



Diversity needs
to be managed!
Variety is the spice of life

Dear reader,



Do you also have the feeling that there is sometimes no end to all the things that you, as a manager, have to manage? And now you are also expected to manage “diversity”. Is that just a trendy new expression? I don’t think so – I see it more as an old topic that we managers have always had to deal with in day-to-day business. After all, managing our employees is often about guiding a wide range of people, with their different personalities and needs, towards a productive way of working together. As managing diversity is now bringing managers even more challenges, we would like this newsletter to enhance the degree of professionalism you have already acquired in this area with some interesting information and useful tips for everyday life at work.

I wish you an enjoyable read and offer you my best wishes,

Reinhold Fürstenberg

The responsible management of differences

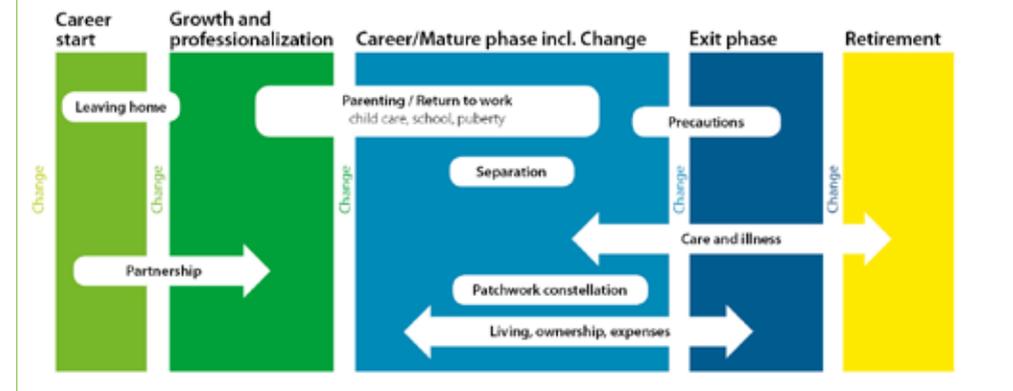


People of different nationalities, ages, ethnic backgrounds, religions, belief systems, sexual orientations, abilities and disabilities live and work in Germany. They all make up our society and enhance it. Accordingly, the recognition and inclusion of diversity and the topic of diversity management – i.e. the responsible management of these many differences – is becoming ever more important in the context of working life.

Demographic change means that the topic of “age” is already playing a significant role in employee structures in almost all industries. Besides promoting the younger generation, the expertise of older employees must not be underestimated, as this is a key resource. It

is important to keep older people tied to the company – perhaps by offering them further training courses, expanding company health management programmes and integrating the various generations so that they learn from each other and create something new together. One challenge in this context is cross-generational leadership, which incorporates all phases of working life, from starting out to retirement. The aim is to develop and maintain people's long-term employability and commitment, while bearing in mind the life phases involved and the way they have been influenced by different situations and learning patterns. Whether career starters, professionals, managers or people about to retire – single, married with families, single parents (1.6 million single parents in Germany, acc. to a 2017 family report), or staff with relatives in need of care (1.4 million people were cared for by family members in 2018, acc. to a 2018 ZQP analysis), or employees who fall ill themselves – every phase of life has its own demands. Company policies based on the different phases of life take all these situations into account in the right way. Measures like the flexible organisation of working times, giving people time off for further training or looking after their children or relatives, as well as the implementation of corresponding remuneration systems are key instruments that could be enshrined in law, at least in part, and deployed sensibly.

Life and professional phases



The complexity of the various circumstances in people's working and private lives can be clarified by categorising them in different phases. Such a classification does not define fixed phases, however, as the transitions are fluid and partly overlap.

Furthermore, more and more companies understand that, in a globalised economy, they benefit from hiring people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Respect towards other religions or beliefs is just as much a part of a prejudice-free organisation as the acceptance of different sexual orientations and identities as well as of different physical and mental abilities. The objective is the conscious and appreciative management of diversity within the company. The focus is not on the deficits or solutions for supposed problems, but on dealing respectfully with individuality. It is about recognising the wide-ranging accomplishments and experiences of employees and understanding them as potential for guaranteeing equal opportunities and avoiding discrimination. A respectful approach to diversity can remove any pressure for justification, while releasing motivation and commitment.

