become intensified ...as people become more loyal to themselves and less loyal to their organisations.

Katrina Hudson, a manager at Seek Ltd., suggested that it was not just life external to the work environment that needed balance, but also internal work environments, commenting that at Seek ...we've got a motto of ‘work hard and play hard’ and so there is a lot of fun had in the workplace.

Sorrenti cautions against the trend of more people working from their home in order to obtain more balance ...its definitely the downside of people working from home; a lot of people live through their social networks at work noting that working from home can cause people to feel isolated and lose the balance they reached out for.
Jessup noted that no longer is work/life balance just about getting the women home early enough to pick the kids up from school. Increasingly the role of parenting is equally shared among both parents. Jessup reflected on the changes that have occurred in regards to dual parenting and also the role of carers with the ageing Baby Boomer generation caring for their parents.

...you also have to have recognition of dual parenting, that it is both men and women who want to have active roles in parenting. And that has been a massive change in the Australian workforce. If anyone said that 20 years ago they would have said you were a nut! So that has been a grand thing and recognition of child care responsibilities, elder care responsibilities. The Baby Boomers are of that generation where their parents are still alive, and many of them still have children living at home. So they are both looking after an older and younger generation.

Doyle commented that the notion of work/life balance differs across the generations. *Boomers are looking for quality time rather than lots of social time. Whereas the Gen Xers work preferences are more around “I work really hard, but I work 9 AM to 6 PM and that’s it”...where Gen Y is, “if I get out of here at 5 PM that’s okay but not much later”*. As Doyle points out, the different expectations held by the generations in relation to working hours is diverse and when placed in the same workplace alongside each other, tensions are sure to mount, if they are not addressed and understood by management and the groups of workers. All of the practitioners commented that the changes which have occurred in the workplace regarding work/life balance having impacted greatly on the policies and management practices of many organisations.
5.2.3 Employee Attraction, Engagement and Retention

The issues facing organisations regarding attracting the right employees and retaining them within the organisation, was widely spoken about by the practitioners as an emerging costly concern. The key underlying issues for the practitioners regarding attraction and retention of employees are:

- The changing economic and demographic shifts occurring
- The inability to attract the right people with the best fit
- The changes needed to attract a new generation of employees to organisations
- The global nature of the talent search and the scale of attraction
- The growing importance of the organisation’s brand to employees
- Having the brand promise meet employees’ expectations in the longer term

Razza suggested that while previously, we’ve seen ‘you're lucky to have a job’ attitude, it’s going to be more, well, ‘you're lucky that I'm working here’ and that's going to be a major shift within the next ten years. Razza notes that this shift is due to the changing expectations of a new generation of workers growing up in a fast moving economy and a declining labour market where demand outweighs supply. Mithen agrees, suggesting that good people are going to be in short supply and high demand and that will therefore impact on the prices for those people, the salaries of those people. Jessup agrees, commenting that:

...they [Generation X & Y] don’t want to do things that the Baby Boomer generation did, they don’t want to go from “cradle to grave”, and they don’t even necessarily want to be in a profession. ...They don’t work as hard or as long, they’re much more interested in ethics, in community involvement, in how this [work] fits in with the rest of their life. Now that is so different from the Baby Boomer generation.
Sorrenti believes that the ... *security and stability is not as important as the choice and the freedom that particularly the X and Y generation are looking for*. Sheldrake sheds some light on the irony of the fact that:

...*here we are 100 years of HR sophistication later and the only way you really find out about a person is to “bang them in the job and see what they do!”*

*Which isn’t very helpful or sophisticated - but it is true.*

Salt is aware that retaining talented staff is no longer about retaining or making sure they don’t leave and go to the competition across the street, but retaining talent so they don’t leave the country with their skills. When that does happen, Salt asks how do we as a country attract people back to work in Australia?

*The issue for Australian business is how do you actually get and retain those people when there is an increasing disposition for them to think globally, because they are not tied locally. ...I think that Australia will have to develop defensive migration strategies next decade, and if we don’t, then the issues facing organisations in Australia from the workforce will be accessing bright, young talent, and holding that talent locally next decade. It’s already surfaced I think. ...I think that the loss of youth, energy, intellect and skills from the 20 something demographic is a major issue going forward.*

Mithen suggests that: ...*we're finding already, that once they go overseas it's very difficult for them to come back because our market here [Australia] is so small*. Razza has also observed these trends as emerging issues of great concern for Australian business noting:

... *being able to attract the right individuals to an employment brand is becoming harder and harder because at the end of the day employees are becoming more and more informed and as the talent pool shrinks due to the*
ageing population. ...[younger] employees have much more of a choice than before, so it becomes more about employees interviewing employers than vice versa.

The importance of the organisation’s brand being attractive to employees and the brand promises made through marketing the organisation’s brand to new and existing employees has become increasingly important. As Razza suggests, the information made available about companies due to compliance and disclosure obligations, allows potential and existing employees to make well thought-out decisions as to their current and future situation. The importance of making realistic promises to employees when marketing the organisational brand is paramount to avoid employee dissatisfaction. The same rules around branding for products and services for customers should apply to branding service expectations for employees.

Key questions on this topic are - why do people remain with an organisation? and why do people leave their employment? Sheldrake believes it is a mixture of fear and enjoyment. The fear of not being able to find another job, or the fear of not being able to pay their mortgage. At the same time, they enjoy working in the role, the people and the business they are in and the enjoyment of being involved. Doyle believes …it’s not money – it is challenging work and appropriate supervision that usually encourages people to stay loyal. But Hudson, B on the other hand, believes that money does play a part ...remuneration is something that keeps people, but culture keeps them more ...lack of respect, not feeling recognised and rewarded is some of the reasons people leave. Sorrenti suggests that: People need to be recognised for the job they do, even a pat on the back is all it takes sometimes or a word of encouragement. Employees need to feel they belong and that they are making a worthwhile contribution. People leave all the time because they don’t or can’t get along with their direct managers. Hudson, K. suggests that managers need to
motivate them and give them different development opportunities or ...you'll lose them to another organisation. Razza believes ...communication is absolutely key in terms of why people leave.

While Jessup reflects that in the past few years Baby Boomers are leaving and changing jobs after coming to a realisation that:

*I put my head down when I was 24 and looked up when I was 50 and I’ve been in the same firm and I’ve been a partner and I have been working crazy hours and I don’t know my family and I think it is time to stop.*

This is a similar example of the growing desire for a sea change referred to by Salt.

### 5.2.4 Training and Life–Long Learning

The practitioners voiced concern over the lack of training in the workforce and the organisation’s ability to adapt quickly to change. They all commented on the need for organisations to alter their position on how they deliver employee training. Mithen suggests that:

*The issue is whether or not we're going to be able to train people to occupy the sorts of positions that are required as opposed to the positions that they perhaps might have been working in, in the past.*

Sheldrake agrees:

*People today are training and learning about capabilities they think they need for jobs that may or may not exist in ten years time.*

Salt also concurs, noting that there is a paradigm shift in the work environment and that the way we work now and the skills we have and need, will be different from those needed in the future:

*I don’t think that generally we train people well for the business roles for the future, even at a much lower level. ...that business in the future, say in the*
2020s will be a paradigm shift away from business of the 1980s through to this decade. ...the last thirty to fifty years, has been one of a paradigm of growth, build more, sell more, consume more, and built on population growth and expansion across Australia.

Therefore our training needs and skill base will also change, as the role of business shifts. The issue then for training managers suggests Gamble, is that...Generation X is all about instant gratification. So if they want to do it, you tell me the fastest way I can do it, you tell me the fastest way I can get that piece of paper in my hand. Doyle suggests...that there is going to be a real challenge in regards to basic crafts and basic skills. Trade skills... a huge shift ... I mean IT has already been such a huge shift. The decline in trade skills was spoken about widely by the practitioners and their concern for the decline in the blue collar trade-based workforce and the rise of the knowledge workforce. The fact remains - who maintains the cars, builds the houses, and fixes the pipes? As the population ages and the younger generations become more educated, the issues regarding the decline in trade skills will negatively affect the economy if not addressed. Mithen suggests that the big issue that Australia faces is not having enough labourers and trades people, which, in turn will affect the growth and health of the economy in the future.

Razza suggests that there is a strong demand for people to be more highly qualified than previously:

Even the older ones have to have qualifications now. ...I think that the younger workers will become more and more academic, a lot more technical than maybe previous generations have been.

Mithen suggests that there is a lack of a national plan for skills development in Australia and that this could very well result in a widening skills’ gap in the workforce.
The debate over specialist versus generalist training has also shifted. Sheldrake believes the debate is swinging back to generic skills, due to the rapidly changing world where competition is increasing and the need to change and be dynamic is paramount. For this reason ...it is probably more effective to give people generic skills than it is to train them in specifics. With the demand towards a generic skills base increasing, Jessup suggests that for the technical professional, who holds specific skills, and who has specialised in their chosen field, such as a technical lawyer, technical brilliance is not necessarily going to get them as far as it once did.

They need also be able to manage a team, communicate effectively with clients, have a certain degree of emotional intelligence in order to understand the psychology of the situation and still deliver a brilliant legal solution.

Jessup suggests that this is very different from a generation ago.

Gamble admits to once thinking that life-long learning was “rubbish” but now like many others, believes the notion of life-long learning and continual growing and developing is vital. People now have to accept, that not only are they doing their job but they also have to learn constantly and be pushed that little bit further. While this is a new way of thinking for many older workers, it is something Gen X and Y have come to expect and demand from their time at work.

5.2.5 Workforce Planning

Workforce planning was raised by the interviewees as a continual challenge in organisations. “Succession planning” or as Sheldrake refers to it “replacement planning” was a particular topic of debate for the practitioners. There were arguments presented for and against succession planning and the role of organisations in mapping out employees’
career paths. The idea of long-range forecasting in business and a ten year strategic plan with regards to workforce planning was questioned by the expert practitioners. Doyle believes that organisations are becoming flatter in their structures, leaving succession and career paths more difficult to map and predict. So organisations are tending to bring [people] “in”, rather than bring them “up”. Doyle believes that organisations …want to get more out of [people/employees] now, not worrying about tomorrow….Mithen suggests she doesn’t see…enough workforce planning occurring from within the HR profession and business.

Mithen states that she finds it:

…it’s really astounding that…HR people aren’t actually looking out beyond their own industry and see what’s emerging demographically, socially, economically, politically and saying how do these things impact on our business’ capacity to operate? … I think HR needs to take a much longer-term view of the workforce than they've really ever done.

Razza commented that succession management is so important in moving an organisation forward, especially …given the transient nature of the workforce and the difficulties in ensuring high engagement and high retention. Razza believes that if you don’t identify the organisation’s key talent early on, the organisation runs the risk of being left with substantial gaps in their workforce once the Baby Boomers retire. Razza notes that you've got these transient Xers that come and do great things for two years but then they're gone and you're left with big holes.

Mithen reflected on the nature of the changing workforce …more than 50% of graduates from universities are female, and how are you structuring your workforce to deal
particularly with female concerns? If half the workforce’s new entrants are women, what are organisations doing to an environment that allows women to flourish in a supportive environment? The testosterone driven organisations of the past are going to have to make changes and accommodate the new generation of female workers who have undertaken higher education and who are expecting equality in the work environment.

Razza comments that is one of the main reasons people come and talk about changing roles to consultants at Talent2. They are feeling that they lack opportunities to progress and that there is a lack of career structure in their current organisation. People feel that there isn’t the training provided and there isn’t the leadership to drive their progression in the organisation. Razza laments that:

…one of the great things that any organisation does is reward the good performer with leadership roles. But it doesn't mean that that a good performer is a good leader but that's how they get rewarded and that is self perpetuation of the fact that then they, as a bad leader, find it difficult to train [and mentor] other staff.

And so the cycle continues.

Hudson, B. comments that secondments to other departments are a fantastic way in which to engage and train staff with progression and leadership opportunities within the organisation:

The new age of leadership, in terms of leadership development recognises the systems and programs that… encompass all of the traditional ways of thinking but also looks at things like getting people involved in projects, they look at secondments. They look at sending people overseas [on assignment].
Sheldrake agrees, commenting that for large organisations and large multinationals, employee development planning is the key for success. *...taking people with potential and putting them into different kinds of jobs in the hope that they move up in the organisation, is an extremely good idea.* However, Sheldrake qualifies this by suggesting that there is an area of contention about succession planning among older managers and board members, who still see succession planning as critical, and who continue to groom people from inside the organisation to take over. Sheldrake puts forward the idea that replacement planning may well be the key to filling the gaps in organisations and not succession planning by suggesting that:

*...a lot of younger managers say that succession planning is a waste of time and that when you need to find someone, you go out and find them, and find the best person for the job. So I think that it is a slightly contentious area. I think that it is confused by the fact that there are quite different requirements for replacement planning.*

Hudson, B. believes that the way in which to develop leaders in an organisation is not through leadership development courses and succession planning programs, but *the way they prepare future leaders is through mentoring*....

### 5.2.6 Management and Leadership Styles

It is a common view that over the past 20 years the styles of management and leadership have changed and adapted to the environment in which organisations now operate. The expert practitioners insisted this is not always the case. For some organisations the management styles employed in the past are still employed today, with little or no regard to the changes that have taken place and the needs and desires of the employees working within the organisation. The “command and control” management styles employed by many organisations in the industrial age have remained but for other organisations a more
consultative, less hierarchical, and more flexible style of management has been employed. Sheldrake believes the new models are about enabling, about supporting, about building consensus, rather than about direction and control. ...There is kind of a big revolution going on, but like any big revolution today the number of people using what you might call “21st Century leadership” [style] are still relatively small.

With the rise of the knowledge economy and the emergence of the knowledge-based organisation, many methods of managing employees who have the knowledge have also emerged. Sorrenti remarks that ...recognising emotional intelligence, over just the hard technical intelligence is shaping the management of people. Jessup concurs:

...the whole issue of emotional intelligence is important ...it is not just your technical ability, because to be a good leader, you still need those technical skills, and the business that you are in [does too]. But you also need to relate to people, you need to be able to ask them about things impacting on their lives apart from work. I think a leader should have a very holistic approach, you need to be able to have the vision, communicate the vision and you also need that empathy and that relationship building to be able to take them with you.

Hudson, B. suggests, that while emotional intelligence is important, it is often viewed as “soft and fluffy” by managers who don’t necessarily understand it, ... it's [emotional intelligence] kind of a bit of a buzz word out there at the moment and it's a bit fluffy in some areas but if you really nut it down and review what it's trying to get at, I think an effective leader has to have high emotional intelligence. Gamble agrees, suggesting that people’s feelings and emotional needs should be taken into account when managing them and that people should not be …treated like machinery and that good management today should be about recognising that.
Hudson, B. suggests that the generational change sweeping through the organisation is likely to bring change in the way in which people are managed:

…the best leaders I've seen have been the Gen X leaders because they understand the motivators of the employees better than people who have been reared through the Baby Boomer era, where management thinking was, as long as we pay people, that's all we have to do, you know, they'll stay forever and [the managers] don't have to worry about anything else.

Jessup also believes that …the newer generations coming through will actually change the hierarchies and change the organisations in a very positive way, through engaging people on a new level and making them feel an emotional connection with the organisation as well as managing “people” and not just the “process”.

Another generational shift noted by Hudson, B. is that traditionally Baby Boomers and even some Generation Xers wouldn’t necessarily engage with a new leader, if they don’t have tenure within the organisation. The sentiment expressed:

…what do they know, they've just come into this business, I've been here for ten years, how can they tell me how to do this? But I think there's a shift away from that now.

This is due to the fact that more and more leaders are being brought into organisations and are less often being groomed internally for the top positions.

Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit was recommended by Doyle who suggests that managers and leaders need to be more entrepreneurial, need to take greater risks and encourage more entrepreneurial behaviour among their employees:
By saying we don’t want to take the risk, we defeat the purpose of having entrepreneurial people and leaders. But I think that is what we need, we need to encourage more people to get entrepreneurial in their thinking and leading and create a vision for tomorrow, [and] getting people involved.

The need for more entrepreneurial thinkers in organisations is also supported by Salt who suggests that:

...the sort of business leaders we will need in the 2020s will be very lateral, fluid thinking, and they will not necessarily defer to the wisdom of previous eras elders, because previous eras elders were dealing with a different paradigm, and their business truths no longer hold in the world as it exist [will] in the 2020s.

Salt’s view is that managers of today will need to be managing and leading differently in the future, is tempered by the view that what is demonstrated today as good management practice, may well not be viewed as that in ten years’ time – nor should it be. Salt suggests that the sorts of people to come up into management and leadership positions in the future …are people that might be a little edgy today, people who think outside the paradigm, people who don’t do what Baby Boomers want them to do. Jessup also noted the informal nature of the Gen X and Gen Y employees in comparison to the Baby Boomers. …they [Generation X & Y] interact in a different way, they’re less formal, which in most cases is a good thing. These traits have been displayed not only in their working style but in their style of management.

Hudson, B. has had experience with managing and working with the multigenerational workforce, and has experienced the issue of younger Generation X and Y managers managing Baby Boomers, who were unable to work out how to motivate Baby Boomers in
their team. Hudson, B. ran a discussion session with their young managers asking them to think of:

- What generation do they come from?
- Who am I trying to lead?
- Who am I talking to now?
- What are their motivators?
- What are the barriers found in different generations? and

Trying to educate our leaders on what they might do and what they might change and that is a challenge.

Salt concedes that the problem lies with the management and business mindset:

...the problem with business is that it’s now being run by “old fart” Baby Boomers in their late forties and fifties who think that Generation Y are just younger versions of them, when in fact, Generation Y is a different life form, they have different aspirations, different values, different experiences of life at that time. You know when Baby Boomers were married with children at twenty-three, Gen Y were, backpacking throughout Europe, and have no expectation to settle down until [aged] 32, 33. But the problem with business is that business mindset is often management’s mindset, [which] is still back in about the 1980s, when in fact the world has moved on, the generations have moved on ...is pushing in a different direction.
5.2.7 Loyalty and Life-Long Employment

The notion of loyalty and life-long employment is something that has changed over the past 20 years and is a trend discussed by the expert practitioners in this research. Jessup commented that:

*The change of status of employment, the whole notion that you don’t have a job for life is a fairly scary thing for a lot of people. ...loyalty doesn’t exist anymore! I think that it is an outdated notion.*

Sheldrake suggests that the continuous trend away from life-long employment has a number of consequences including the way people perceive themselves and their work. Sheldrake believes that we as a society are moving more toward:

...where a person works for an organisation and the person looks after themselves and are more likely to move [organisations], they’re more likely to develop more skills, more likely not to contribute to the organisation, and it is their task to sort out their career progression.

The individualist nature of the work contract and the notion of employees looking after themselves and their own career is a shift away from the traditional employer/employee relationship of the past. Some of the practitioners attribute this shift to the turbulence organisations have endured over the past 20 or so years. Razza believes the shift has been driven by:

...the fact that a CEO now has three financial quarters to make a difference and what's the easiest way to make a difference - is to make change. …that has caused that constant change in the workplace [and business]. People become conditioned to that and also become sceptical with no job for life any more. So people always have their eyes open and on the look out for the next best option, just in case they lose their current job. I hear people say, ‘everybody deserves a good redundancy once in their life!’ I mean, that's a vile thing to say.
The increased occurrence of redundancy heightens the acceptance of the constant and forced change in workplaces and a move to retrenchment and redundancy becoming a part of working life - however grim or vile this may be. Indeed, many Gen Xers would not consider redundancy a “vile” thing at all, but would most likely see it as a great opportunity to embark on yet another career.

