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## Age Diversity Management in the Workplace

Efficiency in company management requires greater attention to differences in the age structure of employees (the difference between younger staff belonging to Generation Y and the mature employees of Generation X). Taking into account employee age, a company should stand on competences and skills that promote its goals. This paper presents certain assumptions introducing the concept of age diversity management and keeping in mind the diversity in employee ages, it proposes a set of sample actions that make it possible to decrease the negative effects of the generation gap.

**Key words:** age diversity, age gap, manufacturing company.

### Introduction

An organization is a place of work for many people. In line with changes to the labor market—an aging work force, where the number of professionally active people aged over 65 has grown significantly over recent years—the age structure of workers has also changed. A generation gap has made its appearance in companies that now have an experienced staff (workers 50+) and employees of the younger generation. A gap is considered a negative phenomenon in economics, a symptom of shortage, delay, and incongruity (Šmid, 2000, p. 192). The generation gap is the result of a shift in population demography (population aging). This problem touches not only Poland, but almost all countries with a high level of education. Thus, on the American market, according to studies by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of workers aged 55–64 has grown (by 36.5%) as has the number of workers 65 and older by approximately 50% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008). In the twenty-seven countries of the European Union the share of people over 65 accounts for over 17% of the total population (Eurostat Yearbook, 2011, p. 118). At the end of 2013 the number of people over 50 was 24.3% of all registered unemployed as compared with 22.8% the previous year. Worth stressing is that people from that specified age group accounted for less than 16% of registered unemployed at the end of 2005 (growth by over 8%). Results of the National Census (NSP, 2011) show that the number of people aged 45+ (men aged 45–64 and women aged 45–59) increased as compared with the 2002 census by almost 12% (9,378,500 people), while those in the post-production age group increased by over 13% (6,512,100). Both these groups saw growth in share in the overall population

up to 24.4%, with growth in the 45+ age group (growth by 2.5%) and to 16.9% in the post-production age group (growth by 1.9%). Looking at the statistical data, it has been established that workers with seniority greater than twenty years account for almost 49% of unemployed over 50 in Poland (GUS, 2012, p. 31). This situation is worrying when assuming that mature workers have greater professional experience than the remainder of the company staff. At the same time, demographic forecasts indicate further unfavorable demographic changes—the aging of the Polish population (Report of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, 2013).

Aging population processes are among the most importance long-term conditions influencing the development of the European Union (Europe 2020). The long-term forecasts of Eurostat indicate that if the present demographic trend is maintained then by the year 2050 the number of people aged 65 and over in the countries of the European Union will grow by approximately 70%, while the number of people of productive age (15–64) will fall by 12%. The result will be that for every retiree there will only be two professionally active people, as opposed to the present four. This is the most synthetic measure of the abrupt growth in the share in the population of the European Union of older people and the significant fall over the upcoming decades in the share of young people of productive age. In 2060, every third inhabitant of Europe will be 65 or older (<http://ec.europa.eu>). In Poland, like in the other countries of the European Union, continued far-reaching changes in the demographic structure is expected. By 2035 the share of people aged 0–17 will fall to 15.8% while people in the post-productive age will grow to 26.7% (GUS, 2009, p. 163).

The solution proposed by the European Commission is reform increasing productivity as well as the level of employment in the Community. In matters of raising the activity as well as awareness of citizens, *Europe 2020* stresses the role and function of older people on the labor market, betting on their experience, availability, and interpersonal skills encompassing collaboration in groups, ease in making contact with coworkers, communication skills, and the ability to solve conflicts, as well as organizational and managerial skills and entrepreneurship (Nowak–Far, 2011). Employers have access to a set of instruments promoting the professional activation of older people, e.g., subsidies for their pay and favorable settlement of sick leave.