Diversity boosts team performance

Diversity significantly enhances a team's creativity and the quality of results (acc. to the "Diversity Factor" study for the 2018 Reinhard Mohn Prize). Team diversity, and the related potentials and abilities, offer managers excellent opportunities for using synergy effects and rich resources to generate new solutions. It is important to prevent or at least reduce any negative consequences, such as the dangers of conflict.

As a rule, capable and motivated teams working on complex tasks benefit from diversity (see study mentioned above). The crucial thing is that the team does not break up into a series of sub-groups. Ensuring that everyone respects the differences and appreciates the perspectives of every other team member is decisive for purposeful and constructive discussions. What's more, the critical task of good managers is to individually promote their employees' skills and qualifications, motivation and identification, as well as their health and sense of well-being.

Finally, it is important to remember that diversity is not just about differences, but also about discovering similarities.

YouTube tip

Simpleshow explains how diversity works

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgrNKRvUFM8>



“Diversity management is becoming one of the most important leadership qualities”

Diversity is one of the five biggest leadership challenges of our times and will become even more important in future.

Practical insights:

Daniela Lau is the Product Manager at the Fürstenberg Institut. She is responsible for topic-related business development as well as for product management and quality assurance.



Daniela Lau

1. What positive effects of diversity do you notice when working in your company?

The VUCA-oriented world will only work if diverse teams can produce new ideas based on their different perspectives and approaches. To do so, a good communication and cooperation culture is required, as well as regular practice at working together.

2. What challenges do you face due to diversity among the employees?

We all see the world from our own perspective and go through life with our own experiences. However, the world we live in today is different from the one we lived in a few years ago. The old evaluation patterns often no longer apply, yet we still cling to them. Variety forces people to be brave and come to terms with "others" and "otherness". It is only then that we stand a chance of meeting new challenges with new answers. Diversity often only deals with



“young and old” – and even then the generations often clash with each other rather than seeing each other as an asset. This barrier will only be overcome when young and old have to work together to make a project succeed. Knowledge and experience combined with new viewpoints and a fresh technical expertise – that could be a good recipe for succeeding in the future.

3. How can managers promote respect and appreciation with regard to cultural diversity in the company and avoid discrimination?

By being the best possible role model, encouraging an open culture, setting clear limits regarding discrimination and not filtering people's opinions based on where they come from but rather on how they can contribute to problem solving. This begins with the recruiting process and goes through every subsequent meeting. So long as we have managers in our working world, they will have to live up to their responsibilities as role models to enable diversity to flourish.

4. Can people train to treat differences with respect?

Of course they can! For example, I enjoy using methods during workshops and meetings that aim to let everyone speak and make a contribution. It is no longer about who said what, but about what was said. If we regularly try out this stance during the various formats, we will achieve rapid successes. In addition, the participants enjoy these workshops and meetings so much more.

5. In your opinion, how important will diversity management be in ten years from now?

Very important – because the world of our customers is becoming ever more colourful and the globalisation of knowledge, thanks to technical possibilities, means that national borders no longer represent a competitive advantage! The land of poets and thinkers will therefore have to become one of techies. We will not achieve that without input from outside.

Beatrice Erhart is a counsellor at the Fürstenberg Institut. She has extensive management experience in business and industry, and specialises in the topics of leadership, change processes, company culture and value development.

1. What positive effects of diversity do you observe when working in your company?

Diverse teams lead to new perspectives and solutions, as well as the chance to appeal to new target groups. In addition, they boost the level of credibility and authenticity.



Beatrice Erhart

2. What challenges do you face due to diversity among the employees?

It is true that there is greater complexity, which is not always easy. Diversity needs to be managed, and this doesn't always succeed so it needs practice and optimism. For this purpose, the right framework conditions need to be established to make the various talents, viewpoints and skills visible, and promote them.

3. How can managers promote respect and appreciation with regard to cultural diversity in the company and avoid discrimination?

The managers themselves need to be open to new things, listen to outside suggestions and act as role models. This means offering appreciation, being respectful, discussing problems and setting clear limits. In this context, simple and communicative formats can be very helpful. This could take the form of conveying input over a bite to eat, having a discussion about something or doing an exercise. The important thing is that it is not done centrally, but at the place where the diversity occurs – an IT basement or a hospital corridor.

4. Can people train to treat differences with respect?

That is a question of awareness, of reflection and of suitable workshop programmes with the right trainers, when seeking to become aware of, for example, one's fears with regard to the new, the different and the unknown. What's more, no one has to learn everything right away! Perseverance is enough in this case.