Sheldrake reflects on the notion of 40-years of long service and comments that:

*We just don’t have 40-year loyal service employees in many organisations.*

*What you have is organisations looking for people with particular skills, particular capabilities and whom they may want to retain from two years or 20 years. But they don’t know that on the day they hire them.*

Hudson, K. comments that loyalty is also changing from the employee perspective. *I think the average tenure now is only three years, which is very low in comparison to the average tenure for older generations.* The shift towards more jobs and multiple careers is changing how younger generations are looking at their time at work and what they get out of the experience.

### 5.3 Conclusion

These expert practitioner views demonstrate that there have been major changes in the Australian workforce and there is an expectation of continued and rapid change. Management challenges will continue to be complex and diverse when leading, managing or working in a multigenerational work environment. The practical experience of the expert practitioners, in the field has highlighted the current trends influencing the workplace environment in Australian organisations. These trends are summarised as:

- The increasing pace of change generally, especially in technology
The impact of globalisation

The changing demographics, including the ageing workforce, labour shortages and increased female participation in the workforce

Knowledge management and the rise of the knowledge worker as an employee category

Corporate social responsibility and corporate governance

Increase in employee demands and expectations to match their own values

The growth in the number of employees striving for work/life balance

Growing concerns regarding employee attraction, engagement and retention

The increasing need to up-skill employees, and to encourage life-long learning

The challenges surrounding workforce planning for organisations in a time of change

The differing working styles among employees of different generations

The need to review leadership and management styles and behaviours

The changing views regarding organisational loyalty

The need to build a strong productive and positive culture to engage employees

The varying impacts of working in and managing a multigenerational workforce

In summary, the experiences of the practitioners confirm that there are very real differences in the workplace attitudes and behaviours across generations, and the management requirements and skills for working in a multigenerational environment. The findings confirm the reality of globalisation, international competitiveness and the challenges in managing multigenerational workforce. The findings presented in this chapter provide a solid base from which to frame the data collection phase of stage two of
this research within four Australian organisations. The next chapter explores these themes with 75 participants from across three generational cohorts.
Chapter Six

GENERATIONS AT WORK

6.0 Introduction

This chapter documents the findings of the research conducted in four Australian organisations across 13 groups of three cohorts (Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) of generations at work. The findings have been divided according to the generational cohort to whom they belong and analysed into two categories: 1) work environment including social, environmental and technological impact and 2) working styles.

This chapter discusses the thoughts and opinions of 75 employees across four industry sectors about “work” in the modern Australian workplace. The qualitative nature of the research provides rich insights into the world of three generations at work, and highlights the interplay between working styles and working environments. There is a strong theme amongst all generations for the need for a balance between their work and home life.
6.1 Overview of Generational Participants

This study interviewed 75 participants through 13 discussion group sessions (22 Gen Y’s, 28 Gen X’s and 25 Baby Boomers) from four Australian organisations across four different sectors - Corporate, Education, Government and Not for Profit. Both males and females were represented in the study (see Table 8 for gender break-down of participants).

Table 8: Gender Break-down of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in chapter four there was not an even number of males and females used in this study due to the nature of a non-controlled recruitment process undertaken by the four representative organisations. However, it was not the aim of this study to investigate the gender differences among the generational cohorts.

A short individual questionnaire was completed by each participant at the beginning of each discussion group. This information provided a demographic profile of the participants in terms of age, education, marital status and country of birth, as well as some questions regarding workplace rewards and how they seek employment (see Appendix E).

In this study, the average Gen Y had been employed in the workforce approximately two and a-half years, while Gen Xers had been employed for an average of nine years and Baby Boomers for an average of 29 years. All participants in this study had completed at least four years of secondary education, while the majority held an undergraduate degree or higher (see Table 9 for a break-down in education levels).
Table 9: Highest Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Tertiary</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma or Course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters (Professional or Research)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data was gathered on the household structure to assess the living arrangements of the participants to identify areas that may arise in the work/life balance discussion and to understand home/life pressures across the groups. There was an even distribution of participants of those living as singles, in a marriage and those living in a de-facto relationship. Table 10 provides an overview of the household structure of the participants.

Table 10: Household Structure of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De-facto</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>With Children</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Under 6 Years of Age</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>6-15 of Age</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Over 15 Year of Age</em></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data was collected on the number of participants who have children living at home. This information was used to assess the number of participants with children living in their home on an average week. It is a popular belief that the reason people demand flexibility in their work is due to the commitments they have to their children at home responsibilities (Grandey, Cordeiro & Crouter 2005; Meyers & Gornick 2005; Voydanoff 2005; Winslow 2005). While this may have been a reason for consideration for some workers, this particular study of a selection of the workforce across three generations contained a large majority of the participants who did not have responsibility for children living in their home on an average week. Overall, 57 of the 75 participants stated that they have no
children living in their home on an average week. Yet a key feature of their preferred working style was to have a high degree of work/life balance. As can be seen in the following sections, the majority still demand flexibility in the hours they work.

While only two of the 75 participants reported having children under six years of age, eight reported having children aged six to fifteen years living at home with them and another eight reported that they have children aged over fifteen years and older, living at home. None of the Gen Y participants had children. Only two of the Gen X participants had children living with them at home on an average week.

The participants were not accepted or rejected on the basis of the country of birth, this information was requested so the researcher could be made aware of any cultural differences that may arise in the data and to ensure that a good cross-section of Australia’s multi-cultural community was represented in the study. The large majority of participants were born in Australia, however a range of other countries were represented by the participants. Table 11 lists the generational groups and their countries of birth.

Table 11: Country of Birth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of Sample Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri-Lanka</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the 2001 Australian Census, 72.6% of Australians were born in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2001) which is broadly representative of the participants in this study, with 77% stating that they were born in Australia. Ten other countries were represented in this study, with 23% of participants being born outside of Australia. In any case, the majority of the participants stated “Australian” as being their nationality or cultural group with which they identified.

6.2 Work Environment

The modern workplace contains a range of complex issues. The group interviews explored eight key themes that were divided into two categories - the work environment and working styles. The “work environment” describes the complex modern day work environment and is the organisational environment which influences many aspects of how participants now undertake their work day.

“Working style” describes the participants preferred styles of working and describes how the work environment had impacted on the styles and preferences of the three generations. Participants were asked to discuss the events that occur in the work environment and the impacts of an ever-changing work environment and how these affect their work life. This in turn influences working style and workplace preferences of the participants and in some cases framed the differences among the generations reported in this study. A range of areas were discussed including:

- Advancements in technology
- The increase in women’s participation in the workforce
- The increase in casualisation and the move away from 9-5 to a 24/7 global economy
- The increase in more mobile and flexible work options
• The increase in the intensity and complexity of work, and
• The increases in global trade and globalisation.

The following sections details the social, environmental and technological impacts on the workplace and the generations at work.

6.3 Social Impacts

Social impacts are those that are driven by changes in the broader society and affect how we live and work. Examples of these impacts are increasing levels of education in the workplace, casualisation, gender balance, and the ageing population.

6.3.1 Increase in Level of Education

Participants from all generations commented on the increasing levels of tertiary qualifications and the need for more transferable skills. This is a trend identified by the OECD who expect that the number of years of education for a child who is aged five in 2003 is between 19 to 21 years in Australia (OECD 2005 p. 4). This has been a substantial increase if we consider that only half of the people born in the 1940s finished secondary education, while three-quarters of those born in the 1970s went on to finish secondary education, which is ‘…now the essential baseline qualification for successful entry into the labour market’ (OECD 2005 p. 1).

The increasing number of qualifications held by new entrants in the workplace is causing frustration among the generations, with Gen Ys voicing their anger at being treated like lower level workers by less qualified employees in their mid-fifties. Ys believed that there is resentment among the Boomer cohort that they had to work their way up and that Gen Ys come on to a graduate program and progress faster through the organisation. Gen Ys with tertiary qualifications admit to hearing comments from Boomers such as, …you kids with Uni degrees … think you know it all! Gen Y expressed that they felt that Boomers are
insecure about their own level of qualifications, whilst Boomers expect recognition for the things “experience” teaches.

6.3.2 Casualisation

The term “casualisation” includes all casual forms of employment, besides the traditional 38 hour week full-time model. This discussion also included how casualisation had impacted on organisational culture, organisational loyalty, multiple careers and the notion that a career or job for life was now a thing of “yester year”. Increasing casualisation was observed by all generations as a trend that has influenced the way they work and how organisations now operate. The casualisation of the workforce has affected each of the cohorts differently, due to their age and years of experience in the workforce. Boomers commented on casualisation as something that had influenced their children, (mainly Gen X and Gen Y), observing that their children had never held a full-time or permanent job. Gen X commented that there were now more short-term jobs available, which had allowed them to move around and work on interesting projects, obtaining a large number of various skills and experience. The negative for the Xers was that some found they were missing out on valuable training due to never being at the same job or organisation long enough to gain the technology related skills in order to progress to another level.

For the most part, Gen Ys in this research were either in their first full-time job, predominately in the form of a graduate program within an organisation, or were on a casual contract with the organisation. For the Gen Y participants, casualisation was more a way of life, commenting that casualisation was something that their parents have not had to really deal with in the main. Table 12 presents how the participants of this study categorised their current position. While the majority held full-time positions on a permanent contract. What was noted was the number of Gen X and Gen Y holding part-
time and casual positions, along with long-term (greater than 12 months) and short-term (less than 12 months) contracts.

Table 12: Classification of Current Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Boomer</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulltime</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Contract</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term Contract</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term Contract</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3 Gender Balance

The increase in female participation in the workforce was noted by the generational cohorts as a major change in the work environment. Boomers noted that there had been an increase in the participation of women in the workforce, while Gen X have observed a shift which in some cases has seen women becoming the primary breadwinner and the male partner looking after the children. Gen Y commented that while women’s participation had increased in the workforce they failed to see equality in the workforce with very few senior positions being held by women. This was also viewed as an issue in the Australiana Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Boardroom report:

…26 percent [of Human Resource managers surveyed] said women have different priorities to men and 24 percent said women are more focused on their families than men. 54 percent of Australian HR and finance managers say there is no difference in the work done by male and female employees. Only 1 percent surveyed believes male executives outperform female executives. 23 percent say women employees are better at communication and passing on information to others in the workplace and 11 percent say women possess superior personnel and management skills to male executives (AICD 2005 p. 4).
These results demonstrate a difference in the work priorities between the genders in the workplace and the changing attitudes that have evolved over the years and have influenced the generational cohorts now in the workplace, but also the similarities. The AICD research highlights that two-thirds of HR and finance managers don’t see women having different priorities to men and 75% of the workplace is equally focussed on their families.

6.3.4 Flexibility in Work Practices

Mobility, the increase in flexible working hours and the places where work is done was seen by all three generations as having been an impact on the workplace. All three cohorts remarked that there was a direct link between technology enabling people to be more mobile, particularly when it comes to where and when they conduct their work. The introduction of laptops, mobile phones, email, the Internet and wireless connection all assisted the increase in flexibility and the ability to be more mobile. However, the generational groups also commented on the increase in the speed and intensity of work, noting that technology had increased expectations around productivity and the short time frames in which people expected responses. People now expect emails to be answered in minutes, if not seconds and for people to be contactable on their mobile phone 24 hours, seven days a week. Many felt pressured to spend even longer more intensive hours at their desk. Lipsig-Mumme (1997) refers to work intensification as meaning:

…the increase in work for those who remain employed, either through overtime or because fewer workers have to do the work of the departed in addition to their own work. It also means the loss of some degree of autonomy at work either as a result of new technologies, or by the introduction of new managerial techniques, or by the restructure of the employment contract (Lipsig-Mumme 1997 p. 118).
Gen X and Gen Y saw the rise in the number of project and contract workers as an opportunity for their own careers which will support the increased demand for flexibility.

### 6.3.5 Attraction and Retaining the Australian Talent Pool

Attraction and retention of high quality people are seen as areas of concern, as an increasing number of people seek global employment opportunities and choose to work outside Australia. The reduction of available talent, impacts the choices younger generations are making concerning their work environment is another area of concern – with many opting to take up a “sea change” or “tree change” (Salt 2004). With this increase in competition from international firms, organisations are going to have to be smarter in the way they recruit and how they retain employees. The need to retain Boomers at least in a part-time capacity is seen as a means of lessening the impact of them exiting the workforce completely. This is an area where organisations are going to have to manage the exit process and have flexible options available to offer retiring Boomers, as well as travel hungry Ys intent on seeing the world and gaining work experience abroad.

### 6.3.6 Ageing Population

The ageing population was identified as an important factor in regards to age diversity in the workplace and society generally by the Boomer groups. The Boomers discussed their own generation’s lack of adequate funds for retirement. There was general agreement that the concept of having flexible work contracts would allow part-time work and provide for greater options of semi-retirement, to assist them with their financial situation. In contrast Gen X identified issues such as a need for greater workforce planning, prior to the Boomers exiting the workforce. Xers commented that this had to happen now, to ensure that places are filled in the coming years and gaps are minimised.
A report published by Drake International (2005) suggests that the real issue is about providing a favourable workplace landscape that encourages older workers and provides Australian older workers with an environment that is conducive to their staying in the labour force. However Jorgensen (2004) stresses the issues surrounding the ageing workforce population cannot be rectified on command stating that ‘Older workers may lack the skills to adapt to constant organisational change and are at risk of being left behind’ (Jorgensen 2004 p. 7).

6.4 Impact of the Workplace Environment

The economic variables that impact the current and future work environment are difficult to control and are constantly changing. This research focused on globalisation, regulatory and changing structures, effects of technology, employment and overall economic health of the country.

6.4.1 Globalisation

The impact of globalisation and/or internationalisation was, in the discussion groups, mostly identified by Gen Ys, through their observation of the increase in the number of jobs going offshore, in outsourcing arrangements and their belief that this trend would also continue in the future. Gen Y noted that the whole workforce, with its increased mobility, would only become more mobile and enable the transfer of their skills globally to wherever the opportunities arose. In the past 20 years there have been a growing number of Australian companies who have moved all or part of their operations offshore mainly for cost benefit reasons.

Competition from cheap labour in the Pacific Rim countries and Eastern Europe exerts a downward force on prices. In addition, there is constant pressure on
costs from capital around the globe seeking the best return on any investment

(Tyson 1995 p. 3).

For many Boomers when they commenced work in the late 1950s and 1960s the notion of telephoning someone internationally would have almost been unheard of and for a lot of Boomers their customers and business would have operated on a state or national scale. For Gen X and Gen Y the notion of emailing people in Japan or New York daily and having their customer base as Asia Pacific is now more the norm and something they have never known to be any different. There is the ability for large multinational organisations to operate 24/7 all around the world - when Australia goes to bed, Europe wakes up and the US continues after them. This has increased the pace at which generations work at and how they think about the management of an organisation.

6.4.2 Regulatory and Changing Structures

All the generational cohort groups noted an increase in the number of regulations involved in doing business such as corporate governance and occupational health and safety (OHS), directorship liability, environmental concerns, workplace relations and corporate social responsibility. This is a very different organisational landscape from the one Boomers and Matures knew their early workplaces to be. The increase in regulations have not only impacted on the high cost of conducting business, but also on the time it takes to manage these regulations and ensuring that the business complies with the regulations. This has impacted greatly on the work/life balance of the participants. Gen Y commented on the increasing instability due to merges and restructuring to a flatter organisational structure and the decrease in hierarchy, as well as the increasing numbers of people working overseas for periods of time.
6.4.3 The Work Contract

The work contract was also identified by the discussion groups as a social impact. Work contracts encapsulated areas such as flexibility, work/life balance, career progression, training, the terms under which you are employed, short or long-term, full-time, part-time or casual. Boomers commented that there had been, and will continue to be a cultural impact on organisations, brought about by the short-term nature of employment, including a reduction in loyalty and cultural values. Gen X commented on workforce planning issues, saying they saw organisations being unprepared for the “big Boomer exits” from the workforce over the next ten to 15 years (i.e. 2015-2020).

Recent changes to the work contract concept have been introduced through new Australian industrial relations’ (IR) reforms “Work Choices” (DEWR 2006). Implemented by the Australian Government in 2006, the reforms have shaken the notion of individual workplace contracts and even the casualisation of work. Small to medium sized enterprises (SME) are Australia’s largest employers and are the main sources of employment growth. Over the past ten years small business has accounted for 70 per cent of jobs’ growth and contributes 30 per cent of Australia’s annual GDP (ITR 2005). The Australian Government believes the old IR system was impeding the growth of small business and hampering Australia’s ability to be competitive in the global market place. The new “Work Choices” reforms which came into effect on the 27th March 2006 (DEWR 2006) are yet another external change in the workplace environment that will impact both Australian workers and Australian business. The generational impact of these changes will be interesting to track and note in future years. It is still too early to comment on the impact that these changes will have in the long-term on Australian workplaces and whether there will be a differing opinion among the generations as to the workability of the new reforms. However comments made by participants in this research would indicate that
some of the younger generations would have little difficulty accepting workplace contract
negotiated directly with their employers. This is particularly so when considering many of
the Generation X and Ys positive affiliation for contract and project work in this study.

6.5 Technology Impacts

Across the three generations, all three identified and commented on the enormous
influence technology has had on all facets of the work environment. The extent to which
technology had influenced their working style and the way they managed their work
depended on the generational cohort the participants belonged to. The Boomer cohort
expressed far more of an influence from technology on their working style than the Gen X
or Gen Y cohorts. The Boomers reflected on days gone by, and spoke about the
introduction of the first computer to their organisation. Whereas the Gen X cohort
reflected more on the pace of change with technology and the need to continually re-skill
and update skills in order to remain competitive in the labour market. Gen Y commented
about technology, focusing on the great reliance organisations now placed on technology
and the Internet in order to do business.

Most participants admitted that the continuous changes in technology and the need for re-
skilling constantly challenged them in the workplace. Coupled with technology was speed
and intensity of work and managing managements’ expectations to “have things
yesterday”, which was then related back to unclear boundaries between work and life and
striking a balance. Tyson noted that ‘stresses imposed by endless waves of [technological]
change within organisations have left their mark on all management functions’ (Tyson
1995 p. 2). Ten years on, Tyson’s research conducted in 1995, was accepted by all
cohorts as strongly applicable to their sentiments.
6.6 Working Styles

This section focuses on the working styles, which are seen more as the internal workings of people in the workplace - the micro-view of the workplace and the areas that are more easily controlled by the organisation, managers and employees (see Diagram 7 for a view of the overlay of the impact).

