



COLECCIÓN CONOCIMIENTO CONTEMPORÁNEO

Inteligencia organizacional, comunicación estratégica e influencia en la sociedad postdigital

Coords.

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INTELIGENCIA ORGANIZACIONAL, COMUNICACIÓN ESTRATÉGICA E INFLUENCIA EN LA SOCIEDAD DIGITAL

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HOW ARE MANAGING THE GENERATIONAL SUCCESSION PLANS THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY? BARRIERS AND CHANNELS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aging of the population is affecting the timing of retirement of workers in many countries. Due to this, the coexistence between different generations in the workplace, their succession as well as the transition to retirement and the risk of knowledge loss associated with experience will require new attention in the coming years.

There are studies (Kollmann et al., 2020; Nilsson & Nilsson, 2017; Van Dalen et al., (2010) that examine the attitudes and practices of employers towards older workers and show the persistence of widespread age-stereotypes. A widely shared limitation of these studies, however, is that they understate the complexity of the interaction of age with other organisational factors, partly because they focus on ‘older workers’ at the expense of wider ‘staff deployment’ or ‘human-resource management’ considerations. As a result, the factors that need to be considered are: i) to explore the benefits, threats and challenges offered to organisations as their workers age, ii) to analyse the inter-age dynamics at the workplace, and iii) to develop policy and practice recommendations for government, employers and other stakeholder groups to promote economic and social achievements (Brooke & Taylor, 2005).

Europe is experiencing the aging of their populations. Aging may imply a restructuring of the economy depending on health expenditure, labour force participation rates and labour productivity (Osathanunkul et al., 2023). Political issues which arise in an aging society include 1) a voting majority for the interests of the elderly, 2) a voting majority of females, 3) the domination of the decision power in corporate and similar ruling bodies, and 4) unemployment or a long wait for promotion for younger people. Economic issues of an aging society include 1) population aging often occurs under reduced rates of growth of per capita national income, 2) the relative economic status of the elderly very much depends on the currently existing tax transfer systems, and 3) the income of families whose head is over age 65 has generally been more unequally distributed than the income for younger families. Issues concerning the labor supply of the elderly include 1) the availability of pension income and health limitations strongly influence decisions to retire and 2) older workers become disheartened and choose early retirement when facing bad reemployment prospects. In general, population aging is likely to have its most substantive effect on the overall level of productivity in an economy where technical knowledge is changing rapidly and strong competition necessitates a high degree of adaptability of the labor force (Bos & Von Weizsacker, 1989).

Population Aging or Third Demographic Transition nicknamed as well “The Silver Cunami” has become a virtually global phenomenon in the second half of XX century. While there had been some isolated periods of fertility declines in the transition, an aged society brings serious financial challenges to all institutions in any economy. Even most developed countries that had foreseen these problems coming for two decades are still struggling to find money to pay for the bulging retirement income and health care costs for the growing elderly population (Ogura & Jakovljevic, 2018).

This research focuses on the aging of the population and its consequences, affecting business and economy. The aging of the workforce is one of the most important socio-economic challenges facing the OECD and the European Union (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020).

Therefore, there is a need to investigate the impact of the retirement of key experienced workers or "wet nurse workers" as well as the transfer of their valuable knowledge, which can jeopardize the sustainability of companies (Arman et al., 2022).

Around this, the Generational Change Community (hereafter GCC) proposes developing a research for the definition of more efficient processes of generational change in companies.

A consortium composed by the following entities presents GCC:

- ISEA S.COOP., a private R&D centre member of the Basque Science and Technology Network, specialised in launching new business initiatives in the field of education.
- ALECOP is a Training Engineering company who designs and develops support models, tools and ICT.
- The University of Deusto, which has several campuses in Spain. Its main hallmark is its own socially recognised teaching model as well as its specialised research capacity, commitment to justice and international projection.
- Fagor Ederlan - Edertek Technology Center: world leader in chassis and powertrain components for the automotive sector. Its strategy is based on innovation, technological development and values as a cooperative committed to the environment.

In the following list, the main objectives of the GCC are presented:

- Design of research tools for companies immersed in generational change processes.
- Creation of instruments for the diagnosis of generational renewal opportunities, the key knowledge transmission processes and the succession of roles in the organization.
- Studies based on the successor training process as well as adaptive learning management and monitoring tools.

- Creation of business communities for the design of more efficient generational change processes, plus the integration of best practices.
- Raise public awareness about the importance of generational renewal processes in companies by disseminating pilot experiences on this issue.

