



A Kelly Services® Report

Generational Crossovers in the Workforce— Opinions Revealed

**2009 Kelly Global Workforce Index Exposes
a Variety of Generational Viewpoints**

Introduction

In 2009, approximately 100,000 people from 34 countries in North America, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region responded to a workplace survey developed by Kelly Services. **The Kelly Global Workforce Index (KGWI)** revealed opinions about work and the workplace from a generational viewpoint. Despite the variations of cultures, survey results were surprisingly similar across the globe.

Survey respondents ranged in age from 18 to 65 and comprised the following three generational groups: Generation Y (age 18 – 29), Generation X (age 30 – 47), and the Baby Boomer generation (age 48 – 65). Respondents were **either employed within a variety of industries**, ranging from information technology to finance, **or were unemployed and searching for future work opportunities**. Each respondent revealed their viewpoints on the following **six** aspects of their current positions and workplaces.

- First, the survey obtained respondents' viewpoints on the importance of finding **"meaningful" positions** which positively contribute to society.
- Respondents also shared their views on the **efficiency of** their organizations' current **training programs**.
- In addition, each respondent was welcomed to describe the impact that **mobile communications technology** has had on their personal and working lives.

- The survey also focused on the ways in which **workplace attitudes** differ from generation to generation.
- Furthermore, respondents revealed whether or not organizational **social responsibility** was important as they pursue positions within various organizations.
- Finally, respondents also displayed their views on the impact that **globally oriented organizations** have on society, as well as current and prospective employees.

Upon completion of the survey, the following opinions about work and the workplace were revealed, beginning with employees' desires to obtain meaningful positions that positively impact other people.

Meaningful Work

According to the survey, a majority of respondents believe that their contributions to a greater cause are more important than their annual salaries or job titles. On average, 51 percent of respondents stated that they would accept a lesser role or even a lower wage if they were certain their new position would contribute more to society than their current position. Many employees do not appear to be as driven by monetary assets as they used to be; rather, they prefer to fulfill their psychological needs, as well as their inner-driven desires to positively impact others.

Meaningful work is more important than monetary assets

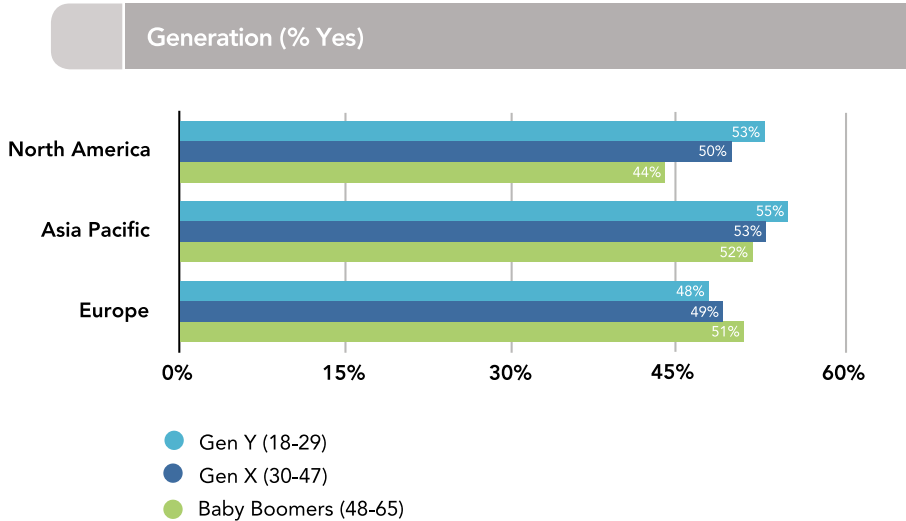
Older generations tend to be less satisfied with the long-lasting impact that their positions have on society. Even though many Baby Boomers are approaching retirement, some are still searching for more meaningful positions that they can obtain for the future. Meanwhile, younger individuals are also anticipating career changes while searching for emotional fulfillment, rather than wealth and status. It has become clear that employees do not view the value of their work solely by their financial status, but rather by the legacy they will leave behind for future generations.