5. In your opinion, how important will diversity management be in ten years from now?

It will be the most in-demand top skill – in line with agile leadership, flexible working models and working-time models.

Life stage-based company and HR management

– a strategy for the future



Interview with Prof. Dr. Jutta Rump, Professor for Business Administration at the Ludwigshafen University of Business and Society.

Company employees are individual personalities who find themselves in different stages of their professional and private lives throughout the course of their careers. The challenge facing managers today is to recognise people's different needs and take them into account in their cross-generational leadership.

Prof. Dr. Jutta Rump is one of the most important professors for HR management in the German-speaking countries. She is the Director of the Institute of Employment and Employability in Ludwigshafen (IBE) and has conducted research on the challenges of life stage-based company policies. In an interview with the Fürstenberg Institut, Professor Rump answers the most important questions on this topic.

1. What is life stage-based management?

Life stage-based management widens the view of the entire working life while taking the various phases and situations of life into consideration. A company culture is required that is based on the

appreciation of all employees and managers, an acceptance of non-work-related interests, respect and fairness, as well as individual responsibility. In this context, it is essential to clearly distinguish between company and HR management.

Company management involves the culture of an organisation as well as the policies and strategy. This normative level is all about value orientation. Life stage-based management is implemented as a guiding principle and vision to, for example, boost employer attractiveness and staff satisfaction levels. From a strategic point of view, it is about increasing competitiveness, being and remaining innovative, as well as strengthening productivity.

With life stage-based HR management, however, the focus is on operative implementation – enabling and supporting employees to consider their working and private lives from the perspective of their individual life stages.

2. Why is life stage-based management becoming more important today?

The various trends in the world of work are making life stage-based HR management ever more important. As well as searching for individualisation, we are increasingly operating in a VUCA-led world. Professional and private stages of life have to be kept in balance today, yet also remain in constant motion due to economic and technological reasons. This is both an objective and a major challenge.

3. What are the biggest challenges of life stage-based management?

The biggest challenge is the individual perspective. All employees have to be considered individually and addressed in accordance with their needs and particular stage of life. There is no longer the “one and only concept” for employee management which has to suit everyone. Life stage-based management involves plenty of time and effort.

This effort must be understood as an investment, however, although many managers simply do not have the time for it.

4. Where is this strategy displayed in a company? What does this aspiration mean for managers?

Life stage-based management is a top-down process and therefore part of company management. The job of managers must be to bear it in mind in their actions.

5. How can the employability of employees be supported with regard to life stages and the extension of working life?

As I mentioned earlier, the aim of life stage-based management is basically to stay in motion without losing the balance between professional and private interests.

The key things for employability and also for working life are one's skills and qualifications, health and well-being, and motivation and identification. A good manager will contribute to promoting these three aspects, whereby life stage-based management has a special influence on people's health and motivation/identification.

6. How can life and career stages be reconciled?

The first thing to do in a meeting with an employee is to identify the situations in their work-related and private lives. In conversation with a manager, solutions should be found that do justice to these two stages while considering the company's possibilities with regard to productivity, performance and competitiveness.

Thank you very much for granting us this interview!

The interview was conducted by Berit Sbirinda-Wenk
Marketing and Company Communication, Fürstenberg Institut

Checklist for managers

- Consider the different needs of your employees
 - Sharpen your view of the interests of individuals
- Encourage your employees to take the initiative by themselves
 - Offer your employees “help for self-help” by strengthening their degree of self-management
- Practice an “open door” and “open ears” policy
 - Let people know that private interests are accepted and be open to discussions, or refer people to the free and anonymous EAP counselling provided by the Fürstenberg Institut
- Stand by your function as a role model
 - If you openly discuss your personal interests and serve them well, your employees will also have the courage to put their cards on the table
- Take private or family interests into account when assigning tasks
 - When planning and shaping career stages, consider each employee’s current stage of life, if possible
- Be flexible in your way of thinking
 - Work together with the employee to look for solutions to overcome any tensions between employee needs and your own demands and targets