1.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The aging of society is one of the main visible problems facing Europe, but also advanced countries such as Japan and the United States. The European Commission predicts that by 2025 more than 20% of European citizens will be 65 years of age or older with a rapid increase in the number of people over 80 years of age. Increasing life expectancy of the population and low fertility rates are the main causes (Fraccaroli & Deller, 2015). By 2030, the EU is expected to face a shortfall of more than 20 million people of working age with a corresponding effect on the size of the labour force.

The generational differences among employees are also a challenge for managers and companies because each generational group offers different views, expectations and values about work and life (Bennet et al., 2012). The literature of the last decade points out the importance of differences between the two most prevalent groups of workers (Baby Boomers and Generation X) that can lead to conflict (Smola & Sutton, 2002) notwithstanding the opportunity for organizations to provide adaptive responses to employees and customers.

Moreover, a generation is defined as an identifiable group sharing birth years, age location and significant life events at critical stages of development, divided by quinquennia into first wave, core group and last wave (Kupperschmidt, 2000). Given their generational diversity, organizations should leverage levers of opportunity based on DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging) drivers, as a way to tap into the diverse generational core beliefs and perspectives (Sukhera et al., 2018).

This way, we can find between 2 and 5 different generations on the same company. Following Smola & Sutton, (2002) we point out that

the generational groups that are prevalent in today's workforce are called Baby Boomers (1946-1964) and Generation X or GenX (1965-81). It also includes a third group, the Millennials (1982-1999), also known as Gen Y or Digital Natives (Schullery, 2013).

On the other hand, values may be defined as ethical-moral, social and cultural principles that are intrinsically associated with the essential factors by which a person measures behavior in life. Dose (1997) defines work values as "the evaluative standards related to work or the work environment by which individuals discern what is right or assess the importance of preferences". Moreover, generation moderates the association between work values and affective commitment (Kismono, 2023). At this point, Henry, Zacher and Desmette (2015) found that as age increases, generative motives increase in line with socioemotional selectivity theory. This reaffirms the need for organizations to have a mindset that can respond adaptively to the requests of both the workforce and the market.

Researchers have confirmed that both the working conditions and health of the worker and his or her relatives are strong predictors of the willingness to retire (Sohier et al., 2022). Moreover, the type of work and personal fulfilment at work, financial situation and the work environment may influence the decision to continue working or to retire voluntarily (Shacklock et al., 2009; Siegrist et al., 2017). This perception, affecting a particular generational sample, could undermine the positive effect of personal resources to successfully manage the end of career and the transition to retirement. (Jung and Kim, 2023). Some important retirement factors during the individual history of a retiring person are the followings: their health status, demographic situation, economic status, and transition-related skills and abilities. The general premise is that if a person has cultivated a flexible style of coping with previous life transitions, is less socially integrated at work, and has attributes that help him or her smooth and manage the transition, he or she is more likely to prepare well for and achieve greater success in the transition.

Older workers with higher levels of personal resources could want to work longer and expect to be poorly adjusted to retirement if they

perceive age discrimination in the workplace (Zaniboni, 2015). Perceived age discrimination at work, insofar that it affects one particular generational sample, could neutralize the positive effect of personal resources in successfully managing the end of career and transition to retirement (Jung & Kim, 2023). The same authors state that if age discrimination is widespread, comparisons with other similar individuals may alleviate the associated stress and reduce its effect on negative perceptions.

At the same time, workers with more solid employment positions (permanent contracts) are more attentive to planning for retirement than people with temporary or irregular employment. In the same position are those who have achieved a longer contribution history resulting in a higher retirement benefit. Furthermore, Van Dam et al. (2009) showed that retirement intention is lower for people with rewarding jobs. Similarly, senior workers who have opportunities to develop their skills are less willing to retire.

Hence, there are different approaches to career stages, delimited by the age, condition and disposition of the worker. These stages entail psychological changes and an adaptation of the person to the new situation of retirement, although the current experience linked to the individual's well-being in the current job also plays a role (Sohier et al., 2022). Nevertheless, if the business scenario is affected by unexpected events that affect organisational survival, it may be necessary to address collective measures not foreseen in the scenario planning, the strategy tool to deal with uncertainty (Chermark and Lynham, 2002). In these situations, the need for the transfer of the know-how of the employees should be carried out on a regular basis in organizations becomes evident, under the risk of significant loss of knowledge in unforeseen situations (i.e. close, reduce or restructure, merge). To the extent that knowledge is explicitly registered, an eventual organizational adjustment will be less conditioned in its execution.

Just as organizations seek to strengthen the engagement of employees during their working lives, it is necessary to act planned and systematically on the factors that can influence the push & pull of engagement in the transition to retirement. The ultimate working retirement is a unique,

non-repeatable and non-transferable key factor. This particularity could affect employees' mental stamina for work engagement. Similarly, high mental vigour at work during the transition to retirement can lead to "persistence in the face of difficulties". (Kassing et al., 2012, p. 241).