However, in order for employers to be able to benefit from the prepared solutions, people aged 50+ must present their advantages to employers as stemming from their employment. Older people are expected to raise their level of knowledge. This is an important prerequisite limiting barriers stemming from the generation gap on the labor market. A drop in physical fitness (the biological factor)

and computer skills (the result of the information revolution of recent decades) can be observed amongst people aged 50+. The most significant values of people aged 50+ are experience and professional knowledge. Thanks to these, people can manage superbly in a well-known environment and be experts in their field. The efficiency of the work of people of various ages is dependent on many factors relating to the worker, the type of work, and the way that the company is managed. Employers can influence both the competencies of workers, their attitudes, and motivation, and mold working conditions that may, to a greater or lesser extent, foster the utilization of staff potential (Kołodziejczyk).

A priority of many employers is a striving to build a staff that is uniform in terms of age, preferably a young staff belonging to Generation Y (Gadomska-Lila 2015). However, the existing demographic changes lead to a situation in which the age of employees is increasingly becoming a variable profiling actions taken in the area of HRM. Companies must build intergenerational relations (Lipska et al., 2015). In intergenerational dialogue it is necessary to pay attention to the personal, emotional, and social state of being of workers (Gajda and Seroka-Stolka, 2015).

Changes on the labor market lead to a new look at diversity in the workplace. The concept of *diversity* is derived from the Latin *diversus*, which means *opposite* (Austin, 1997). In management, diversity means variety (Wziątek-Staśko, 2012). Among the assumptions of diversity subject to conditions of change on the labor market, age diversity takes on special meaning. In the concept of business, especially corporate social responsibility, this is a question of acceptance of all worker age groups (eliminating age-based discrimination). The consequences of acceptance of every worker age influences actions taken by employers in the area of HRM. Experts suggest concentrating on recruiting, developing, motivating, and training workers (the opinion of Hays experts; see also Armstrong, 2007).

### The Goal of this Paper and Research Methodology

The subject of this paper is activity defined as age management. For the purposes of this paper it will be termed “age diversity management” or “age management” in short. However, it must be stressed that contrary to what the terms might suggest, this is not an isolated field of management, but a way of building competitive advantage on the basis of the existing age structure of employees. A special area of age management is the elimination of the negative effects of the age gap. In reference to the generation gap, which is the intergenerational difference (between Generations X and Y), age management is also known as “generation gap management” or “generational diversity” in short.

In connection with the occurrence of the generation gap, problems of a practical nature have made their appearance in companies. How should the age diversity of employees be managed? How can the generational gap be utilized in company operations? How can workers of different generations find a common platform for collaboration? The goal of this paper was the development of proposals for actions in the area of age diversity management for businessmen. The following thesis has been assumed for this paper: Taking into account demographic shifts on the labor market, the company must take care to, on the one hand, develop talents so that young people will be able to replace retiring workers in the future, and on the other, to skillfully take advantage of the experience of the aging staff so that it transfers professional knowledge with young workers, which will play a role in integrating worker teams and will limit the negative effects of the generation gap. Verification of this thesis was conducted on the basis of a study of literature and a case study type analysis. The overview of solutions proposed in domestic and foreign literature in the area of age management was the basis for developing the theoretical part of the paper, especially proposals for guidelines for employers that will allow them to better utilize the generation gap. The case study analysis served as the basis for writing the practical part of the article. The essence of the research methodology in this section is based on a description of actions taken in a metallurgical company in the area of generation gap management.

### **Age Management Methodological Assumptions**

Companies have influence over the shaping of the age structure of their workers. With the help of the appropriate tools they can manage worker age (although they cannot change it). The essence of the process of age management is increased worker productivity in the workplace. The starting point for age management (age diversity management) is perceiving this diversity, while management is a way to handle age differences among employees in the workplace.