Diagram 7: Layers of Workplace Impacts

The three areas illustrated in Diagram 7 relate directly to the internal working styles and the assumption that participants have some degree of ownership of their preferred working styles. Working style is in contrast to the work environment, which relates to the external environment. All groups discussed the differing working styles of their own generation and their perceptions of their elder or younger colleagues. Boomers discussed the level of aggression they felt that Gen Xers displayed in the workplace. Most Boomers admitted that they prefer the working style of Gen Y, as they are easier to mentor and more open to receiving advice. Gen Y agreed saying that:

*Boomers are more willing to share knowledge than Xers are.*

Boomers also commented that there was a different approach to managing people from the younger generations. The different management style was not considered to be better or worse than the way some Boomers managed, just different.
Gen Xers explained the working styles from the view of being the sandwiched generation, commenting that they felt that:

_Xers are the buffer, between Ys and Boomers – just like a first child, Ys get away with a lot more than Xers ever did!_

One group of Xers commented that:

_There are three distinct styles of working; Ys want to progress faster, Xers do their time; and Boomers believe they did their time._

Gen Xers also believed that:

_Gen Ys are less patient and [more] “gung ho” in their approach to their work, they tend not to think of the ramifications of their actions._

### 6.6.1 Relationships at Work

“Relationships at work” encapsulates a range of areas in the workplace where relationships exist. At work these include the relationships between managers and their employees; executives and their managers; the board and the executives; the executives and the employees, the CEO and their directors and so on. What was noted among the discussion group findings was the distinct difference between the relationships at work with colleagues and how the three generations view the relationship, and their contribution and involvement in the range of relationships they experience at work. Areas such as the different styles of management, authority and respect in the relationship, the hierarchy and bureaucracy of the relationship were all noted as being perceived differently by the three generations studied.

Gen Ys commented on different management styles of both Gen X and Boomers. They noted that Gen X managers tended to treat them as equals and provide them with more
stimulating work. They expressed that Boomer managers gave less stimulating and less
challenging work and tended to micro-manage them, explicitly telling them how to
undertake a particular task and providing them with little room to make their own decisions
on how to go about a task. All three generations strived to remain engaged at work, having
a sense of autonomy in their role and in the tasks they undertook. This was strongly felt
among the Boomer groups while Gen X and Gen Y, also expressed a desire for autonomy
in their work. Ys expressed their desire to be more accountable for their work and to
receive some form of recognition when it was done well, especially when the results were
seen by people outside their work team (i.e. management or the executive level).

Both the Boomers and Gen Y groups brought up the difference in “thinking” between the
generations. Gen Y commented that there was a misalignment between the ways the
generations think. Boomers concurred with this suggesting that: Young people’s transition
into institutional thinking is different – they don’t understand the consequences of their
actions.

Gen Ys commented that they feel that:

...older people try and inflict constraints on younger employers when they are
trying to bring about change in the organisation.

Ys tend to feel that Boomers resisted change and in some cases prevented an organisation
from moving forward. This misalignment is currently causing conflict and issues for
organisations that need addressing. Boomers had expectations that employees would
become more self-directed in their working style and that employees would have a higher
degree of input into organisational decisions. This is at odds with Ys feeling they are
micro-managed by Boomers.
Authority and hierarchy in the workplace relationship was discussed by participants. The Boomers commented that:

*Younger generations have a decreased tolerance for bureaucratic processes; they expect consultation and less hierarchy.*

Gen X commented that they believe Boomers to have extra loyalty to the organisation, which affects the way they see authority and the hierarchy. In regards to authority, Gen Y voiced their anger at being treated like lower level workers by colleagues aged in their mid-fifties.

Boomers felt that younger employees:

*...increased the need for risk management due to the young people not having the experience and not having experienced the school of hard knocks.*

However, other Boomers commented that:

*Young people are much better equipped with life skills, due to the travel and multiple jobs they have had.*

The notion of respect was a dominant theme throughout the generational group discussions. The desire for people to feel they were respected and that they felt they deserved respect and were not receiving it in the workplace was strong among all sectors and among all generational groups. This perceived lack of respect is interesting in that all generations desired it, but many were not necessarily willing to give it now or to show respect unless someone “deserved it”.

In regards to respect, Boomers commented that:

*...young people don’t respect the wisdom of older people. Saying ...younger people have a lack of respect, you need to earn their respect, and they need to earn yours.*

Xers commented that:
We respect the experience that older people have, but it is different from our experience.

While Ys conceded that they:

...don’t see why they [Boomers] deserve respect, just because of their position title - they should earn our respect.

6.6.2 Work/Life Balance

Work/life balance was a key feature for employee requirements in the current workplace environment. Everyone deserves the time to have a life outside the workplace, opportunity to avoid stress and maintain private interests, which results in leading a more healthy and balanced life (Edger 2005). The participants from this research were trying to achieve such balance in their own lives. The notion of work/life balance held a range of meanings for the different generational groups; each group having a different understanding of what constituted work/life balance for them. An impact on the differences in meaning are the varying life stages of the participants and therefore the demands people had in their lives on their time and in their relationships. All participants were seeking balance in their lives for different reasons.

The Boomer groups all discussed their desire to downshift their current working hours to part-time or two days rather than four or five; or to take time off and go travelling for three months; or to have a career break in their mid-fifties. Some spoke of their desire to work from home and telecommute a few days a week. Other Boomers spoke of a desire to add value to their life and to fulfil other ambitions in their lives. One Boomer participant stated that work/life balance for them would be:

[Not to think to yourself] I have ignored my partner for nearly 20 years.
Some Boomers commented that they noticed that they struggled with finding balance between work and family life more when their children were younger, but felt that they were able to balance life better now that their children had grown up. However, others remarked that it is now a struggle to spend time with their grandchildren. Boomers in general agreed that having a choice of hours and having flexibility in their work and life tends to make achieving a balance more realistic.

Generation X, from a lifecycle perspective really did come out looking like the “meat in the sandwich” from these discussions. Gen Xers spoke of starting a new family, having young children and still trying to progress their careers. They spoke of returning to work after being on maternity leave and not being able to hold an equivalent role to before. Many of the female participants made comments about loving their job and enjoying the challenge, but feeling that when they choose to work three or four days and have children that they will have to take on less challenging and uninteresting roles, in order to manage a new baby and pay the bills. Others spoke of coming back to the workforce in a fulltime capacity and being faced with long hours at work and sleepless nights at home. Others in the Generation X groups discussed the increasing workload and the demands from senior management of having work “done by yesterday”, some saying that:

...[A] ten hour day was the minimum expected by management, but many people are working longer hours than that.

What Generation X desired in their lives in order to achieve a balance was:

*Having a point of difference in your life and...it not just being about work all the time.*

Generation X suggested that:

*Ideally you do what you love everyday, you have enough time to pursue your passions, and you are able to look at your life holistically.*
They also suggested that there were different perceptions in the workplace about work/life balance and this hindered the effectiveness of the policy. Some Gen Xers discussed their feelings towards their “hard core” older managers who seem to work crazy hours and expect them to do the same. While others spoke of Boomers reminding them that they still had to prove themselves and to do that they needed to work hard and show them that they were serious, others felt the policies around work/life balance failed due to the un-enforced nature of the policy.

*We have one [work/life balance Policy] but it is not really enforced... what senior manager is going to ask you before they drop another load of work on to you on a Friday afternoon, how many hours have you done this week? ...they just want the work done ASAP.*

Many Gen Xers felt more pressured and less in control of their balance between work and life. Some had young families, others were trying to progress their careers, and were not quite holding the most senior position. They still tend to have organisational responsibilities or direct reports to whom they managed and they were in many cases struggling to pay off a mortgage, plan a family and manage a job which had an increasing workload. There were expectations that they would travel the world at the drop of a hat to sign a deal off-shore, and they feel pressured to keep fit and healthy.

When discussing work/life balance with Generation Ys, the cohort took almost an attacking stance about their organisation’s approach to policies on work/life balance. Gen Ys generally felt the organisation’s policies did not relate to them and that the policies failed to address the needs of their generation. Gen Ys commented that they looked for an organisation to be flexible in their approach to working hours and that they looked for areas in the policies that included *volunteer work* and *career breaks* that were open to younger employees. The Gen Y participants felt that while the organisation they worked
for allowed people to telecommute and work from home, this was not something that applied to them, saying that:

*People in my work group do work from home, but they are older than me and they have laptop computers...so they can facilitate that.*

Gen Ys also felt that due to their being relatively new to the workforce and their young age, the work and family policies developed by their organisation also did not apply to them, stating that:

*Sports and other personal interests in life should be catered for not just family friendly – don’t discriminate because I don’t have children - I still have a life!*

Another participant from Generation Y told of their need to get off work early two nights a week to go to football training and how their manager was quite inflexible about allowing him to do this initially.

Like the other generations, Gen Ys were seeking out the non-nine to five work option and spoke of achieving balance in their lives as extremely important to them. Many of the participants spoke of not wanting to repeat the negative work/life balance attitudes and behaviours they had witnessed from their parents and managers. Ys wanted to be: *...seen as a full person and not just having work as your whole life, but having something more to it than that.* Ys spoke of having work roles that they enjoyed which assisted them in finding balance and stated that: *...the job is more important than the money when it comes to being happy at work.*

Overall the generations agreed that they desired flexibility in their working hours and where they undertook their work. While all participants understood the parameters their organisations operated within, they all still desired, where possible, to have flexibility, choice and autonomy in their work environment. However, that doesn’t mean that they
were willing to be flexible to others that they managed - this was a noted disconnect between what someone likes for themselves and what they are willing to do as managers. The importance of striking a balance in their own life was something all desired for themselves.

Across the generations, the commonalities appeared to be mostly in the area of flexible work hours and styles. All generations stated that they would have to enjoy the work in order to stay with their current employer for another five years. A distinct sub-category of participants said that they would have to be *enjoying work* to remain with their employer, and having a social network of people at work was extremely important to them. Gen X and Gen Y relate more to this than Boomers. Some Boomers commented that they:

...just wanted to come and do my job and not be fussed with office gossip.

However, in saying that, all spoke of their desire to enjoy working with a nice group of people and that working in a positive and friendly environment made work more enjoyable. The aspect of fun was also coupled with the need for social outlets and networks in the workplace. For the three generations enjoying their time at work, having fun and having a social network were the three key driving factors of what made the workplace interesting.

**6.6.3 Challenges Faced in the Workplace**

The discussion around what makes a workplace challenging, was answered a little differently by the groups depending on whether they viewed a challenge as being positive or negative. For most participants this question raised a negative connotation however a handful of the more optimistic participants pointed out positive challenges. While it may
be the case that all groups identified the same challenges it was obvious that not all
generations cope with the changes well, or in the same way.

Diversity was also discussed widely among the groups. Participants stated that they found
it interesting to work in diverse teams and with a diverse group of people, expressing that
while this can sometimes be challenging, it is also interesting and facilitates new learning
and opens their minds to new things. Diversity was also referred to as having a variety of
tasks which made their work interesting. Many of the participants commented that routine
and repetitive tasks are what made them lose interest in their work. Both Boomers and
Generation Y commented that being busy made work interesting. Generation Y also
commented that they wanted to be stretched and challenged outside their comfort zone and
to step outside their boundaries. Gen Ys felt that some tasks were unchallenging for them
and made them feel as though they were not contributing and adding value to the
organisation, which left them disinterested in the task at hand.

Participants voiced their concerns of how difficult it is to know if they have added value to
the organisation they worked for, or felt that they contributed to the overall goals of the
organisation. Most participants voiced this as a current frustration with their work.

From a more positive perspective, participants desired to be challenged on a number of
levels - to challenge themselves intellectually. These are all aspects which both Boomers
and Gen X identified as being important to Gen Y. It is interesting to note that both
Boomers and Xers understand this about Gen Y, but still Gen Y are frustrated and feel they
are not understood.
6.6.4 Communication at Work

In this area of the research there was a greater difference noted in the preferred means of communication among the three generational cohorts. Boomers preferred face-to-face communication with other employees in the workplace, arguing that it serves as a more effective form of communication. Boomers found there were issues around miscommunication when using emails, stating that email tended to be abused in many workplace communications, citing carbon copy (CC) and blind carbon copy (BCC) as their major concerns regarding privacy and increasing office tensions, as well as inappropriately copying the names of people into emails, without others knowing to whom the information was being forwarded. The Boomers felt that poor forms of communication, the "mass emails" to all employees with inappropriate or un-useful information, resulted in crowded inboxes wasting employees’ and the organisations’ time.

Gen X, on the other hand opted mainly for the phone, saying that verbal communication was more effective than written, and saying that face-to-face was the most effective, but often harder to achieve, considering the size of some organisations. Gen X admitted that even though they didn’t believe email was the most effective communication medium in the work environment, as far as timeliness of sending the message through, they tended to use it, due to convenience and speed. However, if something needed to be urgently said or actioned they tended to opt for picking up the phone.

Both Gen X and Boomers reflected on the years gone by, when:

...people used to go up-stairs or down-stairs and talk to people at work.

Both generations admitted that now it was a rare occurrence to see people talking to the person next to them, let alone walking up stairs to talk to someone.

They are more likely to send the person next to them an email, rather than talking to them.
Gen X also suggested that email allowed some people a means of hiding from people or a situation they wished to avoid.

Predictions are that in the near future, businesses will adopt an email coach to address the communication issues surrounding email in today’s workplaces.

…businesses are finding that employees who lack the proper writing skills are creating problems by sending harsh, insensitively worded email messages. Thus, a new job titled – Email Coach- will be created to help people learn to communicate effectively given the compressed, immediate and risky nature of email (Popcorn & Hanft 2001 p. 310)

Gen Y stated email was their preferred means of communicating at work. This was for a number of reasons: they found that email assisted them in establishing relationships with people in the workplace without being treated as the young upstart in accounts. Through email, Gen Y found they were better able to articulate their thoughts and enquiries.

However, Gen Y did concede that email was the lazy way to communicate and that the vast amount of emails received were distracting, especially when CC and not addressed directly to them. Ys also added that email etiquette still had a long way to evolve and there were agreement with the Boomers that email was easily misunderstood. Gen Ys also commented on the increased use of mobile phones and text messaging as a quick and easy form of communicating - except when they found out that their Boomer bosses …had no idea how to retrieve the text message! Ys however admitted that face-to-face was something they strived for, but that it was often hard to achieve and time consuming.
Research suggests that Generation Y, … are communicating like no other [generation] in history. E-mail, cell phones, and the Internet are the principal vehicles for person-to-person communication: group chats are the first choice as the source for many kinds of information. Generation Y … is getting its information in an unfiltered way via TV and the Internet which often results in opinions being formed without discussion. While some of the life experiences of Gen Y are easy to describe, it is difficult to predict how these value-programming experiences will manifest themselves in the workplace of tomorrow (Cole, Smith & Lucas 2002 p. 4).

Overall, the generations all recognised that there are many mediums available to use when communicating with work colleagues in the workplace and that there was a time and a place for all of them.

6.6.5 Organisational Loyalty – Fact or Fiction?

The discussion around organisational loyalty sparked a range of views from the groups, including the differing levels of loyalty among employees; different meaning of loyalty; who or what the participants felt loyal to; the notion that loyalty is a two-way street; and issues around values, mutual trust and respect in regards to loyalty and workplace attitudes towards loyalty.

The varying degrees of loyalty held by the participants were an interesting observation throughout the 13 discussion groups. A distinction between the groups was the different opinions Generation Ys held about loyalty, compared with the Boomer cohort. Boomers wanted to have some kind of affiliation and loyalty with an organisation, where Gen Y,
almost was on the opposite side, suggesting that: *Loyalty is an obsolete concept* and …*nothing is forever, it has to be mutually beneficial, and loyalty has to be reciprocal.*

Boomers tended to discuss loyalty as the values of the organisation and aligning oneself with an organisation with values common to their own.

All participants’ values were very important to them and they would undertake a role that contributed to a set of values and beliefs to which they aspired, and this was a deeply held attitude for most participants. For the generational groups who were employed in the government sector, education sector and not-for-profit sectors, the participants sought out work and organisations that they saw as making a difference to a greater good. Adding value to the organisation and a feeling of accomplishment were extremely important across the groups with all generations wanting their work to mean something and to contribute to their organisation. Examples of the comments on values and loyalty that summarise these views were:

- Boomer commented that *your vision and the organisation’s vision have to match for there to be loyalty*
- A Gen X participant commented that: *It’s about mutual trust and values…*
- Gen Ys commented that its about: …*being committed to an organisation’s goals and objectives – feeling a connection with the organisation*

Boomers in general felt loyal to the organisation or a leader rather than the department or team. This tended to be due to the fact that they had been with the organisation for some years, had held positions in a number of departments and felt a stronger affiliation with the whole rather than any one part. Conversely, Gen Xers spoke of being loyal or feeling a strong bond between themselves and their team or their immediate manager, rather than to the organisation as a whole. Xers spoke of a loyalty to themselves (self loyal) and to their
social group in which they had to work. Xers also commented that: *People work hard not because they are loyal, but so they advance their career and get their bonus.* Boomers stated they felt that: *...there is less loyalty among young staff.* And younger employees’ attitudes towards the organisation tended to affect the culture of the organisation and the general feeling around the work environment. One Boomer commenting that: *...it is like they don’t care...they are not really around long enough to care about anything [or]... the consequences of their actions.* Gen Ys commented that: *Contract jobs don’t encourage loyalty ...two years is a long term commitment for us!*

Xers discussed the links between economic climate and employees’ loyalty; they referred to the tale of the rats deserting the sinking ship. When the organisation is experiencing good times and prosperity, people tend to be happy to stick around and ride the wave of prosperity, but as the purse strings begin to tighten and the budget cuts come rolling in, along with the bad press, Xers believe that employees in general look to greener pastures.

One common aspect among all three generations was the notion that loyalty should be a two-way street. All generations spoke of loyalty from an employee perspective and an organisational perspective. From Boomers to Gen Y, all employees believed that an employee could only be as loyal as the organisation could be or was prepared to be to them.

When discussing what would make the groups stay with the organisation, the groups were asked: *Consider that you are still with your current employer in five years time. What are the major factors that would have encouraged you to stay with the organisation?* A range of factors were raised by the participants, including:

- Their desire for flexibility
• Enjoying the work they do
• Having a social connection with colleagues
• Having interesting work to stimulate them
• A career progression or monetary raise
• Trust and autonomy
• Appropriate recognition for the work they undertake
• Feeling valued in the workplace
• A positive work environment and
• To continue learning and developing their skills

Learning new skills and having the opportunity to develop and learn was discussed by all the groups as being something they desired in order to stay interested and be engaged in their work. Overall, while all generations tended to strive for most of the same ideals in what made work interesting for them, one Gen Y commented that: *...interesting work is more important to me than money,* and one Gen X also commented that: *...the role needs to be interesting or why would you stay in the job?*

### 6.6.6 Rewards

Although all generations desired recognition and mentioned that it was a factor in their decision to stay with the organisation, it was observed that each of the generations desired different forms of recognition. Boomers desired more support for their ideas and work, while Gen X desired to be recognised through feeling valued and having their managers see and promote their potential. For Gen Y it was more about having the work they prepared recognised as *their* work, not for their manager to take credit for the work, when presenting it to senior management.
The participants were also asked individually to nominate their preferred reward, from a list of options:

1. A$ 2,500 cash bonus (taxed at the appropriate rate)
2. Two weeks extra paid leave
3. A five day overseas self-development course
4. A gift voucher to your favourite store for $2,500
5. Other______________________.

