

# MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

- How to bridge the generation gaps?

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Abstract <p>The research project was conducted for restaurant Salitintti, the main restaurant of Rantasipi Laajavuori. The purpose of the study was to examine generational differences in values, expectations and working methods. Another aim was to find out if Salitintti belongs to generationally savvy companies. The idea was to include representatives of Baby Boomers (born in 1946 to 1964), Generation Xers (1965-1980), Generation Yers (1980-1995) and Generation Z members (1995- ) in the research in order to get a complete picture of the needs and wants of different generations.</p> <p>The data was collected with a research questionnaire, which was given in March 2012 to the employees of Salitintti. The enquiry was quantitative in nature, aside from few open questions, which gave qualitative data to be analysed. There were altogether 25 copies distributed; 20 Finnish ones and 5 versions in English. The aim was to get as many responses as possible. The response rate was 52 per cent with 13 persons out of the ideal 25 responding to the questionnaire. The results were registered and analysed with the SPSS-software, which helped the author to create illustrative tables and diagrams in order to support the analysis.</p> <p>The results indicated the generations to have some differences between them. The findings also implied the employees acknowledging the differences and being able to adapt to them. The final part of the questionnaire revealed that the staff was satisfied with the current management in terms of age management. Thus, the author can assume restaurant Salitintti to be up-to-date with the issues regarding age management.</p> <p>As a result, the thesis provides some ideas and tools for how to manage a multigenerational workforce, from which many enterprises besides Salitintti can learn and develop their activities.</p>		
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Tiivistelmä <p>Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tutkia sukupolvien välisiä eroja työtavoissa, arvoissa ja odotuksissa työtä kohtaan. Tarkoituksena oli myös selvittää, onko työn toimeksiantajan, Rantasipi Laajavuoressa toimivan ravintola Salitintin, työntekijöiden välille päässyt muodostumaan sukupolvikuiluja ja ovatko he pystyneet luomaan työympäristön, jossa eri-ikäiset pystyvät toimimaan yhdessä. Tutkimukseen pyrittiin saamaan osallistujia seuraavista sukupolvista: suuret ikäluokat (1946-1964), sukupolvi X (1965-1980), sukupolvi Y (1980-1995) ja sukupolvi Z (1995- ).</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa käytettiin sekä kvantitatiivista että kvalitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää. Aineisto kerättiin maaliskuussa 2012 Salitintin työntekijöiltä kyselylomakkeen avulla. Kysymyslomakkeita jaettiin yhteensä 25 kappaletta: 20 kopiota suomeksi ja 5 englanniksi. Tavoitteena oli saada mahdollisimman monta vastausta. Kyselyyn vastasi 13 työntekijää, joten vastausprosentiksi voidaan laskea 52 %. Tulokset analysoitiin SPSS-ohjelman avulla.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat eri sukupolvien välillä olevan joitain eroja. Ne paljastivat myös työntekijöiden olevan tietoisia eroista ja pystyvän sopeutumaan työskentelyyn eri-ikäisten kanssa. Tulokset antoivat myös ymmärtää, että työntekijät ovat tyytyväisiä ravintolan johtoon. Yhteenvedon voidaan siis todeta, että ravintola Salitintti on ajan tasalla ikäjohtamisessa ja osaa tukea eri-ikäisten yhteistyötä tarpeeksi.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyö sisältää ideoita ja keinoja, kuinka voidaan johtaa monista sukupolvista koostuvaa työyhteisöä. Aihe on hyvin ajankohtainen, joten siitä hyötyvät monet yritykset ravintola Salitintin lisäksi.</p>		
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays there are coexisting more generations than ever before at the workplace. Thus, generational clashes are more common than before. Managing people with different personal, educational and professional backgrounds is rather difficult. Each generation has different values, working styles, expectations and attitudes. Therefore, it is crucial managers to pay attention to generational differences. As a result, they might get a functional, more interactive work community with a supportive atmosphere and a flat organizational structure.

(McCrinkle and Wolfinger 2009, 27; Whitacre 2007)

The employers need to acknowledge not only the problems and pressures of mixed generations but also to see the opportunities, which come with the diversified workforce. At the moment, managers might perceive the diversity more as a problem than an advantage. However, at its best, multigenerational workforce can mean more creativity and better ways of solving problems at the workplace.

Unfortunately, multigenerational workforce can also create intergenerational problems. These intergenerational conflicts are highly problematic especially in the hospitality industry. Delivering the best possible customer service usually requires collaboration and constant interaction between the employees. Hence, it is crucial for the managers to be aware of the generational differences among their subordinates in order to bridge the generation gaps and create a positive working culture, which will ensure the service quality and productivity of the whole company.

How do those intergenerational problems then arise? Vesterinen and Suutarinen (2011) claim the reason for age gaps to be that generations feel they don't need to understand each other's worlds. Older people feel that since they have once been youngsters themselves, they know what the young generation today is going through and believe they are only struggling with the same sort of problems as they did when they were young. The young ones, on the other hand, perceive the advice of the old people as obsolete and therefore not worth of listening to. Furthermore, in today's high-tech and globalized

world, the youth feels more powerful and thus are alienated even further apart from older people's experience-based world. (Vesterinen & Suutarinen 2011, 45.)

There have already been conducted several studies on generational characteristics (see e.g. Gursoy, Maier & Chi 2008; Smola & Sutton 2002), and many literature sources on generations' values and expectations are available as well. Multigenerational issues have indeed become a hot topic, which unfortunately the author feels many employers here in Finland haven't really addressed yet. In addition, it will only keep increasing its importance, since the younger generations are entering the workforce at the moment with many employers unaware of their needs and expectations. Also shifting of the managerial positions are generating new sort of conflicts, when suddenly Boomers have to get used to being supervised by Gen Xers.

The purpose of the study was to examine generational differences in values, expectations and working methods. The idea was to include members of Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964), Generation Xers (1965-1980), Generation Yers (1980-1995) and Generation Z members (1995- ) to the research in order to get a complete picture of the needs and wants of different generations. Another aim of the thesis was to find out if restaurant Salitintti, the consignor of the project, would belong to generationally savvy companies. As a result, the author wanted to provide managers with ideas and techniques for how to meet the needs of every employee and bridge the possible generation gaps.

The author's own experiences at the workplace initiated to conduct this sort of a research in the first place. Several situations had demonstrated how the old and young seem to have difficulties with co-operation because of different kinds of attitudes and values. Sometimes there had been even a clear "us vs. them" -mentality, which had gone so far that people were totally ignoring one another. As expected, these sorts of circumstances are not likely to promote productivity, let alone a high service quality for the company.

The author wants to make the employers understand the importance of age management as being part of future management. Hopefully the results of this thesis will help employers to create more open work communities, where employees from

different generations will not only acknowledge the differences between each other, but will also be able to adapt to a constantly changing work environment.

The research was carried out in restaurant Salitintti, which is a great example of a workplace, where many generations work side by side. The author introduced the idea of the thesis in January 2012 and explained her desire to write on the subject in question. The idea was received as a meaningful and topical issue. However, there was not really a need for this sort of a research, since restaurant Salitintti did not have any problems relating to age gaps with their staff. Regardless of the situation, the author decided to conduct the research hoping at least to provide Salitintti with useful information on different generations and age management if not else. In addition, it does not hurt to be ready for a generational shift; especially since the experienced people are going to retire in the near future and their valuable knowledge should be transferred on time to their younger followers.

## **2 BACKGROUND FOR THE RESEARCH**

Labour markets have changed dramatically during the last few decades. Employees' sense of loyalty can no longer be taken for granted, since the future workforce has different views on work than previous generations had. Also later retirement and development of new technologies have had powerful implications to today's workplaces. Moreover, all the trends and developments mean that employers are facing rising new demands not only from the society, but also from their suppliers, staff and customers. In order the managers to survive through all these changes; they need to prepare themselves for the future.

In future, the companies will face a pressure of change. It has been predicted, that globalization, changing demographics and constantly developing technology will keep flattening the organizations even more. The reminder of today's financial crisis will make the companies focus more on issues of fairness, pay differentials and ethics. Also the requirement for trained and skilled labour will go up due to retirement of older workers, which means that companies will have to focus more on finding and retaining the talented people. (Top predictions 2008.)



When looking into the demographics, the societies are facing a large burden of ageing people, which will create a problem to most of Western countries. Baby-boom generation is retiring at the moment, leaving a huge gap in the workforce. Now it comes an issue, how well the society can put its growing labour force into productive use. Also redefining the retirement age has become a hot topic, since people are living longer and fewer employees are entering in the workforce. (A tale of three islands 2011; Top predictions 2008.)

Since the year 2004 the amount of people leaving the workforce has been bigger than the one entering to it. Confederation of Finnish industries predicts this trend to continue. According to them the number of people of working age (15-64 years) will decrease about 100 000 persons between the years 2010 and 2025. At the same time the number of elderly people (over 70 years) will increase about 400 000 persons. (Confederation of Finnish industries, Elinkeinoelämän Keskusliitto 2011.)

The actual work will be more flexible. Employees will prefer to have both short- and long-term flexibility and mobility options to meet their needs. There will also be a greater demand for work/life balance among the employees. (The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 1; Top predictions 2008.)