Michael Webster is executive vice president and general manager for the Americas region at Kelly Services. He believes that many in the Generation X and Y age groups will continue to progressively seek meaningful employment opportunities in the future.

“Individuals need to know that they are contributing their talents and efforts to a larger goal—one that they, as well as other members of society, will benefit from,” Webster said. “Employees should not only accept positions based on monetary gain, but on the passion that they have for their work. If employees lose their enthusiasm as they work, they will not be able to perform with their utmost abilities.”

Generational Response to Meaningful Work

Would you take on a lesser role or lower wage if you felt that your work contributed to something more important or meaningful to you or your organization?



Training Programs

Today's top talent is constantly searching for ways to improve on-the-job performance, while also striving to compete for positions in a global market. In order to stand out among the competition, employees must have adequate skill sets which will help them contribute to organizations well into the future. Unfortunately, according to the Kelly Global Workforce Index, many survey respondents feel that their current skill sets are not adequate. Some respondents fear that they may not be able to maintain their existing positions for the coming years or compete for valuable positions within their desired industries in the future.

Employees desire more sufficient training programs

So, why do respondents appear to be anxious about their current roles and impacts within organizations, then? Simply, it seems that many employees are uncertain whether or not their organizations' training opportunities have sufficiently prepared them for long-term futures within their organizations, as well as the competitive job market of recent times.

To help sustain their current employees, managers will need to implement more effective training programs which will support workers from each generation.

To help sustain their current employees, managers will need to implement more effective training programs which will support workers from each generation. As managers create more robust training opportunities, employees will be prepared to adequately complete current assignments within organizations and develop strategies for future performance. Training should not only be educational and hands-on, but exciting as well, in order to maintain the interests of employees. Effectively trained talent will ensure that positive organizational performance will continue well into the future.

Key Findings

The following key findings were obtained from the survey in regard to organizational training in North America, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region:

The majority of global respondents believe their skills will need to be upgraded within the next five years to maintain pace with changes that occur in the workplace.

A majority of North American respondents (79 percent) think that training should be a joint responsibility between employers and employees.

Leif Agnéus, senior vice president and general manager for the Kelly Services EMEA region, senses that the future well-being of worldwide organizations lies in the proper implementation of employee training programs.

“Employees need to feel valued within their organizations in order to perform to the best of their abilities,” Agnéus said. “Of course, organizations will be sustainable well into the future with help from highly talented and high-performing employees. Organizations can ensure future success by preparing their employees for the same—through effective, year-round training programs that develop and improve employee skill sets.”

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—LEIF AGNÉUS

Mobile Communications

During the past two decades, technological advancements have transformed the lives of worldwide citizens, especially within the corporate world. In recent times, one significant technological innovation, mobile communication, has truly changed employee behavior, as well as the outlook on work-life balance, according to the Kelly Global Workforce Index. A vast majority of survey respondents (84 percent) believe that mobile communication has improved their personal productivity while working, and the opportunity to remain in constant communication with work is rather positive as well.

Mobile communications technology significantly impacts work-life balance

Even though many organizations across the world have increased their working hours, most respondents feel that they have an adequate balance between their work and personal lives. As employees have become more engaged with their employers through devices like smartphones and laptops, they have had more freedom to work anytime and anywhere—including their homes and remote locations. Some employees have even had opportunities to work hundreds or thousands of miles away from their employers on a daily basis.

Around the world, it seems mobile communications technology has positively impacted organizations in recent years. In North America, 78 percent of respondents believe that their work productivity has steadily improved since the creation of mobile communications technology. At the same time, a majority of North American respondents (64 percent) are pleased with their current work-life balance.