Since the context facilitates or constrains the individual position depending on the received information and individual interpretation (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986) we remark the importance of establishing a corporate communication watching over the process diligently. As organisations are interested in the success of succession processes, they will have to consider both the satisfaction and commitment of the participants, as well as the achievement of a positive performance after it, since this will impact on the organisation (Chua et al., 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to preserve communication as part of the monitoring of the process where at least one of the participants acts in a voluntary role in the transference of the expertise. This way knowledge hiding can be reduced too and its significant negative consequences (Jiang et al., 2019). Sometimes the challenge might be to identify the right person to become a reliever, others to encourage the reliever to acquire a sufficient degree of autonomy and yet another to transform tacit knowledge into an explicit basis for creating a cultural pool of sharable knowledge in the organisation (Nguyen, 2020). To the extent that knowledge sharing gains organisational attention, its systemic use will be more homogenous and less subject to individual preferences for interpersonal and socialisation strategies (Taylor, 2004).

At this stage it is evident to include in each annual management a comprehensive plan including targeted actions for the succession phase of key employees. This plan can serve as a basis for knowledge transfer, training for career advancement or succession. This way, the risk of lack of planning, budget or time is reduced. Moreover, the outgoing employees will perceive that the organisation recognises the value of the expertise accumulated in his or her professional life. Secondly, the employees to whom the expert knowledge is transferred perceive the trust the organization places in them by transferring the know-how to them. Thirdly, it will be evident to the rest of the personnel the organizational interest to promote intergenerational collaboration at work to

which it will invest time and money. Finally, the identification of the necessary resources for the transfer process will highlight the organisational interest in preserving the value of past knowledge and its validity as a basis for the future, reducing the lack of attention.

Generational renewal is significant for the economy being a possible lever for the interaction between the changing environment and the adaptable firms. Following Coopmans et al., (2021) generational renewal is a process that implies a succession identity. It is a path full of opportunities and barriers that may contribute into the organizational adaptability to the sustainability, gaining cultural resilience and including internal generational cooperation plus the development of an specific cultural attributes. It is also an opportunity to exhibit policies without particular exclusion, including those people who have been identified as appropriate. The more useful the organizational aspiration for intergenerational exchange at work is perceived to be, the higher the level of commitment of the workforce as a whole, both those in transition to retirement and the rest of the workforce. Hence, it can be seen as a regenerative organizational mechanism for adapting to adversity based on one's own resources (Rutter, 1987).

To cover the major theoretical advancements in retirement research, we summarize four theoretical conceptualizations of retirement (i.e., retirement as decision making, retirement as an adjustment process, retirement as a career development stage and retirement as a part of human resource management) that have shaped the retirement research literature in the past 20 years.

The conceptualization of retirement as decision-making emphasizes retirement as a motivated choice behavior. This conceptualization starts from the premise: when workers retire, they dissimulate their psychological commitment to work and behaviorally withdraw from work. At the same time that workers gradually stop their activity in the workplace, there is an increase in dedication to other activities and to the family.

However, a shift in research focus is essential to find drivers that facilitate the restoration of a harmonious balance between individuals in

transition to retirement and the rest of the workforce, where the employer has to counterbalance the pressure to respond to the environment with the internal transfer of key knowledge for professional performance. Thus, given the forecast of environmental uncertainty and the transformation of work scenarios where the retirement age will have a first general impact to be progressively delayed, the transfer of knowledge as a lever for multi-skilled performance may acquire a more relevant role in the near future.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To identify which is the general viewpoint of Basque companies in relation of the organizational procedures to carry out generational changes in the workforce.
- To identify the key values for an efficient generational change in order to transfer the knowledge in the employee's labour insertion.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. PROCEDURE

To carry out this study, qualitative data was obtained through the responses given by participants of different organizations about their organization generational handover processes and their perspective and vision towards this terms and procedures. In this way, this research was created to answer two previous research questions (see the objectives section).

3.2. PARTICIPANTS

The sample of this study is constituted by 173 employees of different organizations of the Basque Country. The sector of activities of the companies that participated in this survey were 61.4% from services sector; 35.7% are from industry sector; and 2.9% are from distribution sector. In terms of the size of the companies that have participated in

this research 49.7% of the them are small; 23.1% of the companies are medium size; 9.3% of them are medium-large and 17.9% of them are large companies. Considering the participants' job position 44.8% have management positions; 33.1% have intermediate control positions and 21,1% have technical profiles.