Gen Ys scored highly on three of the options presented to them 1) A$ 2,500 cash bonus, 2) Two weeks extra paid leave and 3) A five day overseas self-development course. While Gen X desired also the $2,500 cash option and the two weeks extra paid leave. They tended to not choose the five day overseas self-development course, instead they tended to choose “other”. On examination of the “other”, some participants from Gen X specified things such as: I prefer a verbal thank you to any of the above options. Or I’d take the self development course, but not overseas; not in this climate of terror.

The Boomer participants also chose the two weeks extra paid leave option. Only a small number chose the cash bonus and even a smaller number chose the self development course overseas. It was interesting to note that both Gen X and Gen Y chose the cash reward, while only a small number of Boomers chose the cash reward option. This could reflect the life stages of the generations and the increased pressure of consumerism in contrast to Gen X and Gen Ys need for material items over time. Boomers aspired to have this too, but have now worked long enough to accumulate leave. It could also have to do with salary structures.

The large number of participants who commented on their desire to have more time and to find a balance between work and personal commitments demonstrates the growing need
for organisations to implement usable and realistic policies which meet the employees’
demands to have a life away from their work.

A finding consistent with the annual LEAD surveys and Best Employer Awards in
Australia was that participants desired to be verbally recognised and to be told by their
manager or colleagues, that their work and contribution was appreciated and that they are
valued in their work team. It doesn’t cost a lot of money or time to tell someone “thank
you”, but for many managers it can be the hardest thing to consider doing. This type of
verbal appreciation and recognition needs to be driven from the top, the CEO and senior
executives need to be thanking managers, who in-turn thank their employees. As was
seen in the findings, thanks and recognition should not be saved up for the twelve or six
month review. These are desired by employees, especially Gen Ys to be more frequent,
weekly or even daily.

Gen Y spoke of feeling they were trusted by the employer and again having a degree of
autonomy in their role. Only Gen X and Gen Y spoke of monetary consideration and
promotion influencing their decision to stay with their current employer. This however
could be reflective of the Boomers’ comfort in their role and their desire to progress no
further, or of the confidence that they hold in their abilities to progress and obtain bonuses
and recognition in their current role. While Gen X and Gen Y are both at a stage of
wanting in general, to progress in their careers and move forward, they desire their
remuneration to be increased also.

In an interesting result regarding learning, both Boomers and Gen Y commented that they
desired to have the opportunity to keep learning and to learn new things. This is an
interesting response. Gen Y commenting that older people don’t want to learn new things.
Gen Y also commented that if they were to be with their current employer in five years time that they would have to feel valued; they desired to be: \textit{...treated well and doing something worthwhile} and considered this to be a reward in itself. They also desired that everyone be treated equally in the organisation. Overall, there were more commonalities than differences between the generations in this discussion of what would make them stay with their current employer.

\section*{6.6.7 Career Progression}

The discussion around career progression and who is responsible for progressing employee’s careers evolved around two parts. Firstly, the participants spoke of their responsibility and secondly, the responsibility of the organisation.

All three of the generational cohorts believed that they themselves were ultimately responsible for their own career. However, the participants were asked if they are ultimately responsible - then \textit{what role, if any, does the organisation play in their career progression?} All generations answered slightly differently to this question, but overall they conceded that the organisation played the role of a facilitator, or that the organisation’s role was to provide a vehicle for progression, but that the organisation was still not ultimately responsible for the progress of individuals.

Boomers believed that they are responsible for their own career progression and that: \textit{The organisation gives the context and opportunity.} And: \textit{Organisations create the opportunities.} Boomers mainly spoke of opportunities through the organisation changing in form or growing and providing opportunities. Boomers spoke of the organisation assisting with career progression through providing rewards and bonuses to employees in recognition of their contribution to the organisation. Boomers in most cases saw rewards
as a means of illustrating merit and one’s ability to progress to new challenges:

Organisations provide the recognition and rewards that assist in progressing your career.

And: There needs to be more dialogue about career progression to make it a win-win situation for the employee and the organisation.

Boomers discussed the need for the organisation to increase the degree to which they commit resources, towards actively conducting workforce and succession planning. Most cited the retirement of the Boomer generation as well as the looming labour shortages as prime reasons for organisations to actively create operational strategies in these areas to assist with sustainable practices that are also linked to career development within organisations.

Generation X also believed that career progression was very much their responsibility. Like the other generations they believed that the organisation held a responsibility to them to provide resources and development along the way that could assist them with their own progression. Gen X spoke of resources such as mentoring either in an informal or a formal manner, or the organisation providing them with tools such as a coach or professional development days.

Some Gen Xers however were a little cynical about the organisation’s responsibility and responded with comments such as: [Career progression] is 100% my own responsibility, anything above that is a bonus from the organisation. Gen Xers also believed that progress reviews were often not managed well or not conducted in the timeframe set out by the organisation. They felt that inadequate review processes made it difficult for them to progress in the organisation. Others said while you may feel that it is your responsibility to
progress yourself: ...it is hard to progress if your manager doesn’t sign off on it [the promotion]!

There was also a discussion around being motivated and encouraged to progress and move forward in an organisation. Most said that they still needed assistance in steering through the complex maze of their organisation, to try and work out how they could progress. They stated that sometimes this was too hard, so it was easier just to move on and start fresh in another organisation. This was noted as a critical issue for organisations if it is to retain talented Gen X employees in the future.

One area that did differ from the Boomers was Gen Xers’ willingness to move on to another organisation if they were not progressing at a fast enough rate or being offered the right support and assistance that they expected from their organisation. Xers felt that actions speak louder than words. If they have had discussions with their manager about their next step, where they see themselves heading in the coming months and things don’t work out as was indicated by the manager or in a timely manner, then they were more likely to look elsewhere to have their needs met: I can talk about where I would like to go, but if I am not heard then that is ok, I’ll look elsewhere.

Gen Xers discussed their deals with managers recently and in the past, in regards to progressing in their careers. Most cited experiences with a great manager, who had mentored them and assisted them or they discussed having a hard time working their way up and being recognised for their contribution. They spoke of managers failing to review their progress or being unwilling to develop and train them. Xers stated that: ultimately, it’s you that has to do the work in order to progress your career.
Gen Ys find the notion of career progression both a challenge and a means of receiving recognition for their work. Some Ys commented on the struggle they have for autonomy and their inability to express themselves creatively in their current organisation’s climate.

Like Boomers and Gen X, Gen Y also found mentoring an important role for the organisation to facilitate in assisting progress with employees’ careers and confessed that: *ultimately the organisation needs to help.*

Gen Ys felt that by organisations providing employees with transferable skills and less “job specific” skills, that this would assist employees with future career prospects. This would also provide the organisation with a skill base to draw on when projects change and organisations are restructured. Gen Y not only expected organisations to enhance them as employees, but also as people: *Organisations are responsible for enhancing us and allowing us to grow.*

The more cynical of the Gen Ys felt that real career progression was about “*being in the right place at the right time*.”. Whilst other Gen Ys voiced their growing dismay with the number of people who over-look them for positions based on their age or tenure with the organisation, rather than hiring on merit. *I would like to see progression based on ability and merit, and not time [spent in the organisation].*

For the most part Gen Ys search for equality was something unseen in other generations in this study. They demanded and expected respect and to be treated as equals regardless of stature or level of authority especially when it came to being promoted.
In regard to differing expectations between the three generations, both Boomers and Gen X commented that Gen Y have strong expectations when it comes to their career progression. Both Boomers and Gen X commented on the rapid pace Gen Ys expected to progress through an organisation. Gen Y agreed with the Boomers and Gen Xers, commenting that they did expect to progress in their careers quite fast and commented that they needed to be challenged, stating that, if they were not being challenged, they would find something that does challenge them. Gen X also commented that:

*The younger generation Ys are very “gung ho”, let’s go, idealistic, save the world and not so aware or concerned with institutional boundaries and approaches* [that exist in organisations].

Gen Xers expressed that they felt there were different expectations held by the different generations, citing the example of the Boomers who they feel are just waiting around in their jobs until they can retire, while Boomers expressed that they felt as if they were being *left on the shelf* in regard to advancement.

### 6.6.8 Attraction

In determining the most effective means to attract employees the participants were first asked by “what means do they mostly look for employment opportunities?” Participants where given six options:

1. Print media
2. The Internet
3. Networking
4. Head Hunters or Agents
5. Promotion
6. Other
Gen Ys indicated that they mostly used the internet with only a small number of the Gen Y participants indicating that they search for positions using print media. For Gen X it was a three way split between using the Internet, networking and print media, with print media slightly less prominent among the three options. For the Boomers, over half chose print media, around three quarters networking and only a very small number said that the Internet is the means in which they mostly looked for employment. This is an interesting observation that should be noted by organisations looking to attract candidates from the different generations.

6.6.9 The Changes in Expectations Brought About by Technology

The participants discussed the extent to which they felt comfortable with technology and how they preferred to use technology at work. Participants discussed the level of comfort they currently have with technology, and what they believed other generations capabilities are with technology; the reliance society now places on technology; the frustration born from technology; and the increase in work expectations that have occurred through advancements in technology.

Overall, there was a mixed response from the participants in regards to technology and their level of comfort with it whilst in the work environment. Boomers from across the different sectors all felt that they were reasonably comfortable with technology, however all four groups of Boomers spoke of their wonderment at the younger generations and their abilities to use the latest technology. Some participants felt they had been left behind with the rapid increases in technologies over the past ten years, most stating that this was due to a lack of training and their lack of exposure to new technologies in their workplaces. Most Boomers stated that they learn as needed and that once they had been trained on a new system or piece of equipment that it “generally” became a part of their work tools.
Boomers for the most part embraced the technologies needed in their work, but commented that it was really only beneficial when the technology was working. Most Boomers draw on memories of years gone by, when work tended to be simpler and there was less technological change occurring.

Boomers also commented on the ever increasing expectations technology tended to bring with it, stating that: *Expectations change as technology improves, the goal posts are continually moving.* Generation Xers also commented on the ability of technology to increase expectations, saying that: *It’s a catch 22 – you can do things quicker, but that just means expectations increase.*

Overall Generation X felt very comfortable with technology. Some Xers commented that while they are comfortable with the technology they used in their workplace, they are not excited about it. Some Xers commented that they were: *Over it! We don’t really need as much [technology] as we have.*

Gen Y commented that: *It’s [technology] a waste of time, it’s not always useful.* While another Gen Y commented that: *It is frustrating to think how unnecessarily interlinked work is with technology.*

Some of the Gen Xers commented on the overuse of some programs in the workplace. This discussion was mainly around the Gen Ys overuse of Microsoft Power Point and implied that Gen Y were incapable of communicating an idea in the workplace without first presenting it on Power Point presentation.
Like the Boomers, Xers also complained about training in new technologies. Xers voiced a different concern from that of the Boomers - they felt that there was a lot of pressure to make them feel that they are up-to-date with new technologies and some felt that it was expected that they should be. Some Gen Xers discussed that they found having to continually up-date and re-skill a challenge. All Generation X participants stated they were *not able to live without email*, while others praised technology for increasing their ability to be more mobile in the work environment. Others found technology enabled them to build efficiencies and be more effective in their role.

Overall, Generation Y participants felt very comfortable with technology and were also happy to learn more. Like the Boomers, Gen Ys commented that technology was fine as long as it works and voiced similar concerns to Gen Xers in regards to the reliance that is now placed on technology in order to complete a task in the work environment. The theme that dominated the Gen Ys discussion about technology was their frustrations with a number of things such as:

1. Boomers and Xers apparently inadequate levels of competency with technology
2. Outdated technology that is ineffective and deficient, which causes them to become frustrated
3. Boomers assumption that they [GenY] are “*technology wiz kids,*” due to their age.

Gen Ys discussed feeling that they are the “*at-call-helpdesk people*” in their department, because of their age. They felt they were not trained in new programs because they already knew how to use the technology to an effective level, in comparison to the Boomers. Some spoke of going to training sessions and finding themselves bored with half the training room filled with Boomers, *Who take forever to get it.* The Ys suggested
that organisations should group and focus their technology training at generational groups in order to get the training room dynamics more aligned.

Gen Ys felt that the different levels of competency with technology were a source of tension amongst the generations. All three of the cohorts had similar feelings toward their respective generation. There were no similarities regarding perceived versus actual self i.e. all groups perceived themselves differently from what other generations perceived their level of technology competency to be, Boomers saying they felt comfortable, Y’s commenting that Boomers lacked the skills when it came to technology. Frustrations tended to be felt by all generations in regards to the differing level of abilities regarding technology, but once again, for different reasons.

6.7 Summary of Generational Difference in the Workplace

The generational group discussions revealed that there are a range of areas that differ among the generations in the workplace. These included:

- Preferred working styles
- The degree of personal respect shown and desired
- There was a difference in relationships at work as they attempt to translate management styles and thinking between the generations
- The different use and competency of technology between the generations
- The differing levels of preference held towards authority and hierarchy in the workplace

These observations from each generational cohort are summarised below.
6.7.1 Key Observations of Generation Y

The key observations that can be made to sum up the Generation Ys who participated in this research, are that Gen Ys seemed to be frustrated with technology; they seemed to be disenfranchised or disengaged from it dictating their work experience and for many, tired of working on outdated technology and being considered the “tech wiz kids” because of their age.

Gen Ys for the most part were not willing to wait around, they wished to progress through the organisation very quickly, and to be challenged and continually stimulated. If they get bored they will find themselves another role elsewhere. They see this as being made even easier to do, with the increases in casualisation and mobility in the work environment.

Gen Ys know the importance of transferable skills and are willing to take their skills and apply them to new, interesting and more challenging roles if they feel they are not adding value to the organisation.

Gen Ys desire to be actively involved in the organisation. They want to be shown the “big picture” and want to understand where they contribute and add value to the organisation.

Gen Ys voiced their concerns of “feeling left out” of the work/life balance policies and family friendly policies in organisations. They found that these policies tended to cater for people with children and older workers. Gen Ys in general voiced the opinion that they are here “to work to live” that they understand balance and were keen to obtain balance in their work and life. They wanted to have their leisure activities regarded as important and relevant by the employers.

Gen Ys were seeking flexible work options, they have a strong desire to travel and gain experiences from organisations that offer career breaks and secondments to other
departments or to other states and countries. Ys saw these concepts as ways for retaining existing talent within the organisation. Gen Y felt a strong desire to have a social network at work, they sought out fun and vibrant workplaces and teams, and most had a strong desire to express themselves creatively in their work and have a desire to be listened to.

Gen Ys were seeking timely and constant feedback on their work and their performance. They were willing to work hard, as long as they were rewarded and recognised for working hard and were given the time also to play hard. Gen Y expressed their desire to gain autonomy in their role. They want to be trusted and were frustrated with being treated as if they can’t be trusted and needed to be micro-managed. Gen Y believed that respect is earned and whilst they desired respect from older colleagues, they understand they need to gain their respect and felt it was a two-way street.

6.7.2 Key Observations of Generation X

The key observations of Gen X were that they felt they were the “middle child” and were “sandwiched” between the other generations. Xers felt that Boomers allow Ys to get away with a lot of things that they never would have, when they started out in the workforce. Xers identified a difference in the management style from Boomers. They felt that they preferred to be the coach and mentor to their employees in contrast to older styles of management employed by Boomers, who tended to be more authoritarian in their management approach.

Xers displayed a feeling that they were working hard in their career and had a willingness to progress, but felt that they really couldn’t until the Boomers retired. They were also seeking equality in the workplace and a feeling that they were not junior, yet not quite senior, within their organisations. Gen X, although the majority in the discussion group
didn’t have children, some were still trying to balance work and the hope of starting a family while at the same time progressing in their careers. Some felt that there was an ultimatum on having to choose between both worlds.

Gen Xers overall, were well in-tune with technology and were using it to manage their lives. Most agreed that they had a good level of comfort with technology and that it had become a part of their lives and that they wouldn’t know how to live without it. Xers did comment on the changing nature of communication at work, with most remembering a Workplace without email and a time when people actually talked and walked up stairs to discuss something with someone in another department. While Xers believe that there were more effective means of communication now, there was a feeling and a perceived need to increase the level of social interaction at work.

6.7.3 Key Observations of Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers were seeking respect from younger generations and also a feeling of autonomy. Boomers missed communicating face-to-face at work and felt that there had been an increased incidence of miscommunication at work, due to poorly written emails and poor email etiquette. Boomers also felt that the speed and intensity of work had increased and that the number of emails received by people had impacted greatly on how they worked and how much time it took in their work day.

Boomers expressed that they are still loyal to their organisation and they have a strong need to feel a part of the organisation. However, there were some Boomers who had lived through multiple retrenchments and to whom the concept of loyalty was a little tarnished due to their experiences. Boomers voiced their concerns regarding the ageing population and the need for the organisation to introduce flexible working options for those people.
approaching retirement - options such as career extensions, career breaks and flexible work times were some ideas discussed by the Boomer groups. Boomers were all very clear on wanting still to add value to the organisation and feel that they had contributed and were valued in their role.

6.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter brings to light many issues and challenges facing employees of all generations in the modern workplace at all levels of large Australian organisations involved in the corporate, education, government and not-for-profit, sectors. It brings to the surface the differences that are perceived between the different generations and also some similarities and shared concerns of all employees. Effective communication and management who is aware of the differences and similarities can achieve harmony and productivity in the workplace by working with the positive and effectively managing the negative. The following chapter is titled “The Organisational Perspective” and contains summaries of discussions, analysis and findings of the 15 executives interviewed from the four sectors involved in this study. The focus is on how existing managers are dealing with the issues of a multigenerational workforce.
Chapter Seven

THE ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

‘The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.’
- George Bernard Shaw

7.0 Introduction

This chapter completes the third point in the triangulation process of this research by representing the organisation’s perspective through the views of 15 senior managers and executives in the four organisations from four industry sectors - corporate, education, government, and not-for-profit. This chapter explores the relationships between the generational-based cohorts and the areas that demonstrate the disconnect occurring between the different levels and hierarchies that exist in the complex structures of today’s modern organisations. The breakdown in communication of policy and strategy between senior executives, middle management, and the employees, is a key feature of the findings of this research and serves to highlight many of the misconceptions that executives and boards of the organisations have about the reality of their strategies and policies, when put into operation throughout the organisation. This chapter is divided into three main areas, Generational Differences; Work Environment; and Working Styles. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key observations of the executives from this stage of the research.
7.1 Generational Difference

The majority of the 15 executives interviewed in this study identified a generational difference in the workplace. Only one commenting that:

Well, I'm old-and therefore I don't think that there is a generational difference!

[ENFP22004].

The areas identified by the executives as the more pronounced differences between the generations were:

- Authority and respect between the generations
- Expectations toward work
- Differing career prospects
- Different factors in regards to attraction and retention
- Issues around loyalty

These issues have been grouped together for further analysis as authority and respect; loyalty and the generations and life cycle and the generational debate.

7.1.1 Authority and Respect

The executive’s observation of the differences in authority and respect in the workplace between the generations was discussed. One executive commented that:

... in regards to how people address authority, and the way they respect others, their level of comfort and their confidence, even their [younger generations'] manners are different! [ECORP32005].

Another executive noted that:

Gen X and Gen Y are far more questioning. Baby Boomers were ruled by fear. If we got called in to the boss’s office we put our suit coat on. Had Boomers questioned the boss when they where in their 20s they would have been asked ‘Do you want to work here?’ There was an element of fear or threat in the way...
we were managed. But I think it is much healthier now that we don’t manage
that way [ENFP42004].