As the workforce is gradually turning into more multicultural, also the companies' actions will go under a global observation. The organizations are facing the challenge of being global even though reacting to local conditions. Due to this and many other reasons (such as terror attacks, financial crisis) there will be a huge emphasis on the corporate social and environmental responsibility in future companies' business strategies. (Top predictions 2008.)

According to Gardiner (1996), changed labour markets will bring various challenges to today's managers when they are trying to respond the changes of organizational environment. Thus, twenty-first-century managers need to have a totally new managerial mind-set, problem-solving skills and leadership styles in order to face these new demands. (Gardiner 1996, 25.)

### 3 AGE MANAGEMENT

According to Gardiner (1996), the companies in the past used to have highly hierarchical management style, where decisions were made by the boss and the employees just accepted them without questioning. This kind of use of authority meant, that the workforce were not entrusted with any responsibility either. The job tasks hardly ever varied, meaning the employee might have worked in the same department for his/her whole career. This obsolete managerial mind-set also considered socializing with the employees to be waste of time and diversity at the workplace as a problem. (Gardiner 1996, 52-57.)

Gardiner (1996) believes, that mind-sets are reflecting the current values and needs of organizations and societies. Thus, those old management philosophies, which might have worked in the past, should be modified to reflect the mind-sets of future. This new world of ours values attitude of openness to change and managerial skills of flexibility and proactive problem solving. (Op.cit. p.57.) In other words, if the companies are able to alter their management techniques to respond the needs of every generation, they are more likely to succeed in business world.

The term *age management* has become a hot topic, since the employees are nowadays expecting more from their work and the actual management. According to Kiviranta (2010, 13), age management means the managers are able to acknowledge and understand the differences between the employees' age and experience and then apply suitable techniques to develop the strengths of different generations.

Then, how to know when there is a need for age management in the company? As mentioned in the previous chapter, those demographic changes, which have now enabled so many generations to work at the same time in the same workplace, have made age management a necessary part of almost every organization's operations. If the workforce consists of many generations, it naturally means age management should be applied. In addition to those, Kiviranta (2010, 54) identifies few probable occasions, when age management should become one emphasis on organization's

management. (See Table 1.)

TABLE 1. The assessment of the need of age management (Kiviranta 2010, 54)

1.	The average age of the employees is high.
2.	Appreciable part of the managers is going to retire in the next 2 to 3 years.
3.	The company is not able to hire enough young employees.
4.	The company cannot find enough experienced workers to replace the retiring people.
5.	There are not enough resources and knowledge on how to spread the know-how of the employees.
6.	The company is not able to take into account the ageing of people when organizing the work.
7.	The managers do not have enough knowledge on how to support co-operation between the people of various ages.
8.	There are not enough time and resources for orientation of the young people.
9.	There are not enough career planning and development projects for people aged over 50 years.
10.	The company does not know how to keep the ageing people as active and developing individuals.

Managers are able to benefit multiple ways by applying age management as part of their management strategies. According to Kiviranta (2010), if managers know how to manage people from different generations, they are able to increase productivity, well-being and retention of their employees. To achieve all those objectives, the managers should keep their employees motivated, ensure their personal growth in job and make sure the work community is supportive and functional enough. (Kiviranta 2010, pp. 33-35,49.)

Prerequisites for age management are built on the strategic level of the company. If the managers do not see the benefits and significance of age management as being part of the success of the company, there will not be enough actions made in practise. (Op.cit. p.72.)

Kiviranta (2010) notes, that is it highly important to apply all age management techniques as versatile as possible. Those tools include e.g. following things;

- identifying person's motives and competences and utilizing them
- respecting different generations
- age neutral attitudes, meaning focusing more on the actual competences of a person and ability to work rather than age
- sharing the tacit knowledge of elderly people
- developing the skills and competences of an individual
- empowerment
- balancing the demands and resources of an individual
- appreciative listening
- social support (op.cit. p.48-49).

## 4 GENERATIONS

*“A generation is defined by what it thinks, feels, and experiences and not just by dates of birth.” (Zemke, Raines & Filpczak 2000, 64.)*

McCrinkle and Wolfinger (2009) define a generation as a group of people, who were born in the same era, shaped and influenced by the same times. They usually go through the same events, trends and developments of that particular time. Those historical and cultural events, which person will experience during his/her formative years, no doubt will have an effect on individual's values, personality and world views. (McCrinkle & Wolfinger 2009, 2; The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 1.)

However, it is rather difficult to form these different cohorts of people. For example

people who were born just at the beginning or end of a generation, might have adapted the values and attitudes of two different generations. (The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 1.) In addition, even though generalizing groups and creating stereotypical characteristics might be useful for the managers, one has to remember that they do not always apply for each individual. For example, although many Gen Xers were described as 'latchkey kids' (see the chapter *The generation X*), there might be few of those who had their stay-at-home mothers and fathers during their teen years and therefore were not so highly affected by loneliness.

The author focused on the values and working methods of four different generations, which are now present in the workforce: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Y and Z. The generation of Traditionalists (born before 1945) was purposely left out, since they are no longer as big part of the workforce as other generations. That being said, also many Baby Boomers are currently retiring, but the author decided to keep them as part of the research, since the trend in Europe shows that retirement age is rising, thus Boomers might be staying in the workforce longer. Gen Z on the other hand is increasing by number by each year, meaning that even though they are not a huge segment of labour force yet, they will be.

#### **4.1 Baby Boomers**

The generation of Baby Boomers were born right after the World War 2, between the years 1946 and 1964. The World War 2 had a huge impact to population growth all over the world. According to Zemke, Raines and Filpczak (2000), there was a new kind of an attitude towards child rearing, where people thought it more as a pleasure and a hobby, instead of economic necessity. Parents of boomers devoted their lives to cherish and indulge their children. Consequently, Baby Boomers naturally grew up in more optimistic and positive times than before. (Zemke, Raines & Filpczak 2000, 64-65.)

Erickson (2010, 63) claims the Boomers have had to compete about everything throughout their lives. Because of the large number of Boomers, they have had to fight

for the jobs, promotions and success in life. This has naturally affected on Boomers' values and working methods, creating a more achievement-oriented and career-focused mind-sets for them.

*“For this generation, 'work ethic' and 'worth ethic' are synonyms.” (Zemke et. al. 2000, 77.)*

Baby Boomers' self-image is clearly attached to their work-performance. They are evaluating themselves based on their role and success in working life. When accomplishing job tasks, they want to be rewarded with status symbols, such as higher job titles, increased salary, large private office spaces and so on. Boomers have also a desperate need for proving themselves to their veteran parents. These issues are clearly mirrored to the actual work community; this is a generation, who takes pleasure in pleasing other people and wants to be liked by others. (Zemke et al. 2000, 77; Kyles 2005.) When compared with younger generations, Boomers differ a lot in a sense of how they prioritize things. Since they were so focused on creating impressive careers, they left their family to come second. This naturally had some serious implications for their children, Gen Xers, which the author will describe on next chapter.

The defining events taken place in Baby Boomers' formative years were space race, rock and roll, and women's liberation. All of these had an impact on Boomers' mentality, making them more idealistic, driven and optimistic. As their assets in the workplace can be defined team-perspective and dedicated approach. Boomers also have the experience to get the job done properly, avoiding those pitfalls, which come with gaining that experience. (The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009,1-2; Johnson & Johnson 2010, 56.)

Boomers with their experience, although are a great asset for the company, might cause some problems as well. Johnson and Johnson (2010, 61) contend Boomers to be slightly reluctant when it comes to change. With the technology developing in high-speed nowadays, the organizations have to keep up and advance their systems and approaches as well to stay in competition. Therefore, this sort of reluctance has to be overcome somehow, if the company is eager to stay credible among its rivals.

Baby Boomers expect their managers to be caring, honest and competent. They want to be treated as equals and led with a warm and mission-defined leadership style. (The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 2.) One big mistake made by managers nowadays is that they might leave the Boomers working alone, trusting the experience at the workplace will ensure them the ability to get along on their own without much interference. However, managers should remember they are a team-oriented generation and have usually more to contribute than anyone else. Thus, it is essential to include Boomers to team processes and organizational politics. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 58.)

Boomers are going to retire from working life in few years from now, but still the generation will be actively participating in the society. It is important for rest of us to understand, that they still want to be needed in life. As Johnson and Johnson (2010) state, “they have experience that can provide historical perspective for the decisions you face.” Their skills and expertise have been gained through long life experience. Hence, it is vital to capture all the valuable knowledge that they have before the retirement. (Op.cit. p.73.)

If the managers are not yet considering age management issues, they should start soon. In 2008 the retirement accounts and stock investments went through an economic recession, which means that many Boomers have had to postpone their retirement plans and continue working for some time to come. This continued presence of top-level older employees might cause some disputes, since younger generations are already craving for promotions. (Op.cit. p.56.) The managers should not only focus on how to handle those disputations among the staff members, but also on matter how to get most out of the Boomers before they leave. Johnson and Johnson (2010, 57) suggest, that mentoring and training a replacement is one way of ensuring the valuable knowledge will transfer. On the chapter *Bridging the generation gaps*, the author will go more in depth on how e.g. mentoring and training can be one part of reducing age gaps among the employees.