3.3. INSTRUMENTS

The instrument used to carry out this research is an ad-hoc survey and it contains 8 multiple-choice questions. This instrument was created by the University of DEUSTO, ALECOP, and ISEA with the goal to create a Community of Interest to promote the processes of effective business Generational Change. This Community of interest's name is GCC, has free affiliation and integrates Academical, Research and Business scopes. Thus, the mission or objectives of this Community and therefore, the presented instrument are the followings:

- Disseminate the importance of effective generational renewal processes for territorial competitiveness.
- Promote research in the field of generational change processes.
- Actively experiment in innovative fields for relay business generational.
- Share and disseminate advanced management practices in the specific field of generational change in organizations.

3.4. DESIGN

In order carry out this research we decided to choose a non-experimental design because there is no analysis of a control independent variable and we did not carry out any kind of intervention.

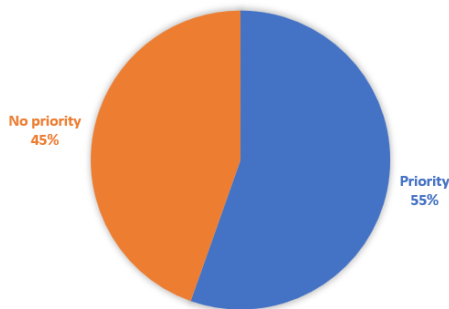
4. RESULTS

The results obtained related to the first research questions are shown in Figure 1. For the 55.4% of the participants, their organizations show

generational handover processes as a priority, whereas 44.6% of the participants state that for their organization generational change is not a priority.

GRAPHIC 1. *The degree of priority given to the generational change processes by the organizations.*

Which strategic priority does give your organization to generational change processes?



Note: Own elaboration

To continue answering the first research question we need to have a look to Table 1 as 80.20% of participants state that their organizations have been immerse on retirement processes when it comes to generational change processes; whereas the 42.60% stated that they focused on internal promotions, and; just 30,90% focused their generational change processes on the departures of organizations. In terms of the problems identified in relation to the generational change processes, 47.30% state that there is no procedure on their organizations; 41,20% state that their company have no time to prioritize generational change procedures; 21.20% state that on their organizations they have not been identified key positions; 18.80% say that there lack of cooperation within the employees involved on the process of generational change: 15.20% admit that their problem carrying out generational handover processes is the lack of departure of public budget; just 16.40% admit that they do not have problems related to generational change.

For those participants that the generational relay was a priority on their organizations, the 65.40% stated that the identification of employees

that are taking part internally on the organizational change process is essential; for 31.70% having an action plan is important and; for the 31.70% having the needed resources is mandatory to carry out an effective generational change procedure. According to the results obtained on Table 1, the 87.50% of the organizations have not a budget allowance for finance activities focused on generational change processes; just 12.50% have it.

The main difficulties identified on this research were for a 57.30% of the participants finding internal and external talent to carry out the generational change; for 46.2% the difficulties come from the organizational culture; the 33.90% struggle with management involvement; for 30.40% the budget was a problem; for 28.10% the lack of internal capacity was a problem; for 21.10% the absence of inadequacy of public programs were a difficulty; and just for 12.30% of the participant external expert support was a problem.

According to the results obtained, the 63.30% of organizations need advice on good practices; 38.70% need tutoring of expert companies; 36.70% state that forum and conferences would be necessary; 33.30% says that projects with public funding would be recommendable having; just the 28% states that having visits to companies that have developed generational change processes would be interesting.

In order to give response to the second research question, we need to have a look to Table 2. The values that participants associate most with generational change or generational handover is knowledge transfer with a 77.9%, followed by strategic renewal with a 62.2%, the know-how with a 48.3%, acquire expertise of the retiring figure 43.6%, adequation of the organizational structure 40,1%; organizational culture 37,2%, business survival 33.1%, familiar succession 24,4%, obtaining autonomy of the mentee 21,5%, gender replacement 8,7%, innovation 1,2%.