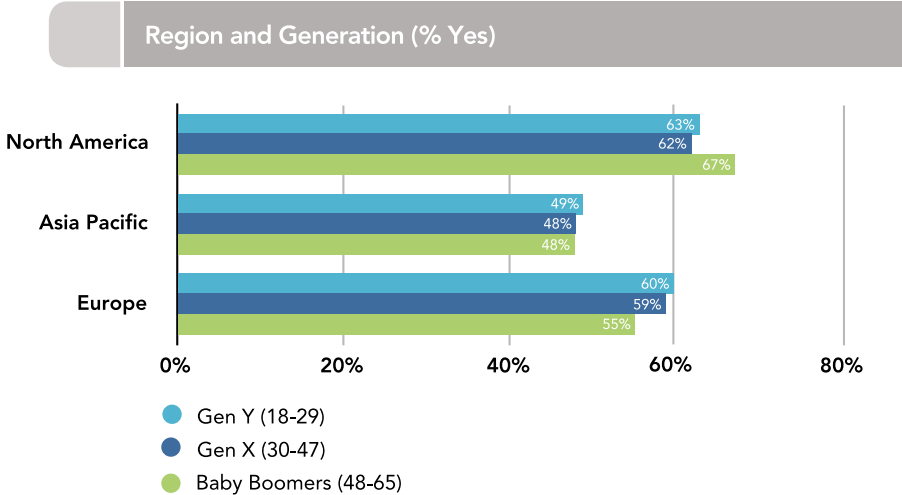
Survey results are similar in both Europe and the Asia Pacific region. In Europe, 87 percent of respondents feel their work productivity has improved in recent times, while 86 percent of Asia Pacific respondents have noticed the same trend. Also, most respondents from both Europe and the Asia Pacific region are satisfied with their current balance between work and personal living.

Dhiren Shantilal, senior vice president and general manager for the Kelly Services APAC region, believes that mobile communications technology will continue to improve employee engagement during the coming years.

“Mobile communications technology is promising for its key impacts within the global workforce—improved communication between employers and employees, noticeable work productivity advancements, and freedom to work remotely during all hours of the day,” Shantilal said. “As mobile communications technology advances, so will employee performance.”

Generational Response to Work-life Balance

Are you happy with the work-life balance that you currently have?



Workplace Attitudes

As Baby Boomers and individuals from Generations X and Y work together within organizations, conflicts may arise, primarily due to varying opinions about technology, work schedules, and social life, among other issues. The Kelly Global Workforce Index has shown that issues like communication style and monetary awards tend to create workplace attitude differences among each generation. For example, older workers who are well established within their industries typically prefer training opportunities or vacations more than Generation Y workers, who would rather have monetary rewards. Consider the following interesting findings across North America, Europe, and the Asia Pacific region:

In North America, 41 percent of respondents believe that generational differences can indeed create a more productive workplace.

A majority of Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y respondents tend to favor face-to-face communication more than any other communication style.

Forty percent of European respondents and 44 percent of Asia Pacific respondents view generational differences positively.

Most global respondents (70 to 75 percent) also adapt their communication styles when interacting with colleagues of different generations.

Workplace attitudes vary across generations

Over time, managers can learn how to effectively handle generational workplace attitude differences to improve their organizations. Various managers have realized that workplace diversity can certainly be positive as it tends to lead to innovative ideas that improve the marketing and promotional functionalities of their organizations. By hiring employees of different age groups with a wide range of experiences, organizations can succeed in a global market.

Agnéus has found that intergenerational differences can indeed help organizations succeed.

“It is possible to not only manage a diverse group of people, but to also improve your organization through the unique talents of diverse team members,” he said. “Organizations should hire employees who have various types of backgrounds and past work experience in order to improve organizational innovations in a creative and successful manner.”

Social Responsibility

As organizations continuously strive to improve their “bottom lines” each day, they must remember that employees do not tend to view organizational value through monetary worth only. Instead, organizations are deemed valuable when they have a combination of both social responsibility practices and high net worth.