## 4.2 The generation X

The generation X was born between the years 1965 and 1980. After 1960, the trend of baby boom had passed. Now the women were given choices when planning their future; they could work or develop their skills otherwise. This new kind of a trend meant that women were having fewer children and later in life. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 79- 80.) This naturally affected on the number of Gen Xers, them being the smallest generation compared with others.

Gen Xers had to survive through different disruptive events during their teen years, such as rising divorce rates and massive corporate layoffs of the late 1980s (Erickson 2010, 66; The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 2). The term 'latchkey kid' describes well how Gen Xers spent their adolescence. Not only were their parents' unravelled relationships causing trouble in their lives, but also the economy was forcing both of the parents to work, which meant that many Xers were left alone at home. (Zemke et al. 2000, 98.) All of these incidents had powerful implications to Gen Xers attitudes and behaviour.

*“In the words of many an Xer, their parents 'lived to work'. Xers simply want to 'work to live'.” (Zemke et al. 2000, 99.)*

Whereas Baby Boomers put work ahead of family issues, Gen X chooses other way around. They clearly do not want their children to go through the same kind of childhood as 'latchkey kids' as they did. Since they have witnessed their parents to work day and night, they are more eager to choose quality of life instead of putting in long hours to achieve a great career. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 96; Timmermann 2007, 27.) This naturally means that if managers want to make Gen Xers to work few extra hours, they need to give logical explanations on why it is necessary to do so. Furthermore, if those overtime duties could have been avoided with better management, Gen Xers might feel quite resentful and reluctant towards the managers. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 80.)

Whereas Baby Boomers were more of team players at the workplace, the Gen Xers



feel quite the opposite. According to Johnson and Johnson (2010, 86) and Quinn (2010), during their adolescence, the Gen Xers had to learn how to solve their problems alone and find their own way of doing things, since their parents were often absent. This has had a huge impact on Gen Xers working habits, making them more independent and self-reliant employees when compared to other generations. Johnson and Johnson (2010) claim, that when managing Gen Xers, the best results are gained if they are let to fly solo. Best way managers can support Gen X employees is by providing them adequate training and resources to do their work and setting clear standards what is expected, and then leave them to perform alone. (Op.cit. pp.90-93.)

However, even though Gen Xers might prefer to work alone, it does not mean that they cannot work well in a team. Johnson and Johnson (2010, 83) suggest, that a successful Gen X group consist of ambitious people, each with their own talent that contributes to achieving the goal. In other words, the word 'team' should be replaced with 'a group of individuals'. This way all group members have a freedom to complete their part as they wish, keeping the ultimate goal of the work in mind.

Gen Xers prefer to be evaluated based on their own individual merits, rather than on the performance of their co-workers or other possible team members (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 88). When it comes to rewarding methods, they could not care less off job titles and other status symbols. Kyles (2005) claims the ultimate rewards for Gen Xers to be opportunities to develop themselves and autonomy at the workplace.

According to Arnold and Williams (2008), since Gen Xers had to witness their parents' lay-offs after years of dedicated service, they are not really loyal towards the companies they work for. Therefore, they might change to a better job, if those sorts of opportunities occur. (Arnold & Williams 2008, 18.) Since Gen Xers are so distrustful towards authority, it naturally brings challenges towards employers on the matter how to retain them.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2010), usually the companies, which offer benefits and working conditions appealing to Gen Xers' sense of independence and their desire to balance work and home, have succeeded in retaining them.

Telecommuting, working from home, job splitting, working part time – those are the

key words when trying to attract Gen Xers. Also by investing for their personal growth and job variation can help to engage Gen Xers better for the same workplace. (Op.cit. pp.100-101.)

From their managers, Gen Xers expect direct, competent and informal leadership style with results-oriented mind-set (The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 2). Gen Xers tend to have little respect for organizational protocol, especially if it does not make any sense to them, which means the managers should focus on explaining the reasons behind the rules and decisions to avoid possible frustration of Gen X employees. Keeping in mind the Gen Xers' scepticism towards authority, the managers also should treat them more as peers than subordinates in order to avoid possible disputes. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 93, 104.)

### 4.3 The generation Y

By the 1980s, those Baby Boomers, who had pursued their career instead of having children, were now realizing that their biological clock was ticking. Since the divorce rates were hovering as well, many Boomers were remarrying and starting new families. These people were the parents of Generation Y, born between 1980 and 1995. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 117.)

These Baby Boomers, who waited until their mid-30s to marry and have children, were committed to raise great children, unlike parents of Gen X, who often left their kids to fend for themselves by putting work ahead of family issues. The parents of Gen Y wanted to participate in their children's lives in any way they could, by e.g. getting involved to their hobbies and school. (Op.cit. p.118.)

According to Johnson and Johnson (2010, 123), this parental nurturing had an effect on Gen Y. They are likely to be more educated and better grounded than previous generations. They also tend to have better self-esteem, since their parents commended their value constantly. Because of this kind of parenting style, Gen Yers are also used to get continuous feedback and comments on their behaviour. This fact comes in handy for the managers when they are figuring out ways to retain Gen Y members.

According to Vesterinen and Suutarinen (2011), the employers should provide frequent communication and reassurance to keep the Yers motivated and involved. Also by relating to them and valuing their efforts and contribution, the manager is able to get most out of Gen Yers. (Vesterinen & Suutarinen, 2011; Kyles 2005.)

*“The computer is as intimidating to Generation Y as the toaster is to older generations.” (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 129.)*

This generation is known for their tech-savvy skills. They use high technology for everything in their everyday lives, from taking a picture to contacting to their friends and searching information. High-speed technology has also contributed for its own part to Gen Yers' tolerance for waiting. At the workplace they might be too impatient and crave for juicier job assignments even at the early stage of their career. (Ball & Gotsill 2011, 31.)

Like the Generation of Baby Boomers, also Gen Yers are collaborators at the work place. Arnold and Williams (2008, 19) consider the amounts of group work at school, organized sports and those extracurricular activities being the cause of this kind of mentality. At the workplace, Gen Yers seek for the same sense of belonging. They want to interact with their fellow workers and be part of the corporate culture. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 141.)

According to Kane (n.d), Generation Y being in their 20s, is currently the fastest growing segment of today's labour force. They are multi-taskers with optimistic and creative minds. When wanting to engage this generation, the employers should focus on creating team-oriented environment with proper technology and challenging tasks. When Yers are kept busy with multiple activities, they will perform well. (Arnold & Williams 2008, 19.)

One way to draw Gen Yers attention is by focusing on green issues. Social responsibility of companies has already become a hot topic, and it will only increase its' importance in future. Energy consumption, water and air pollution, carbon footprints, child labour- all highly important factors for Gen Yers when they are deciding which company to work for and stay loyal to. (Johnson & Johnson 2010,

134.)

As employees, Gen Yers expect openness, honesty and fairness in return from their trust. They want to know the expectations and matters relating to work conditions, such as work hours, payment and possible pitfalls. The actual job needs to be meaningful to them and employers have to offer a possibility for personal growth. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 127; Vesterinen & Suutarinen, 2011.)

Gen Yers want their jobs to accommodate their personal lives. The jobs need to be flexible enough to provide telecommuting options and abilities to go part-time or even leave the workforce temporarily when children are coming along. (Armour 2005.) Unlike previous generations, who actually made difference between work and personal life, Generation Y wants totally blend them into one.

According to Armour (2005), Gen Yers “--believe in their own self-worth and value enough that they are not shy about trying to change the companies they work for.” They are confident, ambitious and achievement-oriented. Gen Yers seek constantly new challenges and are not afraid of questioning authority. (Vesterinen & Suutarinen, 2011.)

From their leaders Gen Yers expect motivational and educational approach. They also want their managers to be organized and able to coach them when needed. (The multigenerational workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success 2009, 2.) Managers should also bear in mind Gen Yers eagerness of relating to groups. Johnson and Johnson (2010, 143) claim, that by creating opportunities to bond, managers are able to engage Gen Yers even better.

#### **4.4 The future generation- Gen Z**

Generation Linkster, also known as Generation Z or Internet Generation, is considered to born from 1995 to present. The parents of Gen Z primarily consist of Gen Xers, but there might be also youngest Baby Boomers or even the oldest members of Generation Y included among them. Since Gen Z are currently entering the workforce

as part-time and summer workers besides the school, other generations have already got a glimpse on how they will integrate in the workforce. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 181; Generation Z.)

*“A marked difference between Generation Y and Generation Z is that members of the former remember life before the take-off of mass technology, while the latter have been born completely within it.” (Generation Z)*

Generation Linksters' technological skills are in a totally different level, than previous generations had. According to Johnson & Johnson (2010), they have used internet, cell phones and other equipment since they were toddlers. They have incorporated technology as a primary tool of their communication with each other and the world. (Op.cit. pp.184-185.) Trunk (2009) believes that since Gen Zers are so acquainted with technology, they will be more effective and smarter in processing information than previous generations.

As a downside of all this virtual interaction, Gen Zers' social skills might be lacking. They might have avoided some of the difficult face-to-face encounters of life by solving situation in virtual communication. As an employer, it is important to provide training to improve the business skills and face-to-face conversations of Gen Z members, so that they are more prepared to meet the needs of work environment. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 185-186.)