7.1.2 Loyalty and the Generations

The executives spoke of how they have observed a growing lack of loyalty from younger
employees towards the organisation. However, for the most part, executives were very
open to the notion of people moving around and gaining experiences from different
organisations and departments. Most of the executives believed there had been a change in
loyalty overall and they felt it had been brought about by economic and political change in
organisations, which had resulted in downsizing, restructures, acquisitions and mergers.
Accordingly the business climate and the way organisations now operate impact on the
culture, including loyalty or an employee’s affinity to an organisation.

...in the past ten years there has been an enormous change just due to the
redundancies. But I think it was a good thing that has happened because it’s
changed the way people do things [EGOV42005].

One of the executives commented that they felt that younger people project that they are
not necessarily here for the long term, commenting that they felt the younger employees’
motto is:

I’m here for a good time, not a long time [EEDU12004].

Some executives had noticed a change also from a generational perspective and felt that
the younger generations hold a different perception of loyalty than that of older
generations.

The Matures thought that loyalty was important, but for Gen X & Y, I think they
are loyal to what the employer is offering...It’s a buyers market and I think that
it would take less to lose the loyalty of Generation Ys, because there are so
many opportunities out there for them [ECORP42005].
The executives agreed it is due in part to the outcomes of an unsettled time in the late 1980s and 1990s, when Australia and most parts of the western world experienced a recession and process reengineering swept through organisations. Downsizing was strategic and acquisitions and subsequent redundancies occurred regularly.

7.1.3 Life-Stage or Generation Debate?

Some executives thought that perhaps generational differences were merely life-cycle differences and that when Boomers were in their 20s and 30s, they acted in similar ways to the 20 and 30 year olds that are in the workforce now. While this may be true to a certain extent, one executive encapsulated the difference between generational and life stages, presenting an alternate Boomer view of the differences between the generations.

I think there is a difference, but I think that it is more subtle than what people make it out to be. I think that employees that entered the workforce in the past ten years till now, have grown up in a recession time and now have grown in the growth stages. Therefore, they have a different value set and have a different view around stability. They have had a variety of jobs offered to them and therefore have a different perspective. In what I guess is my generation [Boomer] there is a different view due to the economic climate in which we grew up, where the supply side and labour side economics were all we thought about because we couldn’t get people into jobs... [ECORP42005].

It has been this kind of value shift and external impacts that have shaped the way different generations view the workplace and how they operate in it.

7.2 Work Environment

The work environment encompasses the external events shaping the current and future changes of work. There are a number of areas that are shaping the world of work – there
are new challenges and increasing expectations and demands that are mandating how and when work is done for the executives, working under increasing pressure and continuous change. The pace and intensity of work is changing and the executives commented on the demands they are facing in managing a workforce which now operates and works under a new set of rules. The workforce planning issues surrounding the current executives and managers are varied and present some difficulties in developing effective management strategies. These issues are discussed in this section along with the challenges, expectations and demands of the new work environment brought about by influences such as technology, economic volatility and trends, and other societal phenomena.

### 7.2.1 Organisational Challenges, Expectations and Demands

To ascertain the challenges and pressures that executive and management level decision-makers in the four organisations are faced with in the changing workplace environment, the executives were asked about the challenges they faced in their management role at present.

In response an interesting similarity was that regardless of the industry sector in which they were currently working the challenges were mostly the same. Key challenges for the executives included:

- Attracting and retaining high potential employees
- Dealing with the rigorous changing demands and expectations, associated with holding a senior management and executive role
- Operating within the constraints of their budget and the need to look for new areas of income generation, as traditional income areas decline
- Managing the pressure associated with the increase in regulations and compliance of conducting business
• Ensuring middle managers receive adequate training and development to manage the operational side of the organisation

All of the executives commented on the increased demands on their time and increased expectations of their resources. For many of them it was a result of the increased responsibility and knowledge management requirements brought about by the advancements in technology, such as email and mobile phones. Most executives interviewed were managing teams in regional, interstate or international locations, and they highlighted the mobility of their direct reports and staff. In all four of the organisations, a leadership change in the upper levels had taken place in the past 12 months, which had impacted directly upon the executives interviewed.

Most executives commented on the challenge of meeting budget requirements and managing a budget to ensure all needs were met within the goals and expectations of the organisation. For the executives coming from the government, education and not-for-profit sectors, the decline in funding and the consequent increase in budget constraints were proving to be their greatest challenges, as well as restrictions on the funding and the need to train and develop people in their current and future roles. Many executives could see a skills gap emerging in some sectors where entire generations had not been trained in certain skills.

All executives noted a concern in identifying and ensuring a sustainable future for their organisation through diversifying their sources of income. Identifying new sources of income to ensure that their business was able to improve or increase their market share and achieve multi-modes of revenue was critical for long-term sustainability, in order to spread risk and ensure profit maximisation for the organisation. Entrepreneurial thinking and
awareness of new opportunities was seen by most executives as critical to ensure that new forms of income were identified in the future.

*Australian “corporate’s” have been on a cost cutting drive for the past ten years and now need to look at income generation* [ECORP22005].

As well as:

*Adopting a more business-like approach to running the organisation* [which] tended, historically to operate as a welfare organisation internally and externally...*there has been a soft approach [to management] for too long and there needs to be more of a business approach* [ENFP4 2004].

Allowing entrepreneurial thinking, through seeking out new forms of income and expanding into new opportunities, creates a buzz in any organisation. It also provides areas for current employees to grow personally and professionally and to have a greater level of opportunity to seek and extend their careers with an organisation. This should be supported by attraction and retention strategies for organisations wanting to retain staff and maintain the levels of tacit knowledge within their organisation. The need for entrepreneurial thinking is a prime opportunity for Gen Xers who are cited in the literature as being entrepreneurial in nature (Cetron & Davies 2005b). Organisations need to ensure they provide an inclusive environment to encourage the creativity in the younger generations coming through their organisation.

Most executives mentioned the demands from the increase in compliance and regulation in their management role and in the organisation. As a result of this factor they felt that too much of their time and resources were being spent with compliance and regulation, which was taking their time away from other more fundamental areas for which they are also responsible.
Social responsibility and integrity was raised by some executives as a challenge for their sector in the future. This was again highlighted by the increase in regulations and compliance occurring in all sectors in Australia. Most executives commented that they believe compliance obligation and social responsibility will only grow and the challenges attached to them will continue to consume organisational resources and time. The literature suggests that an organisation upholding the principles of social responsibility will be attractive to Gen X and Gen Y in the coming years. They are seeking integrity from employers and organisations they work for (Cole, Smith & Lucas 2002). Gen X and Y want employers who will align with their own personal sense of social responsibility (Winston 1998).

For most of the executives, obtaining and retaining “employer of choice” status was very important in their bid to attract and retain high potential staff. However, it was well noted that this aspiration brings challenges:

*Remaining an employer of choice, and in some way becoming more adaptive and responsive not only to employees, but also to the changing and external environment as well, and trying to work out how to do that while still retaining the corporate knowledge [was a challenge] [EGOV4 2005].*

Executives saw the casualisation of the workforce as something that would have an impact on the loyalty shown by employees to an organisation, noting that, years ago if you had three jobs in 12 years you were seen as *unstable.* But most executives found that in more recent years, the need for employees to have a range of experiences within one organisation or with multiple organisations was the norm and was seen by modern organisations when recruiting as a valuable asset to pursue.
7.2.2 Workforce Planning

The development and skilling of managers was raised by a number of executives as a major concern. The corporate sector executives saw the need to train and up-grade skills of highly specialised staff into management staff as a difficult challenge facing their sector, one commenting that:

…it is also about making these specialists into good leaders for the future and they don’t always make good leaders! So that raises another issue for us, which is, to bring in leaders from outside the organisation or grow our own leaders and bring generalised leaders in to lead product specialist [ECORP4, 2005].

The development of specialists into management roles was seen as a problem for executives, as an increasing number of employees either held highly specialised qualifications or had a very generalist set of skills and range of qualifications. The problem arises when there is a need to have someone who understands the technical aspects of the job or department, but who can also manage and lead people. This is especially true in highly technical and specialised knowledge areas needed to operate in the more complex areas of some organisations.

The not-for-profit sector executives faced similar issues with managing and skilling their managers for the job at hand, however the executives described the challenge they faced, with trying to improve the way managers are trained in the organisation, and the conflicts and disconnect they are experiencing between the generations, commenting that:

The big challenge is trying to move away from the very traditional autocratic style of management, to one where managers feel they can let go a little and pull-back and not micro-manage their staff - we are calling it “empowerment”. Building up the manager’s confidence in staff so they feel they are trusted.

What has made this a big challenge? The middle to upper managers - mainly
Baby Boomers. We are saying to them that we want you to empower your staff and they see that as us saying ‘you’re on your way out we don’t need you to manage the way you are used to managing’. So there is resistance to the change as it is a perceived threat of their position and of their authority. For the people they are reporting to, they are asking questions like ‘why are you giving me all this responsibility now?’ ‘Am I going to be jumped on the minute I take on a decision?’ So trust needs to be built up between the managers and their staff [ENFP42004].

This example illustrates the tension and resistance to change in management styles that are occurring in many organisations. The issue of trust in the employment relationship is pivotal to an effective relationship as is the need for greater understanding of the change process, in order for management and staff to have less resistance towards change. Only through education and communicating of the change do people understand and therefore have a greater acceptance of it.

Career progression was seen as crucial by the executives for the success of the organisation, with many noting that it was absolutely essential and critical for the organisation’s future success. Executives felt that it was important to set up an environment where people can develop themselves and make themselves more marketable in the labour market. Like employees, executives are also seeing staff being more active in their own career progression and believing that it is the right direction for employees to take. One executive qualified this, by suggesting that there are people in organisations who are quite happy being where they are and being left to do what they do and don’t want to be anywhere else. The executive stressed that sometimes change programs sweep through organisations and tend not to take the individual into mind when implementing change:
That is one of the things that [the organisation] is failing dismally at the moment! You need to look at people as individuals and base progression on the individual needs of the employee [EEDU12004].

The executive believed that if you don’t get employee buy-in, you won’t get change, noting a significant need for organisations to develop employees and provide avenues and opportunities for progression - whether through growing the business of the organisation, or providing opportunities in different areas for employees, or through training and development. Executives from all four sectors commented on the need for organisations to provide opportunities for employees to up-grade skill levels, re-skill, progress and grow as people, as well as employees of the organisation:

*I think you do need to develop-up [upgrading skill levels of] your employees, and equip them for progression* [EGOV22005].

Another executive suggested secondments as a means of developing employees:

*I actively encourage people to go on a secondment, because I think it is great for their professional development, and it is good for the organisation’s* [EGOV42005].

Most of the executives commented on the need for the organisation to continually develop and skill its employees by having a strong succession planning model:

*I think the sector has to invest in developing its people. ... if you don’t provide your employees with skills then there is a depletion of the skill base* [ENFP22004].

While another executive commented that:

*We should devote much more time to developing the skills of our employees... I think we should have a very strong succession planning model* [EGOV32005].

And:
I think it [my succession] is constantly on my mind that who of my staff is most capable of taking over my role when I leave ...succession planning is important and I think you do need to think about who and what [type of person] could be the next [person to take over my position] [EGOV22005].

An interesting thread through the responses was the way the executives spoke of the models and planning, as if they should do this and it would be nice to do rather than this is the way it is done and this is what we actually do in this organisation. For many of the executives it was as if they knew the right answer and what should be happening but that it was not the reality. For most of the executives, training, mentoring and planning were seen as soft issues and that their time was more valuably spent on the harder, less human issues like budgets and forecasting.

Most executives spoke in great length regarding employees building a career within the one organisation, and to progress in their career outside an organisation if the opportunities are available, and perhaps later returning. Most agreed that this was a means to acquire skills, build a profile and network in an industry or sector:

In the 80s there was a lot of talk about keeping your own [employees] in your department and not letting them progress through the whole of the public service, but now we actively promote the notion of a career with the public service as a whole, instead of with the one department [EGOV12005].

While another executive felt it was necessary to look out for the good of the individual and combine this with the organisation’s requirements, suggesting that:
To say to one of your star performers that your next step is to move on and gain a new experience is very hard. But you do have to look beyond the task and see what is really going to be good for the individual [EGOV22005].

Another executive agreed by suggesting that:

*I think it is good for people to go out and then come back into the organisation with a fresh set of eyes, a new way of looking at things. There is no use sitting around in a holding pattern and waiting for someone to move on, so that you can maybe be promoted into a particular role. People should go out get the experience, and then come back if they wish* [ECORP32005].

Another executive commented that they had found that job rotation maximised employee development:

*...think about having a career with us, not just about the job you do in the first graduate rotation* [ECORP12005].

The executives emphasised the need for organisations to provide opportunities and to be flexible in allowing employees to rotate their role, take up secondment opportunities and allow employees to seek out other opportunities elsewhere, but to remain in touch with employees who do take on external opportunities and offer them the chance to return to the organisation in the future.

The looming labour skill shortage and the ageing population were also key topics for discussion among most executives as a future challenge for their sectors. One executive commented that the government’s policy on skilled and unskilled migration into Australia really did need to be addressed in order to reduce major declines in economic growth in the future, suggesting that the Australian Government needs to answer some hard questions such as:
...who do we need and want and, if they are unskilled, how and what do we train them in? In the next three to five years there will be real structural problems. Development of our skills as a society is vital. Are we directing our investment dollars wisely? What are the longer term resources? Do we have the right mix of people going into the trade areas, as well as the higher education sector? Do we have enough institutions (TAFE / Universities)? Do we have too many? ...So it is the challenge between the longer term economic development and the mix of skills we have and need to get to that place [ECORP42005].

The need to address the workforce planning issues for the future was a common theme across the four organisations (as it was with the experts’ practitioners in stage one of this research). The issues that arose included; attracting, retaining and training employees in times of high demand and low supply of labour. These factors will affect the way organisations operate and the capacity in which they can grow. It also involves the need for organisations to do more with less and for organisations to implement strategies and programs to attract, train and retain staff in this environment, to ensure a sustainable future for the organisation.

7.2 Workplace Issues under Review

The following section addresses the key issues that emerged from the executive interviews that relate to employee satisfaction, and includes areas of work/life balance, loyalty nurturing talent within an organisation, and diversity management. This section addresses the need to role model the practice of work/life balance; the changing nature and perceptions of loyalty; and the need to identify and nurture talent.
7.2.1 Role Modelling Work/Life Balance

A common theme from the executives across the four sectors was the importance of leadership in role modelling the behaviours of a balanced work and life culture.

*Someone said to me the other day that strategy is fine, but culture eats strategy for breakfast every time. No matter what you do in an organisation to try and make it hum, perform, the culture which is a mélange of everything we have been talking about is what will make it work or not. And so much of that is top down; it is really about the visibility of the leaders, the perceptions of the leaders, the values of the leaders and how they behave [EGOV32005].*

Many of the 15 executives commented on the issues of workplace culture and believed it to be the key driving force behind organisations building a strong and supportive environment, responsive to work/life balance requirements for the individual in an organisation, and for enabling staff to feel that it is a supportive and encouraging workplace. Some comments included:

*I focus on senior people here because they are the role models for the rest of the staff on work/life balance ...I think we are fairly progressive but, I don’t think all our leaders really do this well and therefore don’t act as very good role models to their staff* [ECORP42005].

In addition:

*I think a lot of the policies need to be led from the top. I think staff are looking to the CEO and the general managers to see how they take-up the policy and use it...* [ENFP32004].

While another showed concern saying that:
Work/life balance will only be achieved when the upper levels embrace it and “walk the talk”... leadership is critical for it [work/life balance] to work well [EGOV32005].

However, some executives stressed that while they understand the importance of role modelling flexible work/life balance behaviours, they felt that due to the position and responsibility they held in the organisation, working long hours and answering email whenever they were able to, was something that just had to be done in order to stay abreast of the demands of the job.

...I am a little cynical, but I get paid to work these types of hours, so I do tend to work very long hours [ECORP42005].

Another commented on how the demands of the job predict the hours sometimes:

It is hard to apply them to managers, who are expected to attend functions and gatherings outside the normal hours. …work/life balance works hand-in-hand with time management [ENFP32004].

The executives concluded that while it was all good for an organisation to be seen to have policies on work/life balance and to have leaders in the organisation, role modelling the desired work/life balance behaviours, there came a point when the individual employee has to take some responsibility for achieving their desired balance according to their own expectations. The executives made a number of interesting comments regarding employee responsibility including:

The Boomer group at senior level are the ones that are less likely to use them [work/life balance policies]. That could be a generational issue, because they are seen to be at work and that is what they have to do [EEDU32004].

The flip-side to the responsibility was noted by one executive:
In some business units it is actually in employee’s performance targets and some people are being marked down because they are at work at 6:30pm [ECORP32005].

An executive argued that it was up to the individual to set the boundaries:

The CEO talks about work/life balance and he says the work/life balance is up to the individual to define their own boundaries and to know their own limits. It’s individual and it’s about the environment you want to create as a leader. I agree with that, but...In saying that we have the lowest cost to income ratio in the country and we are one of the most efficient organisations in our sector in the world, that means we do a lot more with a lot less people [ECORP42005].

Some executives raised the point that while they believe that work/life balance policies and programs apply to all employees, they found it hard in some instances to trust younger staff particularly when working from home, and working independently. They expressed that it was easier to trust more senior staff, due to the relationship that had been built up over the years and an understanding of what was expected. The following are some of the comments made regarding trust of employees to take up some of the flexible work/life balance policies offered by their organisation.

I think that some people use them [work/life balance policies] as they are meant to be used and I think that only a minority misuse them [ENFP22004].

And:

I think it is a lot harder when you are dealing with younger staff than when dealing with more senior staff and that is in regards to trust, you tend to have that more with senior staff [ECORP32005].

Another commented that it varies across the organisation:
Because the organisation is spread out over the state, I think that employees in the rural offices can use the policy more. In the corporate area in head office in the city, you are expected to be here - “face time” is pretty big [EGOV22005].

From these comments there is an observation of generational bias on the manager’s part. Trust is built and earned, the suggestion that younger employees can’t be trusted to work from home, but older people can, is a perfect illustration of the generational bias in the workplaces. The comment on the need to have face time and that it was very important to be in the office to be observed doing work is not only outdated notion but one that goes against the theory of performance management and time management where the outputs and performance of an employee are more important than the employees pretending to look busy in the office in order to be seen as high performers.

Overall, all executives agreed that it was through their role modelling of the work/life balance behaviours that others in the organisation would also take up a more balanced approach to work, but at the same time executives struggled with the demands of the work and the expectations they and the organisation placed on them. The executives also had a strong sense of being remunerated accordingly, which implied that they should work long hours.

### 7.2.2 Loyalty: To Whom and What?

A common theme among the executives’ discussion was the notion of to what and to whom employees are loyal. Some executives mentioned that employees tended to align themselves to the organisation’s brand and to what the organisation was offering:
...there is a strong culture to the brand as opposed to the organisation, you have a loyalty to what keeps you here and then you can be bought too [ECORP42005].