Age management is not a scientific theory of management. It is more like a practical front for social and economic actions undertaken as a result of the deepening generation gap on the labor market. Social policy assumptions find their reflection in workplaces. Aware of the generation gap, employers are paying closer attention to age differences among their workers in implementing their personnel policy. In spite of the development of HRM, questions of age management have not been sufficiently investigated from a scientific angle. There are few publications on this topic on the domestic publishing market (see Zięba and Szuwarzyński, 2008; Mazur, 2009). Solutions tested in personnel management can provide support for

companies. Examples of tools include career stages (Super and Hall, 1978, p. 296;<sup>1</sup> Feldman, 1998;<sup>2</sup> Schein,<sup>3</sup> as cited in Rybak), fluctuation matrices (Martin and Bartol, 1985, as cited in Cascio, 2001, p. 57),<sup>4</sup> K. Lewin's field theory<sup>5</sup> (1946, as cited in Szalkowski, 1997, p. 93) universal motivational theory (the Malsow concept of the hierarchy of needs), individual ones (V. Vroom and E. E. Lawler's theory of value expectancy), and available ways of communicating as well as professional development techniques (e.g., training, mentoring, and coaching). These presented tools are only a segment of what can be implemented in age management.

Due to the psycho-social complexity of an age-diverse staff, no single solution can be proposed. It is assumed that three generations are involved in the process of age management—the Baby Boomers, born 1946–1964, Generation X, born 1965–1981, and Generation Y, the Millennials, born 1982–2000 (Stephey, 2008). A Generation Z is also identified in the freshest publications. It is defined as the youngest group of potential workers (Kozioł). The existence of the generation that may be termed “Traditionalists” should also be stressed. Usually, these are retirees—people born prior to 1946, where only a few are still professionally active. In characterizing the individual generational groups it is usually an abbreviated description applying stereotypes that is used. Thus, older workers—Traditionalists and Baby Boomers—are workers who are loyal, efficient, but do not apply innovations and modern technological solutions. Young workers are innovative, ambitious, sure of themselves, better prepared professionally than older people, efficient at

1 Taking into account the age of workers as well as their level of achievements, these authors identified five career phases: exploration (up to 20–25 years of age), establishment (25–35), mid-career (40 and more), late career (50–60), and disengagement (60–70 and more).

2 Here, three career phases were identified: (1) early career (22–38 years of age), (2) the career proper (38–55), and (3) late career (55–70).

3 E. Schein proposed nine career stages: (1) growth, (2) entry into the work of work, (3) basic training at work, (4) full participation at an early career stage (17–20 years of age), (5) full participation at a mid-career stage (25–30), (6) midlife crisis (36–45), (7) late career (from age 40 to retirement), (8) decline and discharge (also from age 40 to retirement), and (9) retirement.

4 D. C. Martin and K. M. Bartol are the authors of the output strategy matrix and the possibility of worker replacement. Taking into account the professional knowledge and experience of workers as well as the type of work performed, these authors identified two possible replacements—difficult and easy. However, with respect to efficiency they introduced a subdivision of small, medium, and large. As a result they received a six-field matrix with various levels of staff fluctuation: Field A – highly dysfunctional fluctuation (high efficiency and difficulties in worker replacement), Field B – dysfunctional fluctuation (high efficiency and ease in worker replacement), Field C – dysfunctional fluctuation (medium efficiency and difficulties in worker replacement), Field D – cost-term dependent functionality (medium efficiency and ease in worker replacement), Field E – short-term dysfunctional fluctuation with long-term functionality (low efficiency and significant difficulties in worker replacement), and Field F – functional fluctuation (low efficiency and ease in worker replacement).

5 The situation facing people and conditions of behavior.

operating computers, speak several foreign languages, lack respect for older people, and are lazy and egocentric (Drummonds, 2007; DiRomualdo, 2006). Young people prefer development rather than secure employment (Maurkiewicz and Moczulska, 2015). They see their careers as a series of two–three year periods of their lives (Guthridge et al., 2008), where older people often work for the same company from the moment they finish school. Talent is sought amidst the young staff (Ritz, 2011), while people of Generation X have professional experience. Due to the specified differences between the generations, conflicts occur that are described as intergenerational and conditioned by the generation gap, or simply age differences. Differences may apply to possessed knowledge, acquired experience, accepted values, types of life experiences, scale of needs, and expectations. The size of the difference between one generation and another is not something that can be measured in the mathematical sense. All that can be noted is a certain divergence or delays stemming from assumed criteria (in terms of knowledge, professional experience, computer skills, linguistic skills, approach to innovation, etc.). Some differences are the result of time delays—e.g., computer use by the generation of mature workers. Others are the result of biological processes—e.g., the physical fitness of older people. Elimination of all these differences is outside the realm of possibility of the employer. Employers may primarily act with respect to time delays in worker competencies (Zięba and Szuwarzyński, 2008).