Besides the technological matters, also the environmental issues are a big part of Linksters' values. Gen Z's lifestyle is brimming with environmental awareness and they expect the companies to prioritize the same global welfare issues. Thus, it will become more and more important for organizations to build positive and trusted cultures to attract Gen Z members. (Johnson & Johnson 2010, 189; Ross 2011.)

Johnson and Johnson (2010) suggest that managers should keep in mind the Gen Z's stage of life when employing them. Since they are essentially still kids, their parents might be heavily involved. Therefore, the employers should accommodate not only the needs of the Gen Z, but also the needs of their parents. (Op.cit. pp.183-184.)

In many ways, Gen Zers are like their predecessors, Gen Yers. They also have a huge concern over the planet and are tightly connected to their parents. Thus, they might have similar kinds of expectations and needs for the workplace. However, only time will tell how well they will truly adapt to work environment and whether or not the attitudes and working methods of their parents, Gen Xers, will have an influence. Johnson and Johnson (2010, 202) suggest, that by giving positive experiences for Gen Z this early on, will affect on how they perceive your company and feel towards working in future. Whether one likes it or not, they will bring their own mind-sets to work community in near future, which means now it is time for the managers to start preparing.

## 5 BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAPS

To recap, one aim of this study was to figure out management techniques, which could be applied to match the needs of every generation. Since the needs and expectations of each generation differ quite a lot from each other, it is impossible for the manager to have only one way to respond. Therefore, in author's opinion, it is important the manager to remain as flexible as possible, to be able to provide right kind of support for each *individual* and focus more on decreasing possible negative attitudes, which employees might have towards each other.

One of the main issues of this study was to characterize different generations; help managers to comprehend how generations differ from each other on their expectations and attitudes towards work. It certainly helps people to acknowledge the differences between each other, when they see where the other one is coming from. However, it is extremely important to understand, that generalizing groups and creating stereotypes might be also harmful, and even reinforce the negative attitudes. Therefore, the author wants to highlight the fact that managers should get to know their employees by *individuals* rather than these generational cohorts. In addition, if every employee is motivated and treated as an *individual*, those stereotypes of different generations might just lose their meaning.

According to Kiviranta (2010), employees will feel more appreciated and valued in the company, if the work tasks are based on their strengths and know-how, and forgetting about presumptions given by the age. However, managers should bear in mind, that this type of evaluation of a person has to be enough diversified. Young people usually have the education required, but not necessarily the experience. With practised people it is generally other way around; they might be lacking a good, up-to-date education, but have a deeper understanding and know-how. (Kiviranta 2010, 52-53.) Also Ilmarinen (2005) claims these age neutral attitudes to be essential when wanting to become a generationally savvy company. However he adds that not only do the managers need to get rid of prejudices, but also the employees themselves need to be aware of their competences. Especially elderly people tend to have a groundless negative picture of the effects of ageing to e.g. memory and ability to learn new and thus they are not confident of their capabilities or have enough courage to educate themselves. (Ilmarinen 2005, 33-36.)

One major part of successful age management is trying to bring individuals together, making them work side by side, enabling them to appreciate the knowledge and skills they might be lacking, and thus learn from each other. By increasing contact between the members of different generations, the tension between them might release and people might start to perceive each other more pleasant and work towards the mutual goal.

There have been identified few different management techniques, which might reduce age gaps by connecting and bonding people with different backgrounds.

- 1) Firstly, the manager should avoid myths and stereotypes; there is a difference between respecting differences of individuals and labelling them. Moreover, these age neutral attitudes of superiors will shape the atmosphere of the whole working environment.
- 2) Increasing communication, as well as encouraging interaction and collaboration among the employees are big factors, which ultimately will have an effect on resolving the possible conflicts. Open communication will also help to anticipate and surface the possible generational conflicts, before they grow too big.

- 3) By creating diverse work teams, the manager is able to avoid age pools and transfer ideas and knowledge across the whole organization. Mentoring and reverse-mentoring are excellent ways to share knowledge cross-generational. Not only will it help to transfer the valuable tacit knowledge from Boomers, but it will also bring people together.
- 4) Remaining flexible. Understanding the needs of different generations and offering the right programmes and benefits to retaining them. (Whitacre 2007; Kyles 2005; Greencard 2011; Zemke et al. 2000.)

Flexibility is the key word for future managers. Managing multigenerational workforce effectively means that managers know how to deal with each employee in different situations, as well as having a thorough understanding of the workforce needs and wants. In other words, their leadership style needs to be situationally varied. Naturally it helps to take the generational status of the person into account, but ultimately is all about those competences and experience of that particular individual, which determine the person's expectations and level of support s/he needs.

However, there might sometimes occur intergenerational problems and conflicts, though managers would try their best to avoid them. In those occasions, it is important the manager to stay unbiased. Johnson and Johnson (2010) have produced guidelines how to proceed when generational conflicts arise. The key issues they highlight include good listening of both parties, empathizing, and contributing both sides into the solution. It is also essential to consider generational factors, which might influence the situation, such as values and communication methods. (Op.cit. pp.226-230.)

## **6 HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN FINLAND**

MaRa- organization works as a trade and labor market association of the hospitality industry in Finland. According to their web-sites, travel and restaurant sector in Finland not only accounts for 3,4 % of the nation's GDP, but it also employs some 130 000 professionals, meaning 5% of the Finnish workforce. (MaRa Ry 2011.) Hence, hospitality industry indeed is one of the biggest elements in the service sector in



Finland.

MaRa is publishing frequently specific numbers, like volume and value of the sales of whole Finland, to demonstrate how well or poor the industry is doing at the moment. These will also give an insight on how the economy and trends are affecting on growth and employment opportunities in hospitality industry.

There have been some drops in sales lately due to a changed purchasing behaviour of the customers, which has caused troubles to many industries. Unfortunately, hospitality industry is no exception here. Mara Ry just recently published numbers from the year 2011, and it seems the hotel and restaurant industry has not really recovered from the recession yet. According to them, the demand and sales will not really grow in 2012 either. (Mara Ry 2011.)

Despite the recent setbacks caused by the recession, hospitality industry has good prospects and potential to grow in future. According to MaRa (2011), versatile job tasks, team-oriented work community, international career opportunities and close connections to the customers make the industry appealing for future workforce. One also has to remember, that the actual need for travel and restaurant sector in Finland will not be disappearing anytime soon, on the contrary it will keep employing people years to come.

The employees of hospitality industry are relatively young when comparing to other industries. According to Järvinen, Vataja and Tuominen (2011), this can be seen especially in restaurant business, where 40 percent of the employees are under 30-year-olds. However, the age of managers and specialists of the industry is a bit higher than on average. (Järvinen, Vataja and Tuominen 2011.)

One significant feature of hospitality industry is the seasonality, which has made temporary employees a huge segment of workforce. This will bring challenges for managers on the matter how to find and retain the talented people and create a well-functioning cohort from people, who are changing constantly. Also the customers' expectations on service quality have risen, which means the managers need to put on emphasis on collaboration and teamwork even more in order to get to the required

level of the quality.

## **7 RESTAURANT SALITINTTI**

Salitintti operates as a main restaurant of spa hotel Rantasipi Laajavuori. This extensive, large restaurant provides space up to 550 persons with massive windows revealing view outside. Besides catering the breakfast for the hotel guests, they prepare various buffet services and a la carte- dishes to attract their customers. (Rantasipi Laajavuori-websites 2011.)

Restaurant Salitintti has one restaurant manager and three shift managers. They employ 12 full-time employees, 7 part-time and 3 employees via Restel's personnel bank. In addition to those, they hire few extra persons every now and then, from 3 persons even up to 30, depending on the night in question. (Flink 2012.) Rantasipi Laajavuori, like so many other companies in Jyväskylä, also co-operates with many education institutes by hiring trainees. According to Flink (2012), restaurant Salitintti has approximately 10 trainees in a year.

The age division between the employees of Salitintti is quite vast. The oldest workers being in their sixties work beside 22-year-olds. In addition to this, one cannot forget about trainees, who might even belong to Gen Z nowadays.

Restaurant Salitintti's personnel is a great example of the kind of work community, to which many businesses in Finland are gradually turning into. Besides being multigenerational, the staff is multicultural. There are various nationalities represented in Salitintti, such as Turkish, Russian, Portuguese and Chinese. To avoid all the clashes, which these different cultural dimensions might bring, the managers need to have adequate knowledge over different cultures and communication methods suitable for each individual.

According to Flink (2012), the managers of restaurant Salitintti feel they know their employees personally. When people share the same interests towards life, it enables them to bond and get to know each other outside the work premises. This sort of an

open atmosphere will most definitely enhance the co-operation and make many daily routines and projects a lot easier to accomplish.

## **8 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

### **8.1 The goal of the research**

The goal of this thesis project was to find out, whether or not restaurant Salitintti is a generationally savvy company. Since the staff comprises of different generations, there might have occurred some generational clashes among them. By conducting this sort of a study, the researcher wanted to find out, whether or not age management had been covered already by the managers and if they had been able to create a coherent group of people, where generational differences are considered as enrichment instead of a problem.

The other objective of the research was to find out what sort of differences lay between the age groups and if generational characteristics described in theory part would apply among Salitintti's employees. The author hoped the questionnaire to reveal how different generations in Salitintti feel towards work; their expectations and attitudes towards workplaces and management. The atmosphere of the company was also evaluated in order to find out the possible age gaps among the staff.