Other executives believed their staff to be more loyal to the values and cause of the organisation, rather than the organisation’s managers or leaders. This was especially true for the government, education and not-for-profit sectors:

People are very committed to what they do and what they are contributing. They want to make a difference. Whether they are loyal to the organisation, or not, I think the jury is out on that, but I think that they are loyal to what they do [EGOV12005].

Another added that:

I think there is loyalty to a portfolio or a project. People will put in the added extra for the cause [EGOV42005].

Overall executives believed that the notion of organisational loyalty had shifted: however, some executives still believed that loyalty or building an affinity between employees and an organisation was an important ideology to ensure a sustainable long-term future for the organisation.

### 7.3.3 Identifying and Nurturing Talent

One of the more important comments made by the executives was about the notion of identifying and nurturing talent in an organisation:

I think identifying and nurturing new talent is critical [EGOV42005].

For a lot of executives, seeing through these good intentions to deliverable actions was very difficult due to the nature of the beast. The needs of organisations change, sources of
funding or shareholders requirements and stakeholders’ needs are always in mind and have become the driving force behind development programs and training.

Executives discussed many aspects of nurturing and retaining talent across the generations. These include:

- The need to identify the gaps and implement succession planning models
- Flexible work options to ensure the impending gaps to be left by the Boomer exit impact is lessened
- The way in which organisations can prepare and implement flexible work arrangements for the Baby Boomers - such as downshifting and career extension programs to enable them to have the best of both worlds

All executives emphasised the need to nurture talent, manage succession planning and take action on the big issues in workforce planning such as the ageing workforce, the labour shortage, the facilitation of flexible workplace policy and an understanding of what these issues mean to their organisation and their sector.

*We need to meet the needs of employees that want to downshift and are seeking more casual positions. People are less willing now to defer the pleasures in life until retirement. People want to enjoy their life now; they don’t want to miss out on kids or grand kids growing up* [EEDU22004].

However, for some industry sectors the exit of the Boomers will come sooner rather than later with one executive noting that:

*The ageing work-force and the succession issues are upon us now. It is a “now” issue for us not a “future” issue* [EGOV42005].
7.3.4 Policy Addressing Diversity

Executives discussed five main areas or categories of diversity in the workplace: gender, racial or cultural diversity, harassment and discrimination, generational diversity and sexual orientation. The levels and richness of diversity within the workforce in Australia has grown dramatically over the past thirty years. The increasing number of women in the workplace, and increase in migration from the Asia region and have brought about a more culturally diverse workforce in Australia. The increasing levels of acceptance towards same-sex partnerships in the work environment has also brought about diversity in the workplace, as has the diversity of generational cohorts interacting in today’s workplace. Overall the comments around gender from the executives in all sectors were focused on equal male-to-female employee ratios, female salaries matching male salaries and females often out-performing males on performance evaluations.

When asked to comment on the organisation’s policies around diversity and how diversity was managed in the organisation, some executives noted that diversity and managing it well was once again a “nice to have” in the organisation, and something that was often put on hold due to resources and economic constraints:

*The organisation runs training and awareness programs and we are just starting programs on cultural and indigenous people. We don’t have any programs about the ageing issues or different generations. I think for us at the moment we have a stronger focus on leadership and management skills etc. than doing training on the diversity of different generations, so I don’t think it is as high a priority on our training agenda [ENFP42004].*
None of the executives who were interviewed perceived racial diversity being a huge issue for their organisation and all felt that overall their organisations were doing a lot towards improving racial tolerance in their organisation:

*As far as racial diversity goes, I think that because we operate in 30 different countries we are quite good at dealing with different races of people* [ECORP42004].

Another executive commented on the issues of an ageing workforce which demonstrates the diverse challenges in the organisation among the generations:

*...we have a lot of older employees who are not used to working with people from different cultures and it’s about being culturally sensitive to certain issues. There is some training happening in both administration and academia but there is a long way to go* [EEDU22004].

While an executive from a different sector comments on a similar issue in their sector:

*The older people [staff in the regional areas] are very prejudiced and I think it is about exposing them to more experiences and education* [ENFP32004].

These comments bring to life the reality of the issues that organisations are facing, in regards to racial diversity and generational differences that the executives believed that existed in the workplace. The changes which have occurred in younger generations have brought a greater exposure and hence they are more accepting and more tolerant of diversity. This may have come with the globalisation of the workforce and the increase in migration from a larger range of countries of non-Anglo heritage, as well as the increase in education.

Executives also made comments regarding how their organisations encourage indigenous people to apply for roles and actively promoted this in the graduate recruitment area. This
highlighted the complexities and time needed to implement and bring about real policy and strategic change in an organisation. One executive commented:

*There are indigenous targets and we are trying to reach those targets... we have a policy or strategy, but they tend to take a long time to come into action*

[EGOV32005].

Harassment and discrimination was seen to be more prevalent issues in some organisations, but for the most part these issues were under control and able to be managed. Only one executive commented on sexuality in regards to diversity, suggesting that:

*You can go to any sort of function and someone could have their same sex partner there and it would not be a problem. I think we are all pretty mature like that* [ECORP42004].

However, the executive went on to say that this was more obvious in the city and in the head office: *I am not sure what this would be like in a rural office in country Victoria* [ECORP42004]. The change in acceptance of same-sex relationships in the workplace has been widely brought about by legislation and organisational policy around equal opportunity, which has revolutionised many of the traditional norms in the workplace and society.

The executives noted that age diversity was going to become even more important to the management of staff and that it requires flexibility:

*Every type of diversity is going to become increasingly important to us especially about age; we are just going to have to become more flexible* [ECORP42005].

Another executive commented on the need for the younger generations to have a change of mindset regarding managing older workers, commenting that:
There is no doubt that younger people, especially ones who are going to be leaders, are going to have to change their mindset in order to look at older workers in a whole different light and be able to understand how best to accommodate these people [ECORP42005].

The executive made note of the differences in management styles between older and younger employees. The executives suggested that the younger style of management is not necessarily going to suit older workers managed by younger managers - noting that younger managers will need to be wary of this when managing older workers.

Overall, the discussion with the executives around diversity was very positive and full of insight and the organisations all came across as being very pro-active in their diversity policies. The organisation has been given an award and given recognition as an employer of choice for women [ECORP12005]. Another suggesting that: ... [the education sector] is often a benchmark for diversity and equity policies for other sectors [EEDU32004].

Some of the executives spoke of their organisation having a diversity manager or a diversity council to assist with issues and to help the organisation make appropriate policies in this area. This was a relatively new position in organisations and one which was brought about by the demand and needs of implementing diversity policy. One executive commented that:

People seem to be happy to have different people [in the workplace], as long as they act the same way! So you employ a black person, but want them to behave like their white counterparts; you employ a woman, but want them to behave like a man. You can be disabled as long as you don’t get in anyone’s way. I’m not saying this is a reflection on this organisation, but I think that it is the challenge with diversity policies [ECORP32005].
A number of programs and strategies were commented on by executives, when asked what type of policies and programs the organisation had in place, regarding generational differences (ageing workforce, retention of Gen X and Y etc.). Some of the organisations had more established policies than others, but a few were mentioned by the executives including:

- Running promotional campaigns to recruit mature workers
- Age diversity
- Flexible working hours

Other organisations had structured programs including career extensions, and career breaks; other organisations had commenced working on workforce projects and strategies in this area.

It should be noted that not all executives commented on their programs. Some suggested that it was not really seen as a major concern for their organisation at present, or that they had tried to implement these types of strategies and the CEO or Board hadn’t deemed them of importance, given the organisation’s current climate. For the executives who commented and mentioned the organisation’s strategies, all tended to feel that while these areas were of importance, suggesting there were always more important areas in the organisation that required resources and budget.

A number of executives spoke of their organisation’s current drive in promoting, actively seeking out and recruiting more mature workers. For some, this was done through a number of clever advertising messages on the bottom of the job advertisements in the newspaper and online. For others it was more about feeling they had a wide and diverse range of candidates. The Queensland Government, while not a participant in this research, was referred to by the executives for their advertising campaign seeking mature workers to
assist in getting Queensland’s transport system back on track. The advertisements were to promote mature workers to drive buses in Brisbane. Silver Top Taxi Company also is on a recruitment drive to attract the more mature worker. With an advertising campaign stating ‘Wanted: Silver topped drivers’ with a picture of a man’s head with grey/silver hair’ (Drake International 2005). Other organisations have advertising slogans such as ‘Age is no boundary’ and ‘Mature applicants need apply’. Promoting age diversity in the organisations was very positive among the executives. Benefits were seen from mixing older and younger workers in teams in order to ensure tacit knowledge transfer.

All the organisations who participated in this study had implemented or had policy, on providing flexible work options to staff. When asked to whom these policies apply executives generally stated “everyone”. The executives appeared surprised to hear that focus group participants felt that in some situations that they didn’t apply to everyone.

A more general response was displayed by other executives who replied that the organisation was addressing these needs at present, with a range of workforce strategies and research and were currently in the analysis stage rather than implementation stage. But this displayed that the organisations are addressing these issues, even though some were still trying to engage the rest of the senior management team. It became clear that these were issues and challenges involving the future sustainability of the organisations.

7.4 Key Observations of Executives Findings

The discussions with the executives revealed a range of challenges across the sectors, some only pertinent to the sector or an organisation, but for the most part, many issues and challenges were shared across the four sectors. It was clear from the interviews that there was a disconnect identified between the executive level (the policy and decision makers),
the managers (the operational directors of the policies and strategies) and the employees (who undertake and implement these policies into their work) in the area of work/life balance and attraction, retention and training.

In all organisations in this study, leadership was seen to be pivotal in implementing change and gaining employee buy-in to a policy or change within the organisation. Work/life balance was one of the examples given by executives suggesting that senior management needed to be seen as actively encouraging all employees to create balance in their lives. They also need to demonstrate this to middle managers and gain support for this type of cultural change to be effective throughout the organisation.

Attraction and retention of staff was a big issue and a key challenge for all executives - they all foresee attraction and retention being an increasing challenge for their sector in the future. The area of loyalty and the workplace living up to employee expectations was also an issue for executives. The executives remarked that while employees are in many cases less loyal to the organisation, they are seen to be loyal to the brand, their team or themselves. It was clear that the employment brand promise needs to be upheld in order for the employees to remain engaged in the organisation.

The discussion with executives revealed that they were unaware that the written policy was not applied uniformly throughout the organisation. This also highlights the disconnect between writing and implementing strategic policy and operational procedures and protocols.

Resources and budget constraints were seen as a challenge for all executives across all sectors. Finding new revenue streams was seen as a current and future challenge for all
executives. Most executives mentioned that in order to provide employees with growth
and opportunities, their organisation needs to grow and change. Executives believed that
the organisation played a key role in career progression, by facilitating opportunities and
developing employees through external training and developmental courses, workplace
training, secondments and publishing vacancies internally. It was seen as an important to
maintain a relationship with the organisation in the hope that one day they may return to
the organisation with their diverse range of knowledge and experience gained from
working across other organisations.

7.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter brings to light many issues being managed in today’s modern
workplace, along with the issues and challenges facing organisations through the eyes of
the executive and senior management participants. The differences that appear to exist
between different sectors of the economy are not really so different after all, especially at
the management level. The issues raised by all generations, across all sectors are indeed
challenging, and are bringing to the fore the real issues for organisations and managers in
the forthcoming years. In Chapter 8 the way forward for organisations from this research
and details of the implications and impacts of the findings are explored.
8.0 Introduction

There have been some monumental shifts over the last 20 years in organisations and their work environments. Globalisation, increased diversity in the workplace in cultures and the increase in female participation in the workplace, along with advances in technology, the structure and changing skill sets within organisations, have all had a profound effect on the workplace. This study has investigated the effects these changes have had on Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y and how their working styles and preferences differ accordingly. On many levels, generations want the same things from a workplace – i.e. respect, appreciation, a desire to contribute and a positive experience. However, there are some key differences across the generations that are important to note at all levels of an organisation.

This chapter represents the coming together of the three points in the triangulation process of the rich data gathered in the past seven chapters and addresses the three research questions of this study:

- How do generational differences impact on preferred working styles of the modern worker?
• How have the effects of societal, environmental and technological change impacted on the generations at work? and

• What are the implications of generational change for organisations and how can managers’ best mitigate the negative impacts and exploit the positive differences?

The key findings that will be highlighted in this chapter are: the existence of generational diversity in today’s workplaces, the differing expectations between generational cohorts in the workplace and the apparent disconnect in some organisational policies and operations. It is very important that these differences are taken into account within organisations to assist in avoiding conflict between the generations and explore the ways in which organisations can exploit the unique characteristics that each generation brings to the workplace, by bringing out the best in each generation. By knowing the differences and the similarities of each cohort, strategies and policies can be developed that allow for greater flexibility in managing each group and the individual.

The results of this research clearly demonstrated the notable effect that societal, environmental and technological change has on the values, perceptions and preferences of the generations in the workplace. Overall, four areas have been identified as monumental shifts that have impacted on and will continue to shape the world of work: 1) Hierarchy and Structural shift, 2) Demography shift, 3) Skills shift, and 4) Globalisation. From the external occurrences, a cohort effect has occurred which has driven the generational diversity we are now witnessing in the workplace and this is resulting in differing expectations among generational employee groups. The globalisation of the economy is changing the way work is done and the expectations of employees and employers. It is vital for organisations to take note of what is happening in the wider environment. By assessing the social, the environmental (including the economic, political and legal factors)
and the technological (S.E.T) changes, it becomes possible for organisations to be more prepared for the external environmental impacts upon their organisation (see Diagram 8).

**Diagram 8: The S.E.T Flow on Effect on Generational Diversity**

8.1 Generational Diversity in the Workplace

It is evident from the research undertaken that generational diversity exists in the modern workplace. The complex interplay of years of experiences, levels of education, external forces, life shaping events, modes of thinking and perceptions, all of which impact on how different generational cohorts undertake work activities and their preferences and perceptions of what “work” is, as well as how and where work is undertaken.

From the research, it is apparent that the management of multi-generational work teams is becoming a greater concern for managers in Australian organisations and is one of the biggest challenges. There is a need, for managers to acknowledge that there are generational differences and that generational diversity exists - just like all other forms of diversity in today’s workplaces. This requires a change of mindset and an appreciation of what each generational cohort brings to the work environment. A greater understanding of each generation will also highlight how these unique talents can be best exploited to bring out the best from each cohort, and also bring out the best in each individual thus providing productivity gains for the organisation. It is vitally important that managers and leaders be
encouraged to be open to the positive aspects and possibilities arising as a result of generational diversity and not necessarily only focus on the limitations and tensions of a multi-generational workplace.

Organisations need to identify the demographic composition of their organisation and then adopt an open communication approach in assessing the workplace climate. By listening to employees and achieving buy-in on decisions involving major change in the organisation, by incorporating employees’ ideas and opinions, managers will have established a participatory process which will lead to overall employee ownership of the issue or change.

As the generational gap widens between employees, managing multigenerational teams will become a more pronounced challenge for managers and key decision-makers in organisations. However, by acknowledging and managing generational diversity and intergenerational conflict, organisations will create benefits and gains for their organisation and the work environment, by encouraging generational harmony among workers. People are fearful of what and who they don’t know and understand. Through creating open lines of communications between the generational groups, barriers and pre-conceived attitudes can be broken down to reveal a more realistic view of intergenerational work teams and practices. Flexibility and open communication will also assist in the management of employee expectations across the generations. Differing expectations held by different generations can be realised, managed and understood more clearly. If management is prepared to listen and take note of the differences between the different generational cohorts, many productive gains can be made.
Table 13 is a segmentation of the generational cohorts which were studied. This table represents the themes investigated in this research and summarises the differences found between the generations in regards to the research themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 13: Workforce Generational Segmentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career stage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageing workforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level of Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mind set towards tenure…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyal to…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitude towards lifelong learning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training &amp; Development</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prefer to Communicate…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need for timely Recognition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work/life Balance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career progression – who’s responsible</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attracted to…</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respect is…</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note this is a broad generalisation*

Acknowledging and managing these differences can lead to a great attraction and retention of employees, as well as assist in the management of their expectations from the organisation.
8.2 Differing Expectations among Generational Cohorts

The future of work is not about a “one-size-fits-all” approach. The future of work is about a flexible, highly-trained, adaptable workforce, and with that comes flexible and adaptable employment contracts that relate to the individual employee’s needs, abilities and talents. Organisational policies and processes that are rigid and inflexible and suffer from stagnation and low productivity will find the future even more of a challenge than the past and present. Organisations of the future, who embrace the talents of their employees, and are adaptable and flexible to the needs of their workforce, will find rewards in increased growth, high productivity and increases in innovation. Employers of choice are the attractive options for employees now and will continue to be attractive to employees in the future. Just as we are seeing a decline in mass production in favour of mass customisation (Pine 1993) in the manufacturing sector, the knowledge-based service sectors will see a move towards mass customisation of organisational policies. Generational segmentation (see Table 13) is a small way forward in the classification and segmentation of the workforce into more manageable components.

A key finding of this research was the observation of differing expectations among the three generational cohorts. Expectations differed across a number of areas including: attraction, engagement and retention, work/life balance, loyalty, life-long learning, and respect.

8.2.1 Attraction, Engagement and Retention

Now more than ever the notion of the psychological contract⁴ is critical to the relationship between the organisation and the employees and vice versa. Employee expectations are changing with each new generation of workers. As expectations change, organisations

---

⁴ The psychological contract has been defined as an individual’s beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding terms of an implicit agreement between individuals and the organisation (Rousseau, 1995).
need to address the relationship and the expectations implied in the psychological contract with employees. The employees’ overall satisfaction with the whole employment contract is what attracts, engages and retains employees from all generations this requires a carefully tailored contract that meets the needs of the individual.

There has been a huge power shift in the traditional employer/employee relationship. Capital assets were once the foundations of an organisation, now it is human capital that is the foundation of many organisations. The challenge with human capital is that they come with legs, as an added bonus. The downside to the bonus legs of course, is their ability to walk out the door - capital assets were never quite as mobile as they are during a skill shortage.

Employee recognition has come a long way, but there is still more to do. Employees in this research spoke of the desire to be recognised for the work they undertake, for the people they are and for the contribution they make to the organisation. The participants were seeking a feeling of contributing to a greater good and to the organisation’s common goal. They are seeking to understand which “link” they are in the organisational chain and to understand how they make a worthwhile contribution. Many organisations conduct yearly or half-yearly reviews of their employees to measure performance and to assess work plans and position descriptions. Employees, especially the younger generations, are seeking more frequent feedback on their performance; they desire weekly if not daily feedback on their performance. They are expecting immediate and ongoing recognition and not six months later in their review or at the formal end-of-year organisation function. Employees are demanding continuous feedback, timely recognition, and a feeling that they contribute to the overall strategic direction of the organisation. Once an employee feels
that they contribute and are valued, they also feel a sense of ownership of the issues of the organisation.

Image is everything - marketing and branding is no longer just about the customers. Employee branding and meeting employee brand expectation is important in the attraction game. Just like marketing to consumer groups, the marketing of a positive brand image is becoming paramount in a competitive labour market. An organisation’s brand must come across as a socially responsible, trustworthy, attractive and engaging brand in order to attract potential employees. Employees’ expectations have increased, they expect that the organisation has integrity, follows triple bottom line philosophies and is a good corporate citizen. Organisations that have a traditional culture, and who are less market focused, may require a change in mindset to ensure future success. The organisation’s reputation and social standing is always under the employee microscope. The employment branding is becoming critical in the attraction of talent to an organisation.