TABLE 1 Results of the survey presented question by question

Has your organization been immersed in a generational relay process?	Retirement	80,20%
	Internal promotion	42,60%
	Departure from the organization	30,90%
What problems have you had?	There is no procedure (lack advance planning)	47,30%
	Lack of time, too many priority activities in the day to day	41,20%
	No identification of key positions	21,20%
	Lack of cooperation on the part of the people involved	18,80%
	Lack of departure public budget for finance support projects	15,20%
	No problem	16,40%
If it is a priority for your organization (question 3), how are managing the generational relay process?	Identification of people who are taking part in the generational relay process	65,40%
	There is an action plan	31,70%
	Resources are allocated (time) to carry out an effective process	31,70%
It has a budget allowance for finance activities/projects focused on the management of effective generational relay	No	87,50%
	Yes	12,50%
What main difficulties do you identify in bringing successfully carried out the generational relay	Exists succession difficulty with people internal and/or external	57,30%
	Organizational Culture	46,20%
	Management involvement	33,90%
	Budget needed for make it happen	30,40%
	Lack of internal capacity (of knowledge or technology)	28,10%
	Absence or inadequacy of public aid programs	21,10%
	External expert support	12,30%
In what specific area do you need advice?	Community of disseminated good practices and learned lessons	63,30%
	Tutorials of some expert companies	38,70%
	Forums, conferences	36,70%
	Projects with public funding	33,30%
	Visits to advanced companies	28,00%

Source: own elaboration

TABLE 2 Values associated with generational change

What variables do you associate with generational relay?	Knowledge Transfer	77,90%
	Strategic renewal, organizational innovation	62,20%
	Professionalization, know to do (WHAT and HOW)	48,30%
	Acquire expertise from the figure relieved (WHY it is done), know Act	43,60%
	Adequacy of the organizational structure	40,10%
	Organizational culture	37,20%
	Business survival	33,10%
	Family Succession/Transfer of leadership	24,40%
	Achievement of autonomy reliever	21,50%
	Gender relay	8,70%

Source: own elaboration

5. DISCUSSION

The results of the survey show the need for generational change strategies when it comes to retirements on organizations. Lack of procedures and time management have been suggested and required from organizations to perform effectively generational change procedures. According to the results obtained, the variables that have been more problematic to carry out proper generational change processes are knowledge transfer, organizational renewal and innovation. Indeed, the survey results show the current high likelihood for generational replacement due to the increase of retirement and the lack of time to carry out this process effectively.

In this way, this project aims to contribute through the study, design, validation and implementation of viable and effective action as a way for organizations to strengthen their position towards competitiveness and sustainability. This study publishes research that considers the phenomena of worker aging and retirement from various perspectives. These perspectives could be faced from different fields such as psychology, sociology, economics, technology, gerontology, public health, business and management, and industrial labour relations. The phenomena can be described and analysed on multiple levels. While the articles

usually research this topic from specific type of organizations, this study is focused on a general view of the problem.

Indeed, this study had been an actual contribution for business on the Basque Country as a conference was held to share the results and conclusions with both respondents and the general public. This event was carried out the first week of February 2023 and 51 people attended this presentation. The structure followed during the event was the following: i) presentation of theoretical framework of Generational Change processes, ii) presentation of the results obtained in the survey, and iii) group dynamics to debate about paradigm around this problem and the role of different institutions to improve generational change processes. As a result of the conclusions from the event, 15 companies show their interest to join the GCC.

Even if the obtained results contributed to the improvement of the generational change processes, more research is necessary on these levels. It will help us to understand why employment rates of specific age groups differ so much across countries. As social systems differ between societies, the transferability of research results has to be tested (Deller et al., 2009; Wang, 2013).

Several authors have proposed guidelines on how to conduct Web-based surveys. However, few papers report the use of this method, and none describe its procedural aspects in detail.

6. CONCLUSION

This research has shown an investigation trend which it has been developed during the last 25 years, where employees seek more balance in their lives. Employees may be willing to work hard for their companies, but their work are less likely to be associated with their self-worth. In addition, they give less priority to work as they get older (Finsel et al, 2023; Kooij, 2015). This trend is not likely to reverse in the near future, although there is uncertainty about how work contexts will evolve. Researchers will certainly want to continue to observe changes in employee values, attitudes and performance, as their age advances and the socio-economic context continues to be shaped. The addition of the

Millennials to the workforce and the increasing presence in the proportion of working people may create some very interesting changes, both in attitudes and results. The Millennials are the first generation to be born into a wired world; and, as noted in the literature review, they will bring distinct characteristics to the workforce. Future research can focus on the values they bring, the types of relationships they will form, their performance outcomes and other changes resulting from their entry into the labour market.

The main limitations of this study come from the size of the companies that participated in the study. In order to have a more representative sample, we consider it necessary to have companies of sizes between 0-50 and 50-100 workers. This would make it more representative of the industrial fabric of the Basque Country.

Nevertheless, there is a need for an adequate generational renewal in order to transfer critical human capital (Becker, 1975) to new professionals as a basis for the long-term adaptation and survival of the organization (Schmitt, 2018). We propose to study the organizational generational renewal as a strategy to transfer the core knowledge gained as a result of previous experience, impacting business efficiency and sustainability.

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