Apart from intergenerational differences there are also differences within each of the generational groups. The individual behavior of each worker is conditioned by physical and psychological traits. The predicting of staff planned behavior, understood as “an awareness of control of the behavior of individual workers” (Ajzen, 1991), requires an understanding of the behavior of individuals. The starting point is utilization of knowledge regarding organizational behavior. The packet of knowledge on organizational behavior is available in the form of publications that are found domestically (in Kożusznik, 2002 and Gros, 2003) and abroad (Robbins, 1998; Gordon, 2002; Greenberg, 2002; Hellriegel, Slocum Jr., and Woodman, 2001) as well as in electronic form on the Internet portals of bookstores and companies.<sup>6</sup>

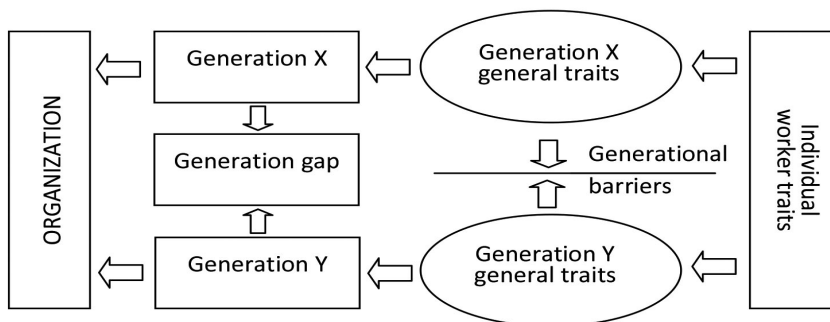
Scientific research (Antick Tolbize, 2008; Choain et al., 2012) demonstrates that knowledge regarding generations allows the selection of appropriate motivational tools, communication, and development (as cited in Koziol and Raport). Age management is based on age segmentation—the subdivision of workers on the basis of their age. The monitored age is the statistically analyzed age of workers (by the

6 The Learning Company and Pearson Custom Publishing offer an Organizational Behavior (OB) packet.

HR department or its equivalent). Any system of banding can be used in classifying workers by age. The following age bands can be applied for the purposes of HRM—16–21, 22–30, 31–40, 41–50, 51–60, 60–65, and 65+. Monitoring age helps identify problems as well as distinguish and present action taken. Employers can fit management tools from the area of HRM to meet the needs of individual age groups. For example, this applies to training, motivation, and recruitment. In certain situations an individual approach should be used because worker age groups only point to certain characteristic traits (generalizations). An individual approach applies to identifying a career path and professional advancement, for example.

Generational segmentation makes it possible to map the needs of people in the context of professional development and is a basis for further personal approaches for each worker in planning their professional career paths. The competencies and values that each generation has to offer are an ace in hand for the company, but only if it creates individual professional profiles for each worker. A profile may take on the form of a table, graph, or map. Its essence is the presentation of the individual qualities of the worker. Although worker profiles are different, they should be connected into the psycho-social system of the organization, where each individual functioning within it should achieve exactly that which is the goal of the system. Workers must be familiar with the career path developed for them, combining training with the range of job position tasks. A professional development scenario for individual generational groups consists of individual careers, including actions aimed at reskilling, remuneration, training, position shifts and crossings, and utilizing various forms of assistance—e.g., subsidies for education outside the workplace (Bukowska et al., 2002, pp. 121–126, 132–138).

**Figure No. 1.** Diagram of an Age-Diverse Organization



Source: Own studies.