Employment branding needs to accurately reflect the organisation’s offerings. It needs to be realistic. Promises made in the employment contract need to accurately reflect the employment offering and experience. The same rules apply for employees when initial promises are not kept and the offering is not what was promised, employee satisfaction is low and employee expectations remain unmet (see Diagram 9).
Having the organisation meet the implied or promised expectations is of growing importance to prospective employees, especially employees from Generation X and Generation Y. There have been numerous cases of an organisation’s reputation and brand image having impacted a person’s decision for turning down a job with a cigarette company, or mining company that mines and exports uranium, retail and manufacturing companies that have employed sweatshop labour, organisations that are under-taking merges or acquisitions with other less desirable organisations, or those that have fallen on financially hard times.

**8.2.2 Generational Expectations**

A major finding of this research was the differing expectations employees from the different generational groups have regarding work/life balance. There was a range of perspectives presented by the employee groups as to firstly what they viewed work/life balance to mean and secondly, who was entitled to work/life balance. The research found that there was in fact varying opinions and expectations held by the groups’ dependent
upon which generation they were from. The generational segmentation (Table 13) summarises the differing expectations;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exert from Table 13</th>
<th>Boomer</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Gen Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is a nice to have</td>
<td>Is critical to success</td>
<td>‘I’ve got a life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘We worked, now we</td>
<td>‘Work hard, so we can</td>
<td>Work should be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>play.’</td>
<td>play hard!’</td>
<td>fun!’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of Boomers view work/life balance as a “nice to have” and is something that most strive for. The Boomers commonly suggested that once I retire, I’ll have the time to do those things that I enjoy. Boomers see work/life balance as something that is earned. You work hard and when life slows down you will have time to enjoy yourself. Where as Generation X viewed work/life balance as something that is needed to be incorporated into one’s life to have succeeded in this fast paced busy world. Generation Xers have the mentality that you work hard to play hard. They work hard all week, so they can have the whole weekend to play hard and enjoy themselves. Gen Y however take a different view again from the older two generations, their expectations were that life is here to be lived and work should be fun, they took the view that they have a life and that work was one small part of their life equation.

Some organisations are implementing strategies to accommodate their employees who are opting to exit the organisation in favour of gaining international experience or to travel and opting for a more balanced life style. More and more large organisations are saying ‘go out and experience the world; we are always interested in knowing what you are up to and there may be opportunities for you back here in the future’. Other organisations are offering programs such as a “Career or Employment Breaks” where after 12 to 24 months with an organisation employees are entitled to take 12 months leave without pay to travel, volunteer or experience something else with the security of returning to the organisation.
after the 12 month period. TGI Fridays operates a “Passport program” where employees who have worked with the organisation for more than one year, have the opportunity to travel and work at other TGI outlets around the world. They front up and present their TGI’s passport to the store manager who then arranges their shifts. They can then move around and travel and experience the world with the security of having a continual income (Zemke et al. 2000). Australia Post and ANZ are providing a program called “Employment Extension” and “Career Extension” respectively where they are offering employees the chance to extend their employment with the organisation, by providing flexible work options, such as part-time, casual, three months on, three months off where employees work on specific projects. The other popular offering by employers currently is the 48/52 annual leave entitlement, where employees are able to apply for four weeks of additional annual leave, with a proportionate reduction in salary spread over the full year. Other initiative such as, job sharing have also assisted in providing employees with interesting work in a part-time capacity.

Employees are looking for organisations to offer opportunity for career progression. This is especially true for Generation X and Generation Y. Employees are looking to be engaged and challenged, be offered job rotation and internal secondments as career options. This assists employees in building up their skill base, and engages them in a new area of the organisation. It was noted in the research that Gen Y in particular are looking at advancing quickly through an organisation, and require pathways to move around the organisation on job rotation, secondments and parallel promotions. By undertaking such activities, organisations are training future managers (while not necessarily their organisations future managers), while at the same time providing the Gen Y employee with the challenge and interesting work that they desire to keep them engaged and interested. This allows younger employees to gain experience, contribute to the organisation, feel
valued and as well as assist them in finding their place in the organisation. For Boomers, career management is still important, but for different reasons than for Gen X or Gen Y. Boomers are seeking innovative and flexible forms of work to cater for the desire to downshift their career. Boomers are seeking flexible options that don’t necessarily see them going from managing a department to being the administration assistant to that department, due to only working two and a-half days a week. They are looking to be downshifted, not “dumbed-down”.

8.2.3 The Changing Face of Loyalty

Loyalty is diminishing at least as we once know it. Organisational loyalty in the traditional sense is quite an outdated notion for most people in the workforce according to data collected in this research. The concept of loyalty has changed. Downsizing, retrenchments and the constant changes that are occurring in organisations and in the market have all contributed to the change in the concept of loyalty for both employees and consumers.

The decline in loyalty means that organisations can no longer rely on the unquestioned loyalty of employees as they once did. There is a greater demand for loyalty to be two-sided. Organisations can no longer expect loyalty if they are not willing to be loyal. For example, why should employees be loyal to an organisation, manager or brand that does not show loyalty to them? On the basis of this research organisational loyalty is now defined as a connection or bond to something or someone, which is developed through mutual trust and admiration.

Loyalty is something that can be broken when and if that mutual trust or admiration is lost, due to expectations of either party not being met. The new form of loyalty that is emerging is more of a relationship or connection. It is for this reason that organisations are adopting
well managed “Alumni Programs” which are set up, for the most part by, HR departments in organisations to keep in touch with employees who leave the organisation. The alumni program assists organisations in continuing the relationship with the past employee and keeps them informed of changes and job opportunities within the organisation. Organisation alumni program representatives correspond with past employees on a monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly newsletter, usually delivered via email, as well as networking events around the world. These types of programs assist in building the relationship with the employees long after they have left and have been used as effective tools for recruitment by some organisations.

8.2.4 Life-Long Learning

Training and development is a priority for employees. They need continual training and for their skills to be updated inline with the pace of change present within the industry they are working. Employees are seeking transferable skills that will prepare them for the uncertainty of the future. Career progression is important for employees to feel they are valued and their skills and abilities are appreciated and needed. Career progression is about providing a new experience that brings a different view of the workplace. This can be achieved in a number of ways and is not necessarily always upwards in direction. Employees can be progressed through rotation and challenged by undertaking new experiences and interesting work or projects.

Promoting a culture of life-long learning, actively promoting training and development and ensuring that all employees are undertaking training and development is essential for a successful retention strategy and to ensure a productive workforce. Training and developing employees provides a sense of belonging and nurturing in the work environment. However, not just any training and development will do. Training needs to
be relevant, interesting, tailored to the needs of the generation and the individual. Gaps need to be identified to accurately assess the training and development needs that will successfully engage, challenge and retain employees from all generations.

The notion of life-long learning has been discussed throughout this research as a key component in addressing the challenges associated with attracting, engaging and retaining employees. The need to continually train employees and develop their skill base in a number of areas, including soft and hard skills is critical not only to the organisation, but also for the employability. Organisations need to hold some responsibility for the continual re-skilling and up-skilling of employees engaged in their employment. A culture of life-long learning embraces a notion of there being an equal opportunity with regards to skill attainment.

Organisations need to train employees on both hard and soft skills. Technology, communication, emotional intelligence, cultural change management, dealing with change at work, innovation and entrepreneurial thinking, are all skills needed by employees. By re-skilling and up-skilling employees, organisations equip themselves, with a highly trained and highly flexible workforce, that can adapt to the changing needs of the business and the external and global demands placed on the organisation.

8.2.5 Respect – Automatic or Earned?

It became apparent throughout this study that respect in the organisational setting is not always automatic and that many of the younger participants felt that respect should be earned by managers and leaders in the organisation based on their performance in these roles and not purely on the titles they hold. Generation Y participants also felt that older employees held less respect for them due to their age and or tenure with the organisation,
and that Boomers ascribed respect based on these things instead of work outputs or contribution made by the individual employee. However, the older participants noted that they had seen a decline in the level of respect shown in the workplace and in particular noted the lack of respect shown by younger employees towards older employees in their workplaces. The uneasiness demonstrated in the workplace regarding the level of perceived respect shown is causing issues for management and for team dynamics. This is an area that is suffering from a misunderstanding and an increase in the incidents of intergenerational conflict in the workplace. Organisations need to ensure that there is a baseline of respect demonstrated by all employees, to all employees - regardless of generation, gender, position or tenure. All people should be able to work in a workplace where they are respected by their manager and peers regardless. Through communicating this message throughout an organisation, a collective understanding and a culture of equality can exist and workplace efficiencies will follow.

8.2.6 Strategies for Managing Generational Diversity

Below is a range of strategies management can employ to assist in managing generational diversity:

- Whenever starting a new project, or new change initiative create a task force that includes employees from each of the generations. Each group will bring a different perspective to the discussion, not just suggestions for how things should work, but on how they will interpret the outcomes.

- Don’t exclude the older workforce from IT rollouts just because it is perceived “they don’t want to learn” or “they will never use it anyway”. Also avoid excluding the younger workers from cultural or productivity changes based on perceptions such as “what would they know”. They will all have different
expectations from new technology. A clear message from this research is that if the employer does not meet those expectations, they will lose good people.

- When growth is stagnating in an organisation, management often look for productivity gains from existing staff. This research highlights that the different generations interpret things differently, apply different values and logic to the way they work things out, and react differently to technology and communication employed in the workplace. Placing a generational filter over issues can often bring to light a range of perspectives that would not have been realised otherwise, and assist in moving an organisation forward.

- The traditional pecking order and hierarchies are no longer the norm for the modern workplace and they will be less prevalent in the future. Only the competent will get to the top of their career paths and managers need to recruit and promote on merit and capability, not duration in a role. Identifying talented employees based on their performance is the way forward, while considering only years of service and age is not going to allow the best available talent to be identified.

- A manager from the Boomer generation who is responsible for managing younger generations should focus on their strengths. Many participants in this research cited a lack of urgency and structure to Gen Y work style. Managers need to find a way to make that work for them. Set firm deadlines but don’t “parent” the Gen Y team member. Set clear boundaries and then give them the space to work within them. Set realistic goals and timeframes and help them achieve them. Reward and recognise them for meeting the targets and goals set. Set the tasks, provide guidelines, set out your expectations, commit to a deadline. Make sure the directions and expectations are clear - then get out of their way. They know where you are if they have a question. Don’t micro-manage - you are suggesting that you don’t trust them if you do.
• Across the organisation “knowledge competencies” need to be set that all staff need to achieve. The successful workplaces of the future will embed structured learning into workplace learning. All employees will be taught a range of transferable skills. By providing training in transferable and personal development skills, the organisation has a “go anywhere” workforce, and as the business situation or climate changes, the organisation can move and adapt to these changes with ease and gain competitive gains in future endeavours.

• Frustrations arise within work teams when inconsistencies and gaps appear in employee training, especially in technology and cultural change. It is optimal that all staff in the team are trained to the same level on all core technology being used by the team. Increased productivity will come from being able to channel resources effectively - no-single employee will be “carried” and no one person will be crucial to growth.

• The best people will rise out of the level playing field created by this environment to be the leaders. The remaining employees will be productive members of a team. So they come to an organisation with different ages, technology experiences and values. They come together in a level playing field of in-house knowledge. They emerge as leaders and team members, with a greater understanding of those around them and their skills.

• Once people find their place in an organisation, they will be happiest and most productive. This research has shown there is a place in most organisation types for all ages in the workforce, but they require training, guidance and boundaries, to ensure they meet the standards of the modern workforce and are able to keep up with the pace of change.
By employing the above workplace suggestions organisations will be on their way from moving from a workplace with generational conflict and moving towards achieving generational harmony.

8.3 Organisational Policy versus Practice

A key finding in this research was the bottleneck arising in the operationalisation of policy being integrated into organisations, especially around the areas of work/life balance and family friendly policies. The disconnect between organisational policy and the manager’s ability to translate the policy into practiced organisational behaviours, was identified as a real issue and one that needs to be addressed in the practices of managers at every level of an organisation. The need for leaders and managers to “walk the talk” on these types of policies is also paramount, if a true cultural change and acceptance of these policies is to be “lived” in the organisation on a daily basis.

8.3.1 The Reality of Work/Life Policies

There is growing importance for organisational policy, such as work/life balance policy and family friendly policies, to be alive and operational within the working culture of the organisation. The misalignment between organisational decision makers’ intentions through policy decision and operational management outcomes, leading to declines in employee satisfaction is a complex issue for many large organisations. However, it is an issue which, if left unaddressed will lead to an erosion of the culture of the organisation, alongside mounting employee dissatisfaction, resulting in an increase in turnover and a decline in morale as well as a breach of the psychological contract. Organisations must ensure the policies are put into operation as intended and that policies such as work/life balance are put into practice and are available and used by all employees, regardless of generation or life commitments. Work/life balance policies should be working models that
assist the organisation in moving forward with a balanced, healthier, happier and more productive workforce.

With the increase in pace and urgency of many workplaces, the notion and practice of work/life balance has grown in importance in the attraction of potential candidates. However, simply displaying the work/life balance policy or writing something about work/life balance in the job advertisement is only the first step. Work/life balance is in demand by many employees from all generations. They are seeking out workplaces that offer and understand the productive gains that come with a balanced employee.

8.3.2 Generational Diversity Awareness in Organisational Policy

A change in mindset is needed in organisations along with a greater appreciation of the pitfalls and advantages of generational diversity, how generational diversity has come about and what it means for employees from different generational cohorts. This needs to be addressed by organisational decision makers to assist in moving the organisation forward and catering for the changing needs and expectation of all employees from all generational cohorts. Just as training and information about cultural diversity was prevalent in the past and currently, so too should formal information about generational diversity be available within organisations today. However, this type of information and updating of management practices seems to be continually downgraded in importance for organisations due to the pace of change occurring in the external environment affecting the distribution of resources in many organisations.

8.3.3 Management Training

A key finding identified by this research is the need to train managers to be managers and in the importance of generational diversity. This was a key issue identified by the expert practitioners in stage one, and the executives in stage three of this research. This was
especially true for the organisations who promote high performing technical employees into management positions, not based on management potential, but on their technical brilliance. It is for this reason that senior management needs to identify skill gaps in more junior managers and go about addressing these gaps through training and mentoring current and potential managers. It was noted that the lack of communication through the organisation was often due to managers not having adequate management skills to execute these policies effectively.

The new world of work dictates that people bring business to life. Organisational decision-makers and management need to note that there is no bottom line without great staff. Looking after the bottom line is looking after the people! Organisations in the next ten years are facing even more uncertain times, potential instabilities, a further increase in competition, an increase in globalisation, as well as an increase in labour mobility. The complexity and chaos surrounding the future of the organisation and of the workplace is set to change dramatically. The thought processes and management thinking of today is not necessarily going to manage the complexity and increase in chaos that the next ten years will bring. The increase in speed and intensity that has been noted over the past 20 years with the advancements in technology is set to further increase. Management of tomorrow needs transferable skills that allow them to adapt and be proactive in times of uncertainty and unprecedented change.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the key findings from this research and presented possible solutions to the issues facing managers of Australian organisations in regards to generational diversity. Key models were presented including the flow-on effect of the S.E.T (Social, Environmental and Technology) model on generational diversity and the
presence of the generational cohort effect. In addition other implications were discussed, especially the need for generational diversity to be incorporated in the formation of organisational policy, especially around work/life balance. The next chapter concludes this thesis, by providing a summary of the thesis, the key contributions and the directions for future research.
Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

‘It is about being flexible and adaptive, more so, than predicting the future. By implementing flexible working and learning environments, we are better able to develop and foster the needs of the changing workforce.’

9.0 Introduction

Looking at the modern Australian workplace from a generational perspective has created new and valuable knowledge that contributes to the understanding of workplace behaviour in large Australian organisations. This research complements other perspectives of workplace behaviour such as psychological, sociological and general management. By undertaking an in-depth study into the three predominant generations that exist in the workplace at this time – Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, the study provides rich, relevant and timely findings that will be of value to industry and academia alike.

Each of the generations – the Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, were investigated against the broader backdrop of the external changes, illustrated through the S.E.T model, and framing the issues currently being faced by Australian organisations. The study highlighted how external changes shape each generation and ultimately influence each generation’s preferred working style and expectations. This research
recommends that organisations need to recognise these differences between the generations and reflect the differences in their management practices and policy decisions. This chapter concludes the dissertation and summarises the findings, as well as providing recommendations to future research in this area to assist in growing this emerging body of knowledge.

9.1 Summary of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do generational differences impact on preferred working styles of the modern worker?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It was found through the research undertaken that the three generations all ascribed to differing preferred working styles and held differing expectations of their organisations, The specific differences are outlined below:

- There were very clear differences regarding the concept of loyalty between the generations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Have a greater sense of loyalty to the organisation although it has been tarnished in recent years with the increase in retrenchments.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>Are loyal to themselves first and are more likely to feel a sense of loyalty to a manager or mentor rather than the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Are loyal to self primarily or to a social network of friends in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All generations</td>
<td>Felt a strong sense of loyalty or have a strong affiliation to the “cause” they are working for (this was noted in three of the four sectors researched; education, government and not-for-profit).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A key difference between the generations was also noted regarding the notion of respect and attitude towards authority:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>For the most part felt that respect was expected and assigned to people in authority and positions of distinction.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>Felt that while it is important to respect those around them in the workplace, they felt that respect could be lost quickly depending upon the behaviours of managers and work colleagues alike.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Felt that respect needed to be earned and that authority figures and people who hold positions of power or authority did not necessarily deserve respect unless it was earned through their actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All generations also held differing levels of comfort and competency with technology and preferred differing means of communication:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>For the most part Baby Boomers viewed themselves as holding a good level of competency with technology used in the workplace. Gen X and Y disagreed with the Boomers self-assessment and rated the average Boomer as being less than competent with technology used in the workplace. Boomers also considered that face-to-face communication was the most effective form of communication in the workplace.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>Felt they held a good grasp of the technology used in their workplace and both Boomers and Gen Y agreed with this self-assessment on the whole. Gen X believed that the telephone was the most effective means of communicating in the workplace, when there was a need to get results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Expressed the view that they were not excited by the technology used in their workplace, some commenting that it was out of date. Ys claimed that Boomers relied heavily on their input to solve basic problems with the technology used in the workplace, some commenting that they were sick of being seen as the “help-desk” in their work team. Overall Gen Ys relied heavily on email as their preferred mode of communication in the workplace.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How have the effects of societal, environmental and technological change impacted on the generations at work?

All three research stages revealed that the Australian workplace has been impacted by a number of significant external forces:

- Demographic shifts including the aging population, increasing participation rates of women, declining birth rate and increased labour mobility.
- The changing working styles and preferences of workers from different generational cohorts.
- An increased pace of change caused by globalisation and an increase in competition.
- A rise in employee expectations was identified as occurring due to the advances in technology and globalisation.
- A rise in socially responsible business practices and an increased awareness of corporate governance among big and small business alike. A marked increase was observed in the demand from employees to obtain a degree of work/life balance in their ever-increasing busy lives.
- An increased concern from management regarding the attraction, engagement and retention of talent in the workplace, brought about by a shrinking talent pool, as well as a decline in the notion of organisational loyalty and the rise in the knowledge economy.