The following three research questions were examined in order to find out whether or not Salitintti is a generationally savvy company:

1. Are there generational differences between the employees of Salitintti?
2. Are there any age gaps between the employees of Salitintti?
3. What expectations do they have towards management and how they perceive the current management?

## 8.2 Research methods

After the researcher has decided the topic, defined the objectives and research questions, it is time to consider the procedures how to collect the needed evidence. Bell (2010) reminds that there can be several methods used to collect the data. Using qualitative approach does not mean there cannot be also quantitative features in the same study. Each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses, so the researcher should get acquainted with different styles before deciding which one to use. Ultimately the decisions should be based on which methods are best for the particular purposes and bring clarity to the research problems. (Bell 2010, 6,117.)

Quantitative researchers usually collect facts by using quantitative methods, e.g. numerical data. They use conclusions from previous studies, former theories and statistical analysing as their tools. These sorts of procedures are likely to produce quantified and generalizable results. (Bell 2010; Hirsijärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2009.)

Qualitative researches on the other hand provide outlook on individuals' perceptions on world. They are more comprehensive and data is usually collected in natural, real-life conditions. Instead of testing theories or hypothesis, qualitative studies aim to examine material more many-sided and detailed. (Bell 2010; Hirsijärvi et al. 2009)

Questionnaire is one way of collecting information. It is an effective research method, since it saves time and effort from the researcher. Research material can be vast; one can include a lot of respondents and questions in the same study. (Hirsijärvi et al. 2009, 195.) However, like Bell (2010) notes, there are several issues, which should be addressed in order to conduct a successful questionnaire. Those issues include a great discipline in the selection of questions, in question writing, in the design, piloting, distribution and return of the questionnaires. (Op.cit. p.140)

Multiple choice questions provide responses, which are easy to analyse afterwards. They will also decrease the amount of diverse responses, which will help the researcher to compare the results. (Hirsijärvi et at. 2009, 201.) Likert scales are

devices used to discover the strength of feeling or attitude towards the given statements. They can be useful, if the wording is clear enough and there are no unjustified claims made about from the results. (Bell 2010, 146.)

Open questions on the other hand provide the respondents the possibility to express their feelings in their own words. They will point out the things, which actually are the most important and central in respondents' thought. They will also show the knowledge of the respondent on the subject in question. (Hirsijärvi et al. 2009, 201.)

Hirsijärvi et al. (2009) list few things, which a researcher should bear in mind when designing the questionnaire.

- 1) Avoid obscure statements. The words such 'often', 'usually' and 'most' are ambiguous and hence should be avoided.
- 2) Offer a choice of 'no opinion' for the respondents.
- 3) Avoid double questions.
- 4) Ask specific questions rather than general ones. This way one can avoid misinterpretations.
- 5) Use multiple choices instead of 'agree/disagree'-allegations.
- 6) Consider the amount and order of questions. (Op.cit. pp.202-203.)

Since the aim of this particular research was to collect information on the attitudes and perceptions of the respondents, the author decided to use questionnaire as a method to collect the results. The enquiry was quantitative in nature, aside from few open questions, which would give qualitative data to be analysed. The author felt, that this was the best way to get honest answers as well, since the respondents would stay anonymous.

At first, the author considered interviews as a primary data collection method, but time being a limited resource, decided to use questionnaires instead. The interviews would have enabled the author to get only handful of responses, whereas questionnaires would give a much bigger data to analyse. This also reduced the risk of getting individual's single opinions, when the idea was to study the attitudes of the generational cohorts.

The author divided the questionnaire (Appendixes 1 & 2) in three different sections in order to get answers to all research questions. The purpose of the first part (question numbers 1-6) was to get information on generational values and working methods. The second part (question numbers 7-9) focused on getting information on Salitintti's atmosphere and revealing the possible age gaps whereas the third and final part (question numbers 10-11) covered all the management issues.

The questionnaire consisted of 22 questions; 4 open questions and 18 multiple choice questions. There were altogether 14 questions with Likert scales, thus the author decided to group them according to the themes mentioned above. This naturally truncated the questionnaire a bit and made it easier for the respondents to answer.

On 19<sup>th</sup> of March, there were 25 copies distributed to the employees of Salitintti; 20 Finnish ones and 5 versions in English. The aim was to get as much responses as possible. The respondents were given one week's time to fill out the questionnaires, which the author felt was reasonable time considering the simplicity and length of the enquiry. However, one week turned out to be too short of a time period, so there were given five extra days for the respondents to answer.

After collecting the completed forms, the author started to examine the responses. The results were registered and analysed with the SPSS-software, which helped the author to create illustrative tables and diagrams in order to support the analysis.

## **9 RESULTS**

In this chapter, the author represents the results gained through the survey. The analysis follows the same logical order as in the questionnaire; starting from the beginning of the questionnaire and finishing in the last question.

The response rate was 52 per cent with 13 persons out of the ideal 25 responding to the questionnaire. Five out of the whole 13 respondents belonged to generation of Baby Boomers, two persons to Gen X and six last ones to Gen Y.

There were six persons, who had worked in Salitintti under a year, one person who had worked there for 1-2 years, three persons who had been inside the house for 2-5 years and four of whom had been employed for over 5 years. As expected, those who had been in Salitintti for a shorter period of time, were Gen Y members, whereas those who had worked there for longest, were Baby Boomers.

Five of the respondents were full-time workers, three part-time, two extras and three trainees. As above, also here the presupposed work roles turned out to be true. Extras and the trainees belonged to Gen Y, whereas most of the full-time and part-time workers consisted of Baby Boomers and Gen X members.

## 9.1 Generational characteristics

As mentioned in previous chapter, the aim of this first section was to provide information on generational values and working methods. The author also wanted to examine, whether or not the characteristics described in theory part would apply among the employees of Salitintti. Thus, she had a purpose of analysing the findings by focusing on one generation at a time. However, in order to actually get valid results, the research sample should have been bigger (see e.g. the number of Gen X). Therefore, the figures were made to represent the results of the whole group. Nevertheless, the author tried also to unveil the opinions of generational cohorts in the analysis process.

At the beginning of this section, there were four statements, in which the respondents used Likert scales to demonstrate how they feel towards the arguments. The author decided to leave only the extreme ends, *5 = strongly agree* and *1 = strongly disagree*, visible for the respondents in order to limit the amount of neutral opinions (number 3). Whether or not it actually worked as planned, one cannot be sure.

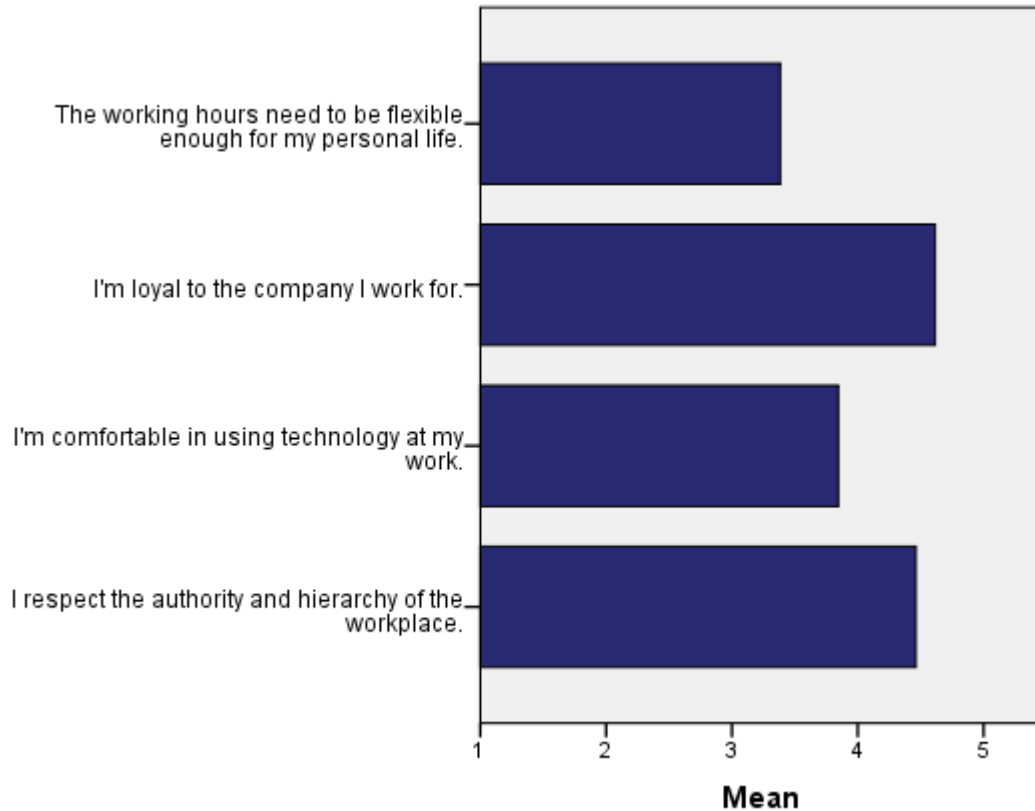


FIGURE 1. Generational characteristics

The figure 1 illustrates the means of these four statements. There were not really clear distinctions between the generations and surprisingly even inside the cohorts the scattering was huge. There were for example couple of Gen Yers, who clearly wanted the working hours to accommodate their personal lives, while others were stating the total opposite or were not really sure of their thoughts. Therefore, the author could not make any conclusions out of the findings of this first question.