Concluding this train of thought, what has been presented is a diagram for building an organization's psycho-social system based on age diversity (Figure No. 1). The system consists of individual worker profiles within the framework of individual staff age groups. Classification by Generations X and Y is an extremely simplified form.

### Guidelines for Age Diversity Management

In spite of the significant complexity of the question of age diversity management, several guidelines are available for companies. Examples of proposed solutions are the result of own study (observation of business practice).

First of all, employers should establish strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) as stemming from the age diversity of their staff. The strong and weak aspects of each age group should look at worker knowledge, qualification, skills, and predispositions. As an example, the strong point of Generation X might be professional experience, positive attitude to coworkers, high work culture, and relationship to superiors (loyalty). In its turn, Generation Y has significant packets of knowledge, linguistic skills, computer skills, and innovative thinking. On the side of weaknesses, what is seen in the case of Generation X is lack of creativity, lack of innovativeness, resistance to new work technologies, a drop in physical fitness, etc. (Gajdzik, 2014b). Weaknesses in the case of Generation Y are interpersonal conflicts, they are easily discouraged with respect to performing obligations (especially routine ones), have a disdain for the traditional work schedule, lack professional experience, etc.

After diagnosing the state of the organization's generational profile it is time to establish opportunities and threats. Opportunities include new training techniques, new work technologies, flexible forms of employment, enriched work content, and improved work schedules (Listwan, 202, p. 243). On the side of threats there is centralization of management, rigid personnel policy, lack of respect for work (decreased attachment to work), growing costs of the functioning of the organization, etc. Various individual categories of workers may be identified on the basis of the analysis—i.e. the best and solid workers, average (not particularly useful), and even problematic workers (Lipka, 2000, p. 102). In age management special attention should be paid to those in the best worker category. In line with the fluctuation matrix (Martin and Bartol, 1985), these are workers who are difficult to replace. If the best workers are in the 50+ age group, special effort should be made to prepare “worthy successors.”



The assumed worker classification (age-oriented personnel portfolio) is not enough to solve the problem of age management. A successive guideline—understanding the basic values of various generational groups—should be applied. Thus, young people are more interested in work results and professional advancement, they approach problems flexibly, seek out ways for solving them, value innovative forms of shaping work content giving transformations stemming from technological–technical and organizational progress pole position, and do not like work that is too monotonous and ultimately comes down to simple, repeatable tasks. On the other hand, older people value stability, regular pay, social and material security, interpersonal relations, where repeatability of actions and rigid working hours are not a problem for them. Diversity in matters of family life should also be stressed. Younger people have a flexible approach to care over young children or ageing family members and seek ways to solve problems—e.g., use of nursery schools, children’s clubs, daycare, etc. Older people put emphasis on company healthcare benefits and awarding benefits to workers out of the company social benefit fund—subsidies for recreation, rehabilitation services, lunch, and regenerative meals (Gajdzik, 2014a). Currently, many well-known companies (Ikea, Danone, Sears, and ArcelorMittal) undertake efforts for employee children, older people, and employee problems within the framework of work–life programs. Such programs are a form of assistance easing tension in reconciling professional work and family life. The range of benefits in work–life programs is very broad and encompasses not only material or social–materials aspects, but also work content, the work environment, working time, and interpersonal relations. The “work–life program” theme also includes actions in the area of human resources (fluctuation, rotation, motivation, assessment, and training) as well as organizational culture (sensitivity of coworkers and superiors to worker family matters and problems stemming from age—e.g., increased illness among 50+ people). Flexible working conditions—e.g., flexible working hours, job sharing, tele–work, part time work, and consolidated work weeks—are particularly attractive to the young in contrast to older people. The listed working condition components are adapted to the needs and ages of employees (Cascio, 2001, pp. 180–181; Bardoel et al., 1998).