- Always stay true to any commitments
 - Stand by any promises made and inform your employees in good time if there are any changes to the circumstances and new solutions need to be found
- Share experiences with other managers
 - Many people benefit from the experiences of other managers, even as part of the discussion meeting for managers organised by the Fürstenberg Institut
- Find out more about the possibilities of flexible working times and working locations in the company
 - The reconciliation of work and private life often goes hand in hand with making work more flexible (times, location, procedure). The Work-Life Service from the Fürstenberg Institut offers support in this area
- Let go of wanting absolute control and show more trust
 - Place the emphasis less on the “when” and the “where” of work and more on the result

Source: IBE Institute for Employment and Employability

Book tip

From baby boomers to Generation Z Dealing properly with different generations in the company

By Martina Mangelsdorf Some people are optimistic and love achieving a consensus, others are independent and combative, while still others are demanding and incredibly well connected. We are talking, of course, about baby boomers and the Generations X, Y and Z, as well as their different expectations, values and ideas with regard to the world of work. HR employees and managers are well advised to understand and pay attention to the specific characteristics and preferences of different generations. After all, only those who can position themselves successfully with an attractive employer brand will reap the rewards in times of demographic change.

The main focus of this book is on practical tips and recommendations that allow readers to put their newly acquired knowledge into practice straight away, without too much theoretical background. The book's main message is that no generation is better or worse than other ones and that companies get the best results when their cross-generational teams work together effectively and complement each other.

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Leadership in mixed-age teams Knowledge transfer for mutual skill enhancement



In almost all companies today, colleagues of different ages and values are expected to co-exist. Four generations are now being employed at the same time – a situation that offers opportunities through all the differences,

yet also has the potential for conflict. The various life settings and circumstances that people grow up in often mean that they have vastly different attitudes – and not only to work. Mixed-age teams comprise employees who grew up with computers, internet, mobile phones and social media, and others who first encountered these technologies as adults and had to adapt to them according to their areas of activity and personal affinities. There is also the issue of different values, aims and motivations among the various age groups. In this context, the new Generations Y and Z require particular highlighting. While the so-called Millennials (born between 1981 and 1990), who are currently entering the labour market, mainly seek sense and variety in their work, attach great importance to personal fulfilment, are extremely well connected both online and offline, and regard their working and private lives as complementary, Generation Z people (born between 1991 and 2010) already grew up with digital media and differentiate more between work and free time. They seek perso-

The benefits of mixed-age teams at a glance

- Differentiated, expanded performance range
- Variety of perspectives
- Wider personal network
- Mutual skill enhancement
- Knowledge transfer in work assignments
- Dynamics
- Health-boosting effects
- Employer branding
- Employee satisfaction and retention
- Lower staff turnover
- Reduced absence from work (AOK absenteeism report)

nal fulfilment more in their private lives and in social contacts rather than in their careers. Companies, department heads and team leaders are left with the increasingly large challenge of uniting the younger and older generations and getting the most out of all this potential.

How can managers actively promote cooperation in mixed-age teams?

A major advantage of mixed-age teams lies in creating knowledge and action synergies, and connecting the various skills sensibly. The curiosity, up-to-date specialist knowledge, new methods and greater speed of the younger people has to be blended with the experience, quality awareness, process knowledge and social integrity of the older generation. The different generations can also benefit from each other in the variety of perspectives for solving problems, in expanding their

personal networks, in learning from each other, in transferring knowledge and experience as well as in the health-promoting effects of offering mutual support and the resulting feel-good factor.

To ensure that this variety can be beneficial, a prejudice-free, fair and promoting leadership is required that also cares about health-related work conditions and appreciating all members of staff.

Quotes from the field:

“Working with mixed ages is definitely an opportunity for me, as a younger person, when it comes to putting theoretical knowledge into practice. The experience offered to me from my older colleagues is “free of charge”, so to speak.”

(female employee, 31 years old)

“Having a young colleague help you through a new IT program is much easier and more practical than working your way through a pile of paper.”

(male employee, 59 years old)

“The knowledge of experienced employees is too valuable to not let it be used and passed on right up to the last working day. In most cases, old and young benefit from each other and generate added value together.”

(manager, 32 years old)

Book tip

Managing mixed-age teams

in
german

**German Association for Human Resource Management (DGFP)
in cooperation with the Demographic Network (DDN)**

Mixed-age teams are strong performers and have a great deal of potential with regard to innovation and know-how. The composition and management of such teams plays a great role in developing this potential.

This book explains the significance of mixed-age teams and describes the areas of activity in a company where they can be deployed. The framework conditions for deploying and managing these teams are also presented, as are the compositions, assignments and possibilities for measuring success.

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