These broad changes have in turn had a major impact on organisations and how they operate. Changes in the external environment have impacted work/life balance, training and development needs, the nature of careers and attitudes towards work.
The findings from the generational employee perspective were compared with the findings from stage three of the research – the interviews with executives and senior managers from the same participating organisations and a number of key results emerged.

- Each organisation representing each of the four sectors surveyed were facing similar workplace issues and no key differences were identified by any one industry sector.
- There was a disconnect identified between policy decision-makers, operational management and employees, which impacts on the effectiveness of workplace strategies and policies. The disconnect between policy and practice was most apparent in the following areas:
  1. Ineffective use of work/life balance policies across the organisations.
  2. The ineffectiveness of the recruitment policies which result in failure, due to the disconnect between the promises made during recruitment and the actual experience in the workplace.
- The importance of strong and effective leadership was noted as a key to driving effective change and removing the blockages and disconnect between the levels in the organisation.
- A decline in loyalty was observed among the executives and noted as a core issue facing them in the area of engagement and retention.

It was identified that there is a strong need for organisations to develop employee branding and offer realistic expectations to employees as the talent pool shrinks and the labour
market tightens. A multigenerational workforce has significant implications for organisations, management and employees. Following is a summary of these implications:

Generational diversity and the differing expectations held are causing issues for organisations regarding the attraction, engagement and retention of employees from the different generations, especially around work/life balance policies and building a culture of life-long learning. This comes amidst changing opinions among the generations regarding the notion of loyalty and the differing views regarding the basis for respect.

A range of strategies is needed to assist in the management of a multigenerational workforce, however endeavours should be made to ensure that organisational policy matches the reality of policy implementation within an organisation. Management must have the skills and training to bring about change and incorporate policy into their day-to-day activities with employees, to ensure policies such as work/life balance really live within an organisation. By management having a greater understanding of the needs and preferences of each generation within the organisation, the differences that have the potential to cause conflict can be mitigated and the positive differences can be exploited. This will ensure a more harmonious work environment and encourage more productive outcomes for the organisation.

9.2 Key Contribution of this Thesis

This thesis contributes to the emerging body of knowledge exploring the differing expectations and perceptions of three generations (Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y) in the Australian work environment. This research has implications and wide appeal to a number of sectors in Australia and organisational areas including: organisational policy makers, organisational practitioners in strategy, human resources and training and
development, academics in the delivery of education programs to individuals and to industry as organisations embrace life-long learning, and also to government advisors in areas such as workplace relations, the economy, and social policy.

The pace of change occurring in Australia’s workplaces and the demographic shifts occurring within the Australian population are monumental shifts which are changing the core of the Australian workplace currently and will continue to impact upon the workplace in the future. These changes are impacting the three generations of workers through their preferred working styles and preferences, and are influencing how and where and when they prefer to undertake their work.

The demographic shifts occurring and the impact of the differing generational preferences identified in this research are significant in contributing to the growing demand from organisations to understand their multigenerational employees and teams. Organisations need to recognise these differences in order to know how best to manage and accommodate the differing needs, viewpoint and/or desires. More effective and efficient attraction, engagement and retention strategies need to be developed to take account of the shrinking supply of available talent, an aging working population, and an increase in labour mobility globally. Recognising and effectively dealing with generational diversity will encourage harmony in the organisation, and bring with it efficiency gains, effective work practices and a positive organisational culture. Managing these issues on a generational basis will provide for a longer-term solution.

From this research, key challenges have been identified that should be addressed by organisations in the management of their workers, especially in policy development around work/life balance, training and development, attraction, engagement and retention,
communication and technology. Viewing the Australian workforce through a generational lens has provided a rich analysis of the growing trends and the concerning issues and challenges that are impacting on the Australian workplace.

9.3 Direction of Future Research

Although this study represents a snapshot in time it does however provide a broad foundation for further research in the quest to understand the working styles and preferences of generations currently in the Australian workplaces. This study is qualitative in nature and used a cross-sector sample of 100 participants across three stages. The natural progression for future research would be to undertake a large quantitative study based on the constructs developed in this research. Further research could also focus more narrowly on any one of the areas covered in this study; such as work/life balance, recruitment, or training and development.

There is a need for more studies to be undertaken in the area on multigenerational workforce behaviours and benefits, as well as intergenerational conflict in the work environment. This would require more extensive resources needed to undertake such a study than what was available for this research. It would also be of interest to concentrate future research on the key findings of this study, such as:

- The conflict between the generations in the workplace regarding work/life balance policies and perceived inequity.
- Differing generational attitudes towards life-long learning.
- The profitability benefits from the aggressive management of intergenerational issues and conflict in the workplace.
9.4 Conclusion

This research has highlighted the need to be flexible and adaptive, more so than being able to predict the future of multigenerational workplaces. By implementing flexible working and learning environments, organisations are better able to develop and foster the needs of the changing workforce both now and in the future. This research has concluded that multiple generations in the workplace are greatly beneficial to organisations. Managing them well will be greatly beneficial to the individual employee and also to the prosperity of the organisation.
REFERENCES


[http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@census.nsf/4079a1bbd2a04b80ca256b9d00208f92/7dd97c937216e32fca256bbe008371f0!OpenDocument#Birthplace]


--------, 2006, Work Choices, Commonwealth of Australian, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, viewed 21/05/2006. [https://www.workchoices.gov.au/]

Dick, R.B. 1990, Convergent Interviewing, Interchange, Chapel Hill QLD.


Hicks, R. & Hicks, K. 1999, *Boomers, Xers, and other Strangers: understanding the generational differences that divide Us*, Tyndale House Publishers, USA.


Murphy, S.A. 2000, *A Study of Career Value by Generation and Gender*, PhD in Human and Organizational Systems thesis. The Fielding Institute, USA.


Reynolds, J. 2003, *You can't always get the hours you want: Mismatches between actual and preferred work hours in the U.S.*., Social Forces, vol. 81, no. 4, p. 1171.


Sayers, R 2002, Cultural implications of the shift towards a knowledge-based company, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.


APPENDICES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schuman &amp; Scott</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Generations and Collective Memories</td>
<td>The findings revealed that different cohorts recall different events and changes and that the memories that they discussed generally came from their adolescence and early childhood. Concluding that ‘generational effects are the result of the intersection of personal and national history’ (p. 359)</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daboval</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>A Comparison Between Baby Boomers and Generation X Employees' Bases and FOCI of Commitment</td>
<td>Baby Boomers showed a higher level of commitment to the organisation and their supervisors, where Generation X were more focused or committed to improving their marketability, and HR policies in the organisation directed at their professional development. ‘Organisations should identify non-traditional bases for commitment and develop programs to support the culture’ (Daboval 1998, p. 82).</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>A Study of Career Value by Generation and Gender</td>
<td>Gender and age play a greater role in understanding career values, with gender playing a key role in influencing 12 of the 15 career values of the participants.</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valenti</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Generation X: Act Your Stage! Organizational Commitment and Career Stage Perspectives</td>
<td>The results challenge the generalizability of popularly touted management strategies for Gen X employees. It was found that Gen X did not display less commitment than past generations and this was applicable to both males and females in the study.</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeffries</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>A phenomenological study of Generation X executives in the United States' high-</td>
<td>Generation X executives [in the high-technology sector] were found to possess; a peer personality, grounded in their</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smola &amp; Sutton</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Generational differences: Revisiting generational work values for the new millennium</td>
<td>Generational work values do differ. To a lesser degree work values also change as workers grow older. The results indicate an increasing desire among American workers to balance work and personal goals. This change in attitude was reflected even within the same cohort group. The findings of this study ‘strongly suggest that work values are more influenced by generational experiences than by age and maturity’ (Smola &amp; Sutton 2002, p. 379) .</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teh</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Intergenerational tension in the workplace: a multi-disciplinary and factor analytic approach to the development of an instrument to measure generational differences in organisations</td>
<td>Organisations should not assume that they are treating all workers equitably. The study recommends that organisations should treat the cohorts (Boomers and Xers) independently and cater for their special needs and expectations.</td>
<td>Aust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferres, Travaglione &amp; Firns</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Attitudinal differences between Generation-X and older employees</td>
<td>Little difference found between Boomers and Gen X regarding trust and commitment. However, Gen X employees displayed a lower continuance commitment, exhibited stronger turnover intentions and had a lower score for perceptions of procedural justice.</td>
<td>Aust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller &amp; Yu</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Organisational values and generational values: a cross cultural study</td>
<td>Generational groups in Taiwan’s manufacturing sector held different work values to their western counterparts, but generational groups working in the educational sector in Taiwan’s held similar work values to their western counterparts.</td>
<td>Aust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merkes</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>A longer working life for Australian women of the baby boomer</td>
<td>Policies for an ageing female workforce should be based on the values of inclusiveness,</td>
<td>Aust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women's voices and social policy implications on an ageing female workforce

fairness, self-determination, and social justice and address the issues of workplace flexibility, equality in the workplace, recognition for unpaid community and caring work, opportunities for life-long learning, complexity and inequities of superannuation systems and planning for retirement.
Appendix B - Stage 1 Questions for Elite Interviews

1. Main Issues Facing Australian Organisations:
   a) In your opinion what are the three main issues currently, being faced by Australian organisations?
   b) Do you think these issues are short or long term, in nature?

2. Major Changes in the Australian Workforce:
   a. What do you think have been the major changes in the Australian workforce in the past ten years?
   b. What do you think the major changes will be in the next ten years?

3. Leadership in Australia:
   a. In your experience, is leadership training in Australian organisations adequate in preparing leaders for future success?
   b. What traits do you think are desirable in a leader and do you think these desired traits will change in the coming years?

4. Working Across Generations:
   a. What do you view to be the management challenges of working and managing across generations?
   b. Do you see any differences in the characteristics and preferred working styles of younger employees as opposed to older employees?

5. Retention:
   a. In your opinion what makes employees want to stay with an organisation?
   b. In your opinion why do people leave an organisation?
Appendix C - Stage 2 Cover Letter to Organisations

Director of Human Resources
Street number & name
Melbourne   VIC 3002

6th August 2004

Dear <<Director’s Name>>,
I am a candidate for a PhD at RMIT University. My PhD research is currently investigating the preferred working styles of employees in Australian organisations from a generational perspective. I am currently conducting qualitative research with four Australian organisations in the form of discussion groups and in-depth interviews. I would like to invite your organisation to represent the <<input sector>> sector in my research.

My research aim is to explore the different working styles and preferences across generations and to better understand the work preferences of employees from four different sectors in Australia. The data gathered from the four organisations, and from around 70 employees will assist in constructing future scenarios to assist Australian organisation in better managing their employees in the future. With four generation currently employed in Australia, increased international competition and an ageing workforce, the need for Australian organisations to be competitive and provide their employees with the working environment that enables employees to be innovative and effective in their work is paramount.

I would like to invite <<Organisation Name insert>> to participate in my research. I have attached a short proposal, outlining my research, the benefits of being involved, and the requirements of taking part. If you are interested and would like me to meet with either yourself or a member of your staff, to discuss my proposal further, I would greatly appreciate your time.

I will contact you in two weeks time to see if you are interested in <<Organisation Name insert>> taking part in this research. If you have any queries regarding this project in the mean time please don’t hesitate contacting me on (phone 03 9925 1573), or email Roslyn.Sayers@rmit.edu.au.

Thank you
Kind Regards

Roslyn Sayers
PhD Candidate
School of Economics & Finance, Business Portfolio
RMIT University
Appendix D - Stage 2 Group Discussion Plain Language Statement

September 2004

Dear Participant,

I am a PhD student in the School of Economics & Finance at RMIT University. My research is investigating the preferred working styles of employees in Australian organisations from a generational perspective. My supervisors are Dr Roslyn Russell and Dr Jenny Diggle

I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation will involve partaking in a one hour discussion with no more than 9 others employees from your organisation. Participation in the focus group discussion is at no risk to you. Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may withdraw from participating at any time.

The data collected will be analysed for my PhD thesis and the results may appear in publications outside my thesis. The results will be reported in a manner, which does not enable you to be identified, thus protecting your anonymity. In appreciation for your time and contribution to my research, each participant will receive a double movie pass.

If you have any queries regarding this project please contact Roslyn Sayers Primary Investigator on phone 03 9925 1573, email Roslyn.Sayers@rmit.edu.au or Dr Roslyn Russell (first supervisor) on 03 9925 5187, email Roslyn.Russell@rmit.edu.au or the Chair of the RMIT Business Human Research Ethics Sub-committee Professor Robert Brooks, phone 03 9925 5594, email Robert.brooks@rmit.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and for participating in my research.

Regards

Roslyn Sayers
PhD Candidate
School of Economics & Finance, Business Portfolio
RMIT University
Appendix E – Stage 2 Group Discussion Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation in this research. Please read and answer the below questions carefully. If you are uncomfortable about providing any of the below information, please leave the question blank and move on to a question you are more comfortable answering.

Section A:

1. How many years have you been employed in the workforce since leaving full-time formal education?

2. Since leaving fulltime formal education, how many jobs or positions have you held? (Please count all positions held even if it is with the same company.)

3. How many different organisations have you worked for since leaving fulltime formal education?

4. How many careers have you had?
(a career being a totally different area of work eg. I was a plumber, now I am a real estate agent)

5. By what means do you mostly look for employment opportunities?

| Print Media (Newspapers, trade) | □1 |
| Journal, magazines etc.         | □2 |
| The Internet                    | □3 |
| Networking                      | □4 |
| Header hunter’s/Agents          | □5 |
| Promotion                       | □6 |
| Other (please specify)          | □7 |

6. Which would be your preferred reward in recognition of a job well done?

| A$2,500 cash bonus (taxed at appropriate rate) | □1 |
| Two weeks extra paid leave                  | □2 |
| A 5 day overseas self development course    | □3 |
| A gift voucher to your favourite store for A$2,500 | □4 |
| Other (please specify)                       | □5 |
7. From the list below how best would you classify your current position? Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>☐1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>☐2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>☐3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>☐4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. From the list below how best would you classify your current position? Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>☐1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term contract (less than 12 months)</td>
<td>☐2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term contract (more than 12 months)</td>
<td>☐3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>☐4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. How many years have you been working with your current employer?

10. How long do you anticipate working for your current employer? Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>☐1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 1 year but less than 3 years</td>
<td>☐2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 years but less than 5 years</td>
<td>☐3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years but less than ten years</td>
<td>☐4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than ten years</td>
<td>☐5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section B:

11. Gender: Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Selection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>☐1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>☐2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What year were you born? (eg. 1970)

13. What was your country of birth?


15. What nationality or group (country) do you most identify with?

16. What is your current occupation?
17. What is your current life cycle status? Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single (never married)</td>
<td>□1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De facto</td>
<td>□2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>□3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated/ Divorced</td>
<td>□4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>□5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>□6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. Do you have children in the following age groups living In your home at any stage during a regular week? Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
<td>□1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 6 years of age</td>
<td>□2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-15 years of age</td>
<td>□3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 15 years of age</td>
<td>□4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. Which best describes your level of education? Please √ one only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>□1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>□2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Tertiary</td>
<td>□3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma or Course</td>
<td>□4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master (Professional or Research)</td>
<td>□5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Doctorate</td>
<td>□6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)</td>
<td>□7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for taking the time to answer the above questions, this information will allow us to paint a more accurate picture of the participants who took part in this research. Regards Roslyn Sayers
Appendix F - Stage 2 Group Discussion Questions

Throughout the one hour focus group the participants where asked the following questions:

1. What do you believe the major trends have been in the work environment in the past ten years and what do you think the trends will be in the next ten years?
2. Do you believe generational differences exist in workplaces?
3. What makes a workplace interesting for you? And what makes a workplace challenging for you?
4. How do you prefer to communicate at work?
5. To what extent are you comfortable with technology and how do you prefer to use technology at work?
6. What does work/life balance mean to you? (Are you experiencing this at the moment?) (In the future what would you like to be different about how you experience a work/life balance?)
7. What does organisational loyalty mean to you? *(Scenario asked to participant: Considering that you are still with your current employer in five years time. What are the major factors that would have encouraged you to stay with the organisation?)*
8. Who is responsible for your career progression? (What role do you see organisations playing in your career progression?).
### Appendix G – Executive Coding Classification & Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECOR12005</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOR22005</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOR32005</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOR42005</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Corporate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEDU12004</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEDU22004</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEDU32004</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGOV12005</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGOV22005</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGOV32005</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGOV42005</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENFP12004</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Not-for-Profit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENFP22004</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Not-for-Profit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENFP32004</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Not-for-Profit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENFP42004</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Not-for-Profit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Boomer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H – Stage 3 Executives Plain Language Statement

Oct – Feb 2005

Dear <<Insert executives name>>,

RE: Plain English Language statement – In-depth interviews Stage 3

I am a PhD student in the School of Economics & Finance at RMIT University. My research is investigating the preferred working styles of employees in Australian organisations. My supervisors are Dr. Roslyn Russell and Dr. Jenny Diggle.

I am inviting you to participate in my research. Your participation will involve partaking in a one hour in-depth interview with me, at a time that is convenient to you. Participation in the interview is at no risk to you. Your participation in this research is on voluntary basis, and you may withdraw at anytime.

The data collected will be analysed for my PhD thesis and the results may appear in publications outside of my thesis. The results will be reported in a manner, which does not enable you or the organisation to be identified, thus protecting your anonymity. You will be identified as an Executive from the <<insert sector>> Sector.

If you have any queries regarding this project please contact Roslyn Sayers Primary Investigator on 03 9925 1573, email Roslyn.Sayers@rmit.edu.au or Dr Roslyn Russell (first supervisor) on 03 9925 5187, email Roslyn.Russell@rmit.edu.au or the Chair of the RMIT Business Human Research Ethics Sub-committee, Prof Tim Fry, phone 03 9925 5594, email Tim.Fry@rmit.edu.au.

Thank you for your time and for participating in my research.

Regards

Roslyn Sayers
PhD Candidate
School of Economics & Finance, Business Portfolio
RMIT University
Appendix I – Stage 3 Executive Discussion Questions

During the interview the executives were asked the following questions:

1. What do you see as the biggest challenge in your management role at present?
2. What do you see the future challenges being for this sector?
3. Do you believe there is a generational difference in the workplace?
4. Do you know if the organisation has a policy or strategy regarding generational difference in the workplace? (i.e. ageing workforce, retention of Gen Ys etc.)
5. How do you believe the organisation manages diversity in its workplace? (i.e. Equal opportunity, racial diversity and generational difference)
6. Can you tell me about the organisation’s policy on work/life balance?
7. Who do you think work/life balance, family/friendly policies apply to? And do you believe that they actually live and are used within the organisation?
8. Do you believe there is a strong culture of loyalty among employees?
9. Have you seen a shift or change in employees’ loyalty over the past ten years?
10. Has this affected or influenced the culture of the organisation?
11. What is the organisation’s role in employees’ career progression?
12. Is high staff turnover an issue for the organisation? (If yes, has the organisation put in place strategies to retain good employees?)