When taking into account the differences in the age of workers, it is necessary to adapt work organization methods to the requirements of specific generations. Thus, age differences among workers result in a need to develop communication methods that are appropriate for the difference age groups. In addition to electronic methods of communication (valued by younger people), traditional methods (face–to–face talks) should be returned to as they are more effective in transferring knowledge between generations and build stronger relations among them (Gajdzik,

2014a). Information services should pertain not only to professional matters, but also questions not involving work, such as counseling in personal matters, cafeteria plans, and educational programs on various fields of life. As to work organization itself, work rate and time, work methods, task assignment, work discipline monitoring, etc. should be adapted to the needs of the generations. Older people do not feel the pressure of passing time as strongly as the younger generation. Mature workers prefer an eight-hour work time. The generation of younger people prefers working at home and accepts flexible forms of employment.

In response to the needs of various age groups, companies must change their means of motivation. In accepting the principles of rewarding work results, the employer should adapt the content of tasks to the psycho-physical predispositions of workers. Mature workers feel respected when their many years of professional experience find application at work. Young people desire ambitious jobs so they can demonstrate their talents and ideas. Each and every worker plays a role in the organization making possible the underscoring of their identity—a possibility of presenting their qualifications. The subdivision of roles must be taken into account in motivation systems. However, it is good when the qualifications of the different generations are mutually supplemental thanks to the exchange of knowledge and experience (Austin, 1997, p. 347). In companies that practice age management, worker teams are made up of people of various ages. As to the exchange of professional experience, it is usually the mature workers who are the trainers or mentors for younger workers.

In establishing principles for dividing basic and additional pay, attention should be called to the proper proportions. In the case of older people, healthcare and retirement contributions are important. The level of remuneration has an impact on the level of contributions. For Generation X, basic pay is the determinant of payment for work. Generation Y, however, pays more attention to additional pay (bonuses, allowances, and lump sum payments). Because of the extended retirement age, members of the younger generation have a longer period of contributions. Generation Y consists of people who were born in a market economy system (in contrast to Generation X, which experienced the economic transformation) and for this reason it is easier for them to accept flexibility and innovation. Generation Y has an easier time of deciding as to additional forms of healthcare and retirement security (they benefit from instruments offered by commercial institutions). Habits involving security provided by state institutions (e.g., ZUS Social Security Administration) is stronger among older people.

The application by a company of the appropriate motivators sometimes requires multiple studies and analyses. An individual approach to the needs of an employee

is significantly more difficult and more expensive than applying universal solutions. However, in accepting diversity policy, one must accept additional costs in the area of HRM. At this point the author suggests publications on calculating human resource costs, for example (Cascio, 2000), in order to become familiar with the many direct and indirect costs involved.

The specified guidelines pertaining to age management in no way exhaust the vast pool of possible action on the part of employers with respect to different worker ages. The presented guidelines, if applied, allow the building of company value on the advantages of age-diverse employees. However, it must be remembered that regardless of age, workers expect respect, recognition, self-fulfillment, and satisfaction at work.

### Case Study: A Steel Mill

Observations made regarding age diversity using the ArcelorMittal Poland metallurgical company as an example are a proprietary case study.<sup>7</sup> ArcelorMittal Poland employs approximately 12,000. The average age of employees is 48. Over 5,000 employees (42%) are aged over 50. The existing age structure of the staff is a result of the demographic changes taking place in Poland. The company is struggling with the effects of a competency (generation) gap.

The aging of the staff is the object of analysis in the company. A study has been conducted on changes in employment as a result of employees retiring. Key positions for which experience is gained over years of work have been established on the basis of research. These are primarily specialized production positions, including metalworkers, electricians, and mechanics. Such positions are occupied by people with over a dozen years experience working in the mill. The fact that these positions are referred to as “key” means that the absence of workers with the relevant qualifications can threaten the continuity and safety of technological processes.

The identification of key positions allows the preparing of the scope of training for people who will take over the responsibilities of employees who are leaving. Such training is both in-house and external. Workers are entitled to subsidies for the external training and courses as well as training leave. New forms of transmitting knowledge has been applied in in-house training—e.g., Lunch and Learn training, or meetings with well-known personalities—experts in the field of management. The average annual amount of training time per one employee is approximately thirty hours.