### **Usually I prefer to work**

This was a multiple choice question with two options, *alone* and *as part of a team*. Since the theory suggests Gen Yers and Boomers to be more of team-players and Gen Xers to be more independent at the workplace, the author wanted to see if it would apply among Salintintti's employees.

All of the respondents, including the two Gen X members, answered the second option, *as part of a team*. Since the sample of Gen X members was such a small one, the results might indicate more their personal opinions rather than generational



perceptions. Furthermore, one feature of restaurant work is that one rarely works alone. Since the employees need to interact constantly, it might mean that only those personalities, who enjoy socialization, seek to work in this field.

### **Usually I prefer to work**

This question also had two options which to choose from: *with one assignment at a time* and *multitask*. Here the author expected the young ones to select the second option, since they were supposed to be excellent multitaskers.

Six of the respondents answered the option *with one assignment at a time* and seven persons the option *multitask*. However, the division of these responses was rather diffused. 3/6 of Gen Y members, 3/5 of Boomers and 1/2 of Gen Xers replied with *multitask*. Once again these results do not give any clear picture, if one generation particularly are multitaskers.

### **Important rewards for me in work**

There were altogether four different alternatives, from which the respondents were meant to choose the two most important ones. All of the respondents (13) answered to this question.

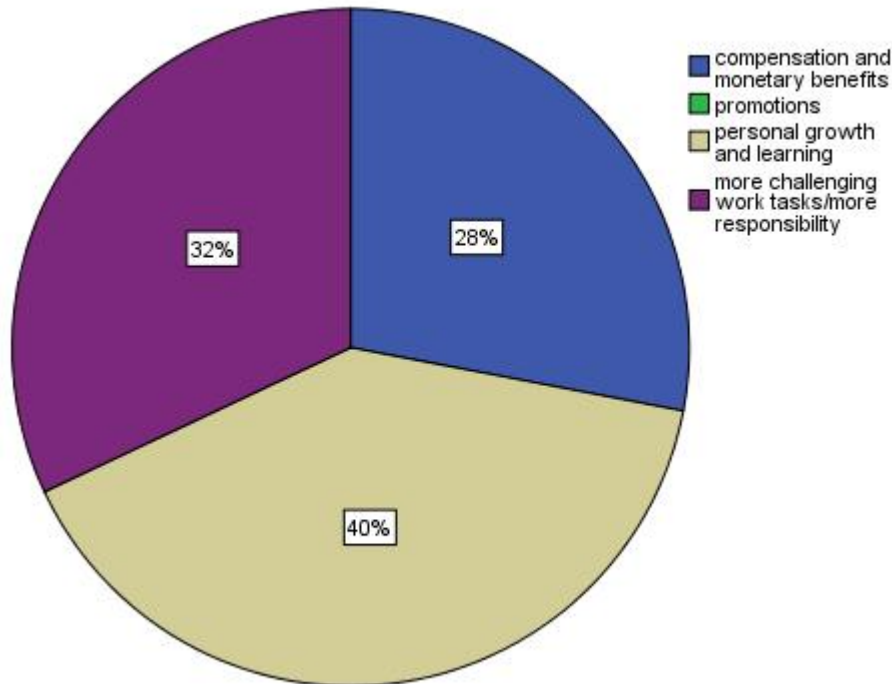


FIGURE 2. Important rewards for me in work

The figure above demonstrates the division between the options. As one can see, *personal growth and learning* and *more challenging work tasks/more responsibility* were picked by majority of the respondents. Also *compensation and monetary benefits* were highly important reward factors, whereas *promotions* did not get any votes.

All the Gen Yers (6) chose the option *personal growth and learning* as an important reward and majority of them (4) also picked *more challenging work tasks/more responsibility* as another important factor. The Boomers seemed to appreciate the same things; however, majority of them (3) chose *compensation and monetary benefits* as one important reward. Despite the small research sample, in this case the results might indicate the theory to be valid.

### **An appealing job for me includes..**

There were several work related things listed in this question and the respondents were meant to rank them according their appreciation list, from number 1=I appreciate the most to number 9= I appreciate the least. Some of the employees had understood the question wrong, or did not have time to consider the issues, since they had used a wrong scale e.g. from one to three. Unfortunately, the author was not able to use these

answers in the analysis process.



FIGURE 3. An appealing job for me includes..

The author was able to use 8 /13 of the replies, which included all the Gen Yers (6), one Gen X member and one of the Boomers. The figure 3 indicates the results. *Fun and innovative workplace* was listed as the most appealing factor, whereas *strict work ethic/clear rules on how things are done* was the least appreciated. Since majority of the respondents represent Gen Yers, the author could assume this question to correspond the theory quite well. It would have been interesting to see, if e.g. *security* or *strict work ethic* would have been listed higher, if there had been more Boomers in the analysis.

**What values do you expect the company to have? Do you feel restaurant Salitintti shares those same values?**

This open question seemed to be more difficult than the researcher expected. At the same time, it was actually the most interesting one to author's mind, and thus she was eager to read the results. The reason why author decided to ask this sort of an issue is that by choosing the correct values the company is able to attract the employees it might need. For instance, if the company is struggling in attracting and retaining young people, there might be a need for change of values. Hence, it is crucial to be aware of the values, which people of various ages expect.

There were three persons, who answered to this question. In the responses, there were mentioned issues of open communication, product- and production safety, employee appreciation and equality. The respondents felt these matters were already covered quite well in restaurant Salitintti, however they could invest even more to employee appreciation. In addition to these, there were three persons, who simply answered 'yes', which might mean they feel the restaurant is already up-to-date on issues concerning values.

## **9.2 Atmosphere/Age gaps**

In this second part the respondents were given a chance to evaluate the atmosphere of the workplace and reveal the possible age gaps. Also this part started off by statements with Likert scales. In this section and the following, the researcher did not focus anymore that much on generational opinions but analysed more the results of the whole group.

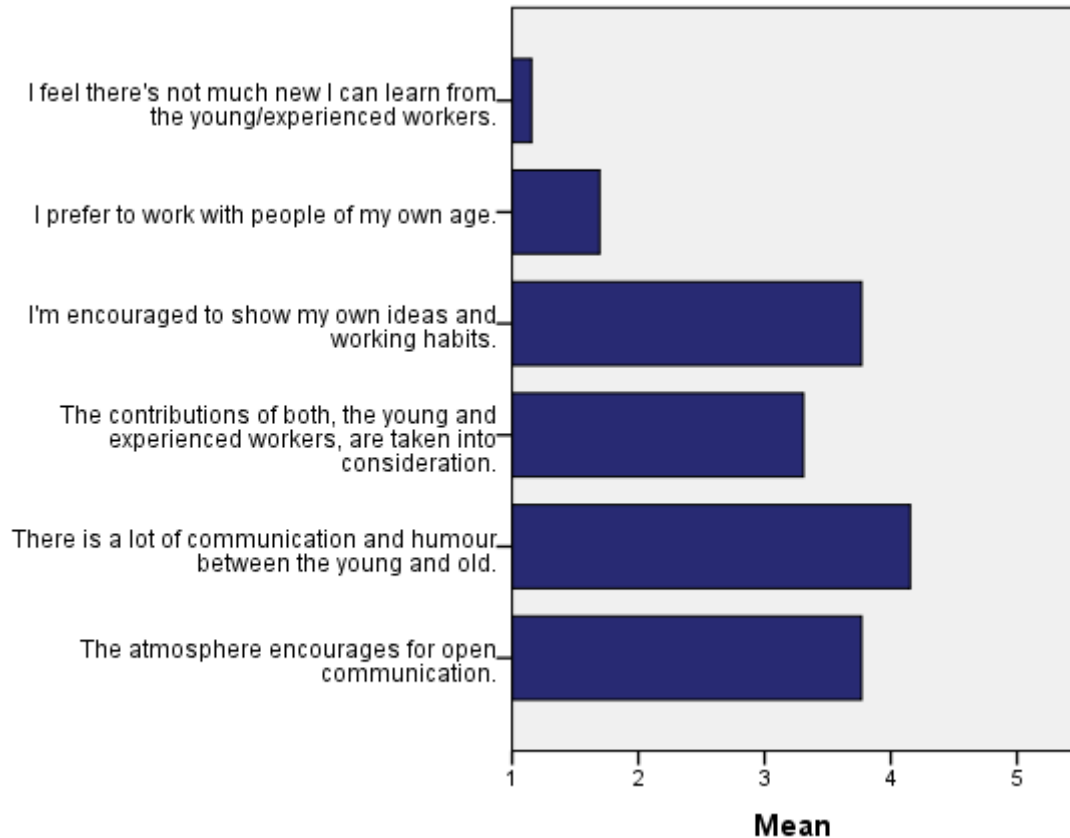


FIGURE 4. Atmosphere/Age gaps

The figure 4 shows the means of first six statements. Since all of the statements are listed above number 3, it indicates the employees to be generally happy with the atmosphere of restaurant Salitintti. The respondents also seem to be open-minded about age differences, since they enjoy working with each other and feel they can learn from one another regardless of the age.