Socially responsible organizations typically attract top talent

According to the survey, respondents view organizations that focus on issues beyond their own performance outcomes as “employers of choice.” Interestingly, employees of all ages and geographic backgrounds also tend to prefer working for organizations that have had well-developed social, ethical, and environmental policies during the past several years.

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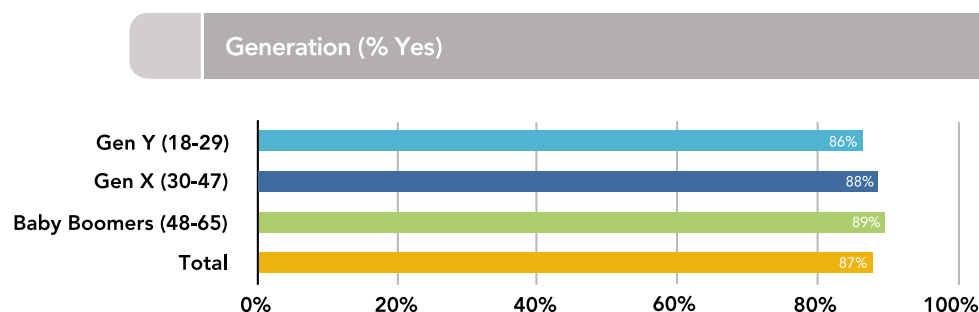
Approximately 90 percent of respondents are more likely to work for organizations that are ethically and socially responsible than for those that are not. In the meantime, many employees are willing to accept reduced annual salaries or roles with less responsibility and power in order to work for a more socially responsible organization. Across the globe, employees are searching for meaningful positions with organizations that tend to care about net worth as well as the needs of society.

Shantilal understands the value that socially responsible employees and organizations have in society.

“Many employees around the world are seeking positions that provide them with a real sense of value. Employees need to know that they are truly impacting other people in a positive manner,” Shantilal said. “Organizations must do the same. By promoting larger social goals, rather than focusing solely on monetary worth, organizations can improve society and make the world a better place for future generations to live in.”

Generational Response to Socially Responsible Organizations

Would you be more likely to want to work for a company that is considered ethically and socially responsible?



Globalization

A majority of survey respondents (83 percent) from all four corners of the world tend to also believe that organizations should strive to employ individuals of various nationalities and cultures to achieve organizational success, especially as globalization continually increases. Most respondents (78 percent) want to become more globally oriented as they work on a regular basis. Unfortunately, half of the respondents indicated that their organizations neither offers nor encourages sufficient cultural and language training opportunities. As a result, many people will not be adequately prepared to work with individuals from different cultures in the future.

Globalization of workforce is important

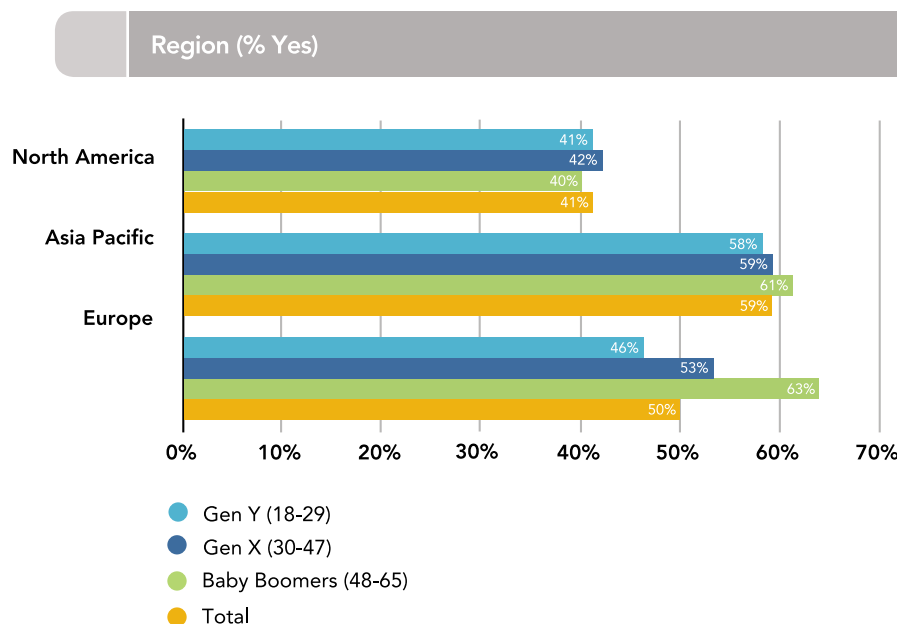
During the coming years, organizational leaders can provide employees with more opportunities to receive cultural and language training while they work. By encouraging employees to learn about new languages and cultures, diversity within the workplace will increase and globalization will continue to unite individuals from around the world. As employees become more globally oriented, organizations will have opportunities to ensure that globalization continues well into the future.