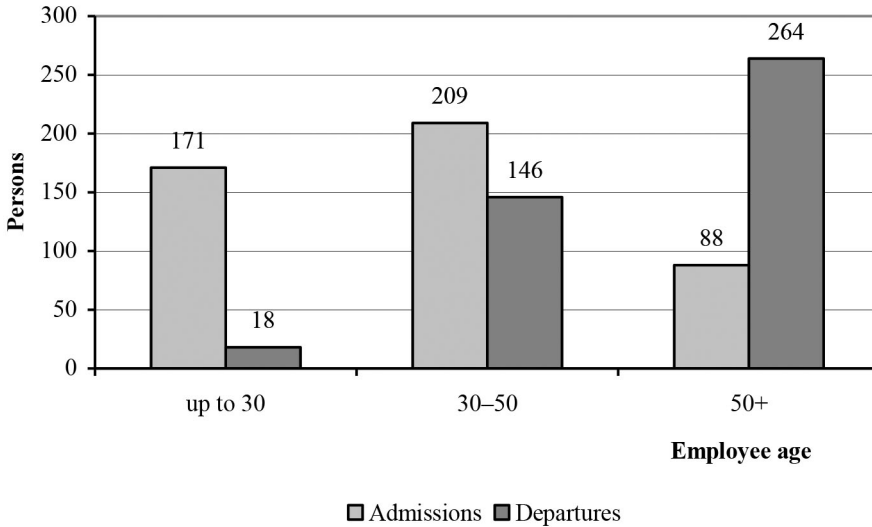
7 Analysis of in-house ArcelorMittal Poland documentation, including *Odpowiedzialny biznes, Raport 2013* [Responsible business: 2013 report], web pages, HR information, and *Jedynka*, the plant newspaper.

In addition to training, there is also a recruitment and succession plan for key positions. Moreover, interviews were conducted with employees filling those positions to establish if the employee is interested in continuing work (extended period of work). In order to retain key employees they have been offered assistance in the form of additional working teams (support workers). These are usually young people who are “learning the trade” under the care of workers with professional experience. Employees in the 50+ group are mentors and trainers for the young staff. The company has teams made up of people from Generations X and Y. Knowledge and experience is exchanged within the framework of these teams.

A packet of pre-retirement benefits such as additional healthcare benefits, send-off packages taking into account age and seniority, and assistance in retiring from professional life has been prepared for people aged 50+. For their part, in addition to planned development paths, the young generation is offered a “Talent Management” program. A “talent” is an employee with high potential (qualifications, skills, and predispositions) that may be used by the company. Verification of workers is conducted through a system of assessments. In 2013, workers with high potential accounted for over 10% of all those encompassed by the assessment. With respect to the previous year, this marked an almost 2% growth in assessed employees. In terms of numbers, there were 267 “talents,” while the following year there were 318 (an increase by fifty-one people).

A comprehensive assessment of workers is conducted twice each year. The results are the subject of discussion in career committees (HR and managerial staff). Career paths are analyzed with the immediate superior of the employees (managers, together with employees, draw up individual development paths). The company applies the 70/20/10 principle, which signifies that 70% of knowledge is the result of performed work, 20% is the exchange of knowledge and experience (learning from others), while 10% is derived from training.

The staff recruitment process is implemented in line with best practice (the company joined the Friendly Recruitment Coalition, as initiated in the eRecruiter brand, in 2013). These practices include contact with the candidate (the providing of feedback and caring for relations with the candidate), protection of personal data, keeping to deadlines, formulation of recruitment advertisements, and equal treatment of candidates. During recruitment, the company is guided by the qualifications, skills, and experience of the given candidate (it guarantees equal opportunities for young and old candidates). The principle of candidate equality is visible in the age structure of the newly inducted individuals. A total of 19% of newly employed workers are over 50 years of age. Graph No. 1 presents the fluctuation rate by employee age structure.