**I have noticed there are some differences in working methods and attitudes towards the work depending on age.**

This statement had couple of options; the respondent could choose either *No* or *Yes*. If choosing the option *yes*, the respondent would be able to define the differences s/he had perceived at the workplace.

The majority of the respondents (11) stated *Yes*, as if they had witnessed some differences in working methods and attitudes. Seven out of these 11 persons were able to define the differences. The following issues were listed in the responses:

- the young people demand their breaks on time; older people tend to go when there is a quiet moment and no many customers around
- older people tend to have their own style of doing things, which sometimes feels the only correct way of doing things
- there are differences in punctuality, motivation, liability, humbleness, caring of the job outcome
- everyone has their own working styles; some people are not interested in doing the job properly
- “working methods do change over the time; both the young and old people have good ways of doing things”

Since restaurant Salitintti comprises of so many generations, it is only natural for them to confront different values and attitudes. It would be more alarming if they had not seen any differences. Hence, these results might indicate they are actually working together constantly and paying attention to one another. Once again, the author wants to highlight the fact, that it is not about how to minimize the generational differences, but how to live with them.

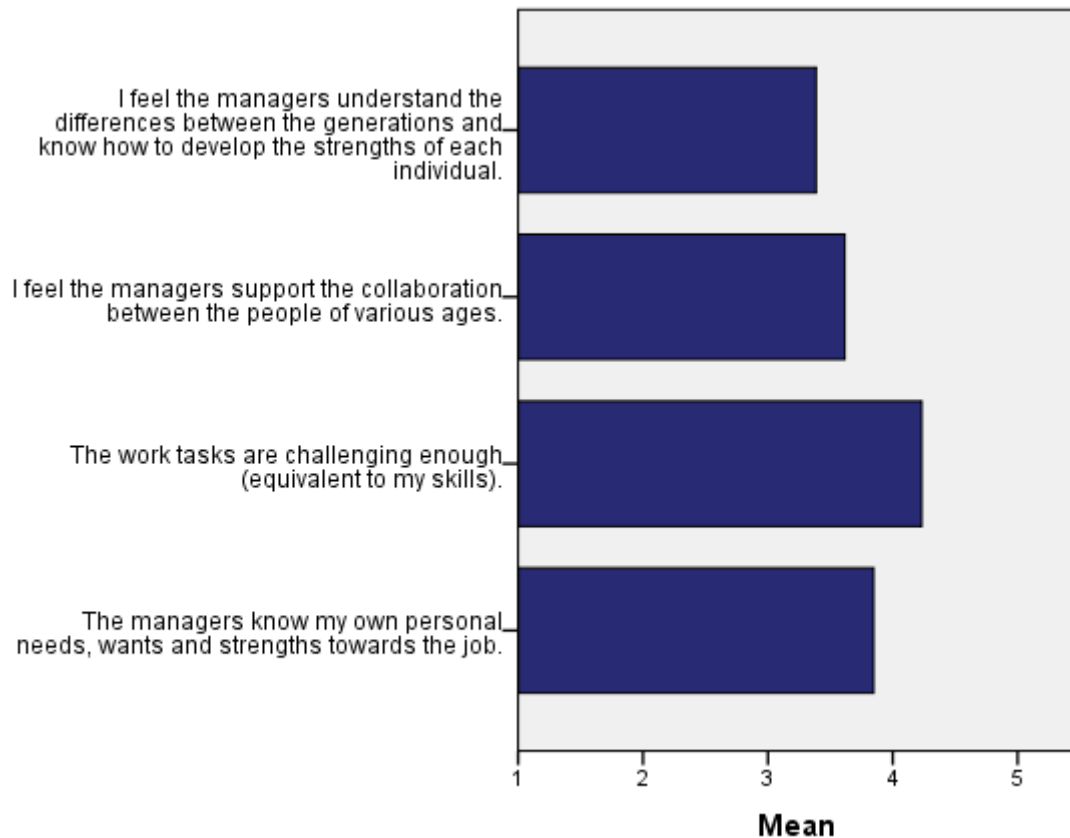
**There have occurred some clashes/disputes between the generations because of different values and work ethics.**

As above, also this argument did have two options, where the answer *yes* would lead to determining what sort of clashes the respondent had encountered.

Six persons out of 13 replied with *Yes*, and from them two persons were able to define what sort of clashed there had occurred. According to the responses, there had been some problems with punctuality and carelessness. Sometimes there had also occurred situations, where people were criticizing even though the person had done nothing wrong, only differently.

### 9.3 Management

The third and final part focused on management issues. Once again, there were few statements with Likert scales to measure on how the respondents feel towards the current situation.



THE FIGURE 5. Management

The figure 5 represents the findings. The results might indicate the respondents to be satisfied with the current management, regarding especially age management. All of the means of the statements were placed above number three.

One interesting thing the author noticed from the responses of this section, as from Atmosphere/Age gaps-section also, was that the experienced workers (Boomers and Gen Xers) were slightly favourable than Gen Yers when scaling the statements. This

might indicate the demands and expectations towards workplaces to have risen already with the presence of younger generations, like the theory suggests to happen in near future.

**What sort of expectations do you have towards management? Describe the ideal leader?**

This question was indeed one of the most interesting ones to author's mind. Nowadays the companies are competing of 'the employer of choice'-title and good managerial skills clearly are major factors influencing on that issue. In addition, since the theory suggests different generations to have diverse values and expectations, it would be nice to see if the expectations towards management are notably divergent.

In total of seven persons replied to this open question. There were no huge differences between the generations; the respondents all seemed to appreciate same things. The following issues stood out from the responses when inquiring the ideal leader:

- supportive and patient, but knows when to be also demanding
- understanding, caring, approachable
- treats everyone equally
- can predict and adapt to changes
- professionally skilled, assertive, takes responsible
- innovative and flexible
- takes feedback and can develop the work activities when needed, takes into account the needs of every employee
- explains the reasons behind the decisions
- the managers need to be present at the workplace when things happen

## **10 DISCUSSION**

The goal of the thesis project was to find out if restaurant Salitintti would belong to generationally savvy companies. There were three different research questions examined in order to find out the answer.



*Are there generational differences between the employees of Salitintti?*

Because of the small research sample, the author was not able to get comprehensive information on generational values and working methods. However, the results of some of the questions did seem to support the theory quite well. Therefore, the author could assume there to be at least some generational differences between the employees of Salitintti.

*Are there any age gaps between the employees of Salitintti?*

The results showed the respondents to acknowledge the differences between the generations, but they did not feel there were huge problems relating to age gaps. The atmosphere of restaurant Salitintti was also considered as generally good.

*What expectations do they have towards management and how they perceive the current management?*

The respondents seemed to be satisfied with the current management and they felt managers were already acquainted with age management issues.

Even though the research was not fully successful, the results might indicate the restaurant Salitintti to be up-to-date with age management issues. However, the results of the first part, which were meant to give useful information on different generations, were not a huge success. Therefore, it is questionable how other companies besides Salitintti can take advantage of the results of the thesis.

Although the author was not able to create any concrete development ideas or plans for restaurant Salitintti regarding age management, the thesis does provide some general thoughts about management techniques presented in the chapter *Bridging the generation gaps*. The research did however reveal some things, which they focus in future if wanting to stay up-to-date on retainment issues. The following ideas are based on the results gained through the survey and they also support the theory part.

The results showed especially the young employees to appreciate fun and innovative workplaces with variable work tasks. It also seems providing status symbols as

rewards is no longer enough, since the future generations want more from their work; the job needs to be meaningful for them and it needs to provide challenges and opportunities for personal growth. Therefore, if wanting to become 'the employer of choice' among these younger generations, restaurant Salitintti could focus on the issues mentioned above. Also by integrating the current values, such as *integrity*, *honesty*, *employee appreciation and empowerment*, *equality* and *innovativeness*, to the company's values, restaurant Salitintti is able to modify its image if needed.

The results revealed also employees' expectations towards the management. Although the management of Salitintti was considered as good, there is always room for development. Since the respondents seemed to appreciate modern leadership characteristics such as unbiased, inventive and supportive approaches, the managers could work on these features if needed.

All in all, the author was pleased with the whole thesis project, though the research did not go as well as planned. Despite the fact restaurant Salitintti might not be in need for age management tools, the author got to write her thoughts and ideas in the chapter *Bridging the generation gaps*. The topic is still very important and the author hopes it to at least rouse some curiosity and interest among the managers with multigenerational workforce.

## 10.1 Validity

This thesis project has many pitfalls, when considering about the validity. First of all, there were no very profound information sources available in Finnish, which means the author was compelled to use mainly English literature. Hence, a huge part of the theory, especially the Generations-chapter, is written from e.g. American or Australian point of view, which might not apply here in Finland. After all, the idea was to conduct a research in Finnish restaurant business, not a European or American one. However, the author assumes the theory to apply generally for all the Western countries, even though there are naturally some cultural issues, which have their own effects on generations.

Another thing affecting the reliability is the success of the research questionnaire. Obviously some the questions were misunderstood by the respondents, which was unfortunate for the analysis part. Whether the reason was the respondents' lack of interest towards the research, the author's ability to conduct understandable questions or simply a time related issue, one cannot be sure.

