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Generational Differences in Satisfaction with E-Learning among Higher Learning Institution Staff

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Abstract

Training technologies and generational groups changes over decade, numerous issues both in training and technology need to be addressed to meet the demands of this evolution. Generation is a group of individuals, most of whom are the same approximate age, having similar ideas, problems, and attitudes. There were four types of generation, Traditionalist, Baby Boomer, Gen-X, and Gen-Y. Finding ways to close the generation gap between older workers with decades of experience but fewer technology skills and younger, inexperienced employees with significant technological skills is the challenge for organizations of today. The purpose of this research was to examine the differences between generational age groups in their perceived satisfaction with e-learning. A quantitative method was used to survey the relationships between stated independent variables and generational age groups (dependent variable). The design use was ex-post-facto and there was no manipulation of the independent variables. The inquiry was one in which the experiences and demographics of the sample population were collected, analyzed, and reported. Total respondents selected for this study comprise of 100 staffs of various institutions of higher learning who have taken e-learning format course for their jobs. The results of this study have indicated that overall satisfaction with e-learning is both fairly significant and moderately stable. We recommend that the top management in the institutions of higher learning to offer e-learning sessions to keep the workforce among their organization staff up-to-date. Thus, any organization can use this information to modify training to increase e-learner satisfaction.

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1. Introduction

Lewis (1999), quoted that continuing advancements in training technology that allowed traditional forms of instruction to change considerably over the course of the generations of workers who are currently in the workplace. As training technologies and generational groups change over the next decade, numerous issues in both training and technology will need to be addressed to meet the demands of this evolution. Acton (2005) suggested that training is one of the key employee-centered practices that is strongly associated with higher earnings and employee retention. Additionally, training is vital to businesses as large numbers of older workers reach retirement and recent college graduates join the labor force. ASTD (2001), cited finding ways to close the gap developing between older workers with decades of experience but fewer technology skills and younger, inexperienced employees with significant technological skills is the challenge that all companies are facing in this transition. Gunasekaran (2002), explain that e-learning is being implemented by many organizations to meet the new training demands of changing technology and demographics because it can provide access to high quality training from numerous sources around the world. Although computer-based training is seen as commonplace to younger workers who have grown up with technology, many older workers who have had to adapt to technological changes throughout their careers have not yet embraced or adopted the newer training model of e-learning as an effective alternative or addition to standard classroom training. Many national and multinational corporations spend large sums every year to provide technical, compliance, and developmental training for their employees. For this reason, it is of the importance for instructional designers and training organizations to develop training that is useful across multiple generations. Research is needed to evaluate the value of learner satisfaction with computer-based instruction in corporate training environments across multiple generational audiences.

Gunderson (2005) stated that, "Three factors demographics, workplace skill demands and the global economy are combining to create a jobs revolution. Any one of these factors represents a dramatic transition in our economy. This unprecedented shift from a higher number of older, experienced workers to a much smaller number of more technical, but less experienced, workers may have a direct impact on both industry and the economy. In response to these changes, workers will be forced to learn and relearn current in-demand skills. This continuous updating of skills will increase the need for and focus on training within corporations to retain workers and remain competitive in a changing marketplace. The focus of this study was on the variations between the generations in response to aspects of technology, more specifically, the use of e-learning in workplace training situations. The identification of such variations may allow for the creation of more efficient and effective training and e-learning models.

The purpose of this research study was to examine the differences between generational age groups in their perceived satisfaction with computer-based training. This study investigated possible disparities regarding perceptions e-learning faced by employees of different generational age groups. Although this study did not focus on barriers to e-learning, satisfaction with computer learning and learner characteristics has been found to be important in the development of computer-based training (CTAL, 2001). To examine these relationships of training, technology, and age, this study looked at several variables, including demographics, job position, and experience with e-learning.

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