Webster is anticipating the future globalization of organizations around the world.

“As companies strive to improve their communication capabilities with people around the world, globalization will be essential,” he said. “However, in the meantime, organizations will also need to create proper language and cultural training programs so that their employees will be well prepared for the future promise of globalization.”

Generational Response to Globalization

Does your employer encourage or offer courses to help in dealing with other cultures (e.g., education, language training)?



Conclusion

According to survey results, each generation of respondents has similar opinions about various aspects of their current workplace; however, there are also some noticeable differences between generational workplace views.

Generational wrap-up

Generation Y

First, Generation Y respondents appear to be more willing to sacrifice their current wages and roles than older generations to obtain “more meaningful positions.” Meanwhile, even though Generation Y respondents are much more technologically savvy than older respondents, they tend to also receive more training opportunities than older generations—a noticeable difference between younger and older generations.

While each generation is rather pleased with their current work-life balance, Generation Y workers prefer monetary awards more than older workers, who typically enjoy obtaining additional vacation time and other “perks.” In the meantime, even though Generation Y respondents prefer face-to-face communication as much as their older counterparts, they do tend to adapt their communication styles while speaking to different generations more than older respondents typically do. However, like older generations, many individuals from Generation Y are willing to forego pay and promotion to work for a highly reputable organization and to obtain a career that is globally oriented. Overall, the survey found that Generation Y workforce views are rather similar to those of older generations, yet some observable differences do indeed exist.

Generation X and Baby Boomers

Meanwhile, both Generation X and Baby Boomer respondents are interested in finding meaningful positions that positively contribute to society and are also eager to receive effective training within their organizations. As older generations continue to experience significant technological efficiency gains, they also strive to maintain adequate oral communication skills, especially as younger employees frequently use the most recent technological advancements available. Older survey respondents want to work for socially responsible organizations in the future and also desire to work within a globally oriented atmosphere that will expose them to a variety of nationalities and cultures.

Managing the multi-generational workforce

It appears that survey respondents of all ages and prior work experience are interested in obtaining meaningful positions within socially responsible and globally oriented organizations that will allow them to display and improve their skill sets well into the future. Managers around the world may need to consider implementing the following strategies within their organizations to maintain top talent.

- First, as employees strive to obtain meaningful positions that positively impact society, managers should create and provide positions that add value to their individual organizations as well as society as a whole.
- Second, by implementing proper training programs and using state-of-the-art communication technology, managers can help their employees achieve optimal performance.
- Third, even though intergenerational conflict will continue well into the future, savvy managers will use employee diversity favorably as a means to improve their organization.
- Finally, by supporting globalization and social responsibility, managers will be able to continuously attract highly talented employees.

As the Kelly Global Workforce Index has shown, managers need to not only value organizational monetary worth, but also have a responsibility to positively impact their workforces during the coming years.

About Kelly Services

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