**Graph No. 1.** ArcelorMittal Poland Employee Fluctuation in 2013

Source: Developed on the basis of the ArcelorMittal Poland Report for 2013, p. 22.

The graph shows that the company is striving to flatten the generation gap. More young people were hired in 2013 than old people. More admissions than departures were noted in the below 50 age groups. The largest group of newly admitted employees is made up of people in the 30–50 age group.

## Conclusion

The following has been established on the basis of analysis of literature and the case study:

- Demographic changes (the aging of the population) that are resulting in a generation gap in companies;
- Employers, aware of the generation gap, are taking action that may be termed age management;
- Age management is not a scientific management theory, but a practical front for employer action in the area of HRM aimed at the limiting of the generation gap;
- The subject matter of generation gap management is an important component of HRM;
- In order to undertake age management, it is first necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of the company staff structure;

- It is on the basis of such an analysis that key positions should be identified, especially those that are important for the proper functioning of the organization;
- A set of actions in the areas of recruitment, training, motivation, teamwork, careers, etc. (areas of HRM) allowing the decrease in the intergenerational gap should be planned;
- Changes in the age structure of employees should be monitored.

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### Zarządzanie różnorodnością wieku w miejscu pracy

#### Streszczenie

Efektywne zarządzanie przedsiębiorstwem wymaga zwrócenia większej uwagi na różnice w strukturze wiekowej pracowników (różnica między młodą kadrą należącą do pokolenia Y a dojrzałymi pracownikami pokolenia X). Uwzględniając wiek pracowników, firma powinna stawiać na te kompetencje i umiejętności, które urzeczywistniają jej cele. W niniejszej publikacji przedstawiono założenia wprowadzające do koncepcji zarządzania różnorodnością wieku (*age diversity*). Uwzględniając różnorodność wieku pracowników, zaproponowano zestaw przykładowych działań, które pozwolą zmniejszyć negatywne skutki luki pokoleniowej.

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## Diversity Management: A Look into the Future

The aim of this study is to determine the state of implementation of diversity management in companies that are finalists in the Human Resource Management Leader Competition and participants in a panel of experts devoted to diversity management,\* as well as the identification of areas of diversity management and the specifics of diversity management in the presented organizations. Empirical materials contained in this article were collected using qualitative analyses of the results of the panel of experts as well as an analysis of documents and competition questionnaire results, including audit reports stemming from Human Resource Management Leader Competition procedures.

**Key words:** diversity, diversity management, competition in the field of HRM.

### Introduction

Diversity management (DM) is an approach to the managing of people in an organization whose goal is the building and maintaining of a friendly work environment for workers by perceiving their individualism and diversity as stemming from their qualities such as sex, age, race, ethnic origins, disability, and others of social or demographic character (Sweeny and McFarlin, 1992, pp. 23–40). Moreover, DM refers to the noting of differences among workers as well as to the conscious development of strategy, policy, and programs that create a climate of respect as well as utilization of such differences in the achievement of organizational goals (Urbaniaik, 2014). As indicated by the results of numerous studies, companies undertaking actions in the realm of diversity achieve better financial results (Giscombe et al., 2011, Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014), and thus enter onto a higher social level (Świstalski, 2008). Skillful DM at the workplace is also a source of tangible benefits for companies (Kirton and Greene, 2010, pp. 2–3). Taking up actions linked with the implementation of the idea of DM has a significant impact on growth in worker commitment as well as on eliminating many negative phenomena, such as low staff productivity, reluctance to share knowledge, social conflict and tension, and high personnel fluctuation (Avery and McKay, 2010, pp. 227–252). This concept stresses

\* The panel of experts met on December 15, 2015 in the Lubomirski Palace in Warsaw as a part of the “Diversity Management” Seminar organized by the HRM Department of the Institute of Labor and Social Studies within the framework of the National Scientific Center “Creating Engagement in the Context of Diversity Management” Project, Contract No. UMO–2012-/07/B/HS4/03008.