In retrospect, the author would have left a few questions out of the research. The question numbers two and three (Usually I prefer to work) were not useful at all. The author might have succeeded better if making the questions more specific. The nature of restaurant work should also have been taken into account when designing the questions. In addition, one can speculate if the research would have succeeded better if using interviews instead of questionnaires; the questions might have come across more comprehensible and the researcher might have got more out of the respondents.

## **10.2 Future**

While conducting the research, there aroused many new ideas for future studies in author's mind. Some of the issues mentioned in this chapter were also considered by other researchers and article writers, which only increases their importance.

The actual research part of this thesis focused to ponder issues relating to generational differences and age management more from the employees' point of view. However, usually at least the bigger companies have their own HRM-departments, which take care of matters related to personnel. Presumably they are up-to-date in latest news and innovations of the industry. Hence, it would be interesting to see how well Finnish HR-managers nowadays are acquainted with age management issues and if they have already started to prepare for the future.

There might be also a need for more cross-cultural studies. Western countries are familiar with the concepts of Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Yers, but what is the situation in the rest of the world? How do people form these cohorts e.g. Asia or Africa, where the demography is totally opposite? What sort of problems do they encounter and how do age management issues apply there?

One of the issues many writers and researchers were pondering about, was that do the values and expectations of different generations stay, or do they change with age, maturation and life stage? This was extremely interesting and uncomfortable issue at the same time, since the author started to question the importance of the thesis subject. After all, why to study the generational differences in values and expectations, if they change with the age anyway? This sort of a study would obviously last for many years and there should be conducted many of them to ensure the validity.

Naturally there would be also a need for Gen Z-studies. The author was not able to get any of Gen Z-members in the research, since the number of Gen Z employees at the moment is not that big. However, after few years the situation is totally different. Thus, it would be interesting to see, how they have integrated in the workforce and if they, with the help of Gen Yers, have been able to replace the Boomers as hoped.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1**

Hi!

I'm a third year Facility Management-student in JAMK University of Applied Sciences, writing my thesis at the moment. The idea is to study generational characteristics; concentrating on the values and working methods of different generations. This questionnaire will hopefully reveal whether or not restaurant Salitintti is able to meet the needs and expectations of people of various ages.

I hope you will consider your responses carefully in order for me to actually get truthful results on the situation. It will take around five to ten minutes to fill out the form. The respondents will stay anonymous through the whole process and I will promise to handle the results in the most confidential matter.

Thank you for your time and effort!

Annastiina Romo

Year of birth:

1946-1964

1965-1980

1981-1994

1995 -->

How long have you worked in restaurant Salitintti?

less than a year

1-2 years

2-5 years

over 5 years

Nature of employment contract:

full-time

part-time

trainee

extra

### 1. Generational characteristics

How do you feel towards the following statements?

5=strongly agree ... 1=strongly disagree

- I respect the authority and hierarchy of the workplace. 5 4 3 2 1
- I'm comfortable in using technology at my work. 5 4 3 2 1
- I am loyal to the company I work for. 5 4 3 2 1
- The working hours need to be flexible enough  
for my personal life. 5 4 3 2 1

### 2. Usually I prefer to work

alone

as part of a team



**3. Usually I prefer to work**

with one assignment at a time

multitask

**4. Important rewards for me in work**

Choose the two most important.

compensation and monetary benefits

promotions

personal growth and learning

more challenging work tasks/more responsibility

**5. An appealing job for me includes..**

Rank the following things from number 1 = I appreciate the most, to number 9= I appreciate the least. If you are not able to come up with anything to the open spot, you can leave it blank and mark it by number 9.

strict work ethic/clear rules on how things are done

freedom/possibility to do the work as I wish

security

variety of work tasks

meaningful work

getting continuous feedback and recognition

fun and innovative workplace

support and reassurance from the co-workers and management

something else, what?

**6. What values do you expect the company to have? Do you feel restaurant Salitintti shares those same values?**

### 7. Atmosphere /Age gaps

5=strongly agree ... 1=strongly disagree

- The atmosphere encourages for open communication. 5 4 3 2 1
- There is a lot of communication and humour between the young and old. 5 4 3 2 1
- The contributions of both, the young trainees and experienced workers, are taken into consideration. Everyone is treated equally. 5 4 3 2 1
- I'm encouraged to show my own ideas and working habits. 5 4 3 2 1
- I prefer to work with people of my own age. 5 4 3 2 1
- I feel there's not much new I can learn from the young/experienced workers. 5 4 3 2 1

### 8. I have noticed there are some differences in working methods and attitudes towards the work depending on age.

No

Yes, what sort of differences?

### 9. There have occurred some clashes/disputes between the generations, because of different values and work ethics.

No

Yes, what sort of clashes?

## 10. Management

5=strongly agree ... 1=strongly disagree

- The manager knows my own personal needs, wants and strengths towards the job. 5 4 3 2 1
- The work tasks are challenging enough (equivalent to my skills). 5 4 3 2 1
- I feel the managers support the collaboration between the people of various ages. 5 4 3 2 1
- I feel the managers understand the differences between the generations and know how to develop the strengths of each individual. 5 4 3 2 1

## 11. What sort of expectations do you have towards management? Describe the ideal leader?

## Appendix 2

Hei!

Opiskelen Jyväskylän Ammattikorkeakoulussa kolmatta vuotta Facility Management-koulutusohjelmassa ja olen nyt kevään aikana suorittamassa harjoittelua ja opinnäytetyötä tänne Rantasipi Laajavuoreen. Opinnäytetyöni ideana on tutkia eri sukupolvien työtapoja ja arvoja sekä ottaa selville, vastaako työpaikkanne eri-ikäisten tarpeisiin ja odotuksiin. Tarkoitukseni on myös selvittää, onko Ravintola Salintintin työntekijöiden välille päässyt muodostumaan sukupolvikuiluja, työpaikkanne kun koostuu niin monista eri-ikäisistä.

Toivon, että paneudutte huolella kysymyksiin ja harkitsette vastauksianne, jotta saamani tulokset vastaisivat todellisuutta ja näin ollen olisivat myös hyödyllisiä Ravintola Salintintille. Kyselyn täyttäminen vie noin 5-10 minuuttia. Käsittelen kaikki vastaukset nimettöminä ja ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti.

Suuri kiitos ajastanne ja vaivannäöstänne!

Annastiina Romo

Syntymävuosi:

1946-1964

1965-1980

1981-1994

1995 -->

Kuinka kauan olet työskennellyt ravintola Salitintille?

alle vuoden

1-2 vuotta

2-5 vuotta

yli 5 vuotta

Työsuhde

kokoaikainen

osa-aikainen

harjoittelija

extraaja/ tarvittaessa töihin kutsuttava

### 1. Arvot ja asenteet

Missä määrin seuraavat väittämät vastaavat mielipidettäsi?

5=täysin samaa mieltä ... 1=täysin eri mieltä

- Kunnioitan työpaikan auktoriteettia ja hierarkiaa. 5 4 3 2 1
- Käytän mielelläni teknologiaa ja tekniikkaa työssäni. 5 4 3 2 1
- Olen lojaali ja sitoutunut yritykseen, jossa työskentelen. 5 4 3 2 1
- Työaikojen täytyy olla tarpeeksi joustavat voidakseni sovittaa ne yksityiselämäni. 5 4 3 2 1

### 2. Työskentelen yleensä mieluiten

yksin

osana ryhmää

### 3. Hoidan yleensä mieluiten

- yhden tehtävän kerrallaan
- monta asiaa samanaikaisesti

### 4. Tärkeimmät palkkiot ja kannustimet työstä.

Valitse kaksi tärkeintä.

- rahalliset hyödyt ja hyvitykset
- ylennykset
- oppiminen ja omien kykyjen kehittäminen
- haasteellisemmat työtehtävät/suurempi vastuu

### 5. Miellyttävä työ sisältää seuraavat asiat..

Aseta seuraavat asiat tärkeysjärjestykseen asteikolla 1-9, numero yhden (1) tarkoittaessa asiaa, jota arvostat eniten, ja numeron yhdeksän (9) tarkoittaessa asiaa, jota arvostat vähiten. Mikäli et keksi avoimeen kohtaan vastausvaihtoehtoa, voit jättää sen tyhjäksi ja merkitä numerolla 9.

- tiukka työmoraali/selvät säännöt kuinka työ tulisi tehdä
- vapaus/mahdollisuus tehdä työ kuten itse haluan
- turvallisuus ja työpaikan varmuus
- työtehtävien vaihtelevuus
- mielekäs työ/ mahdollisuus tehdä työtä, jolla on tarkoitus
- jatkuvan palautteen ja tunnustuksen saaminen
- hauska ja innovatiivinen työympäristö
- tuen ja vahvistuksen saaminen työtovereilta ja johdolta
- jotain muuta, mitä?

### 6. Minkälaisia arvoja odotat yrityksen noudattavan? Tuntuuko sinusta, että ravintola Salintintti jakaa samanlaiset arvot sinun kanssasi?

## 7. Työilmapiiri/ Ikäkuilut

5=täysin samaa mieltä ... 1=täysin eri mieltä

- Työpaikan ilmapiiri kannustaa avoimeen kanssakäymiseen. 5 4 3 2 1
- Eri-ikäisten välillä on paljon keskustelua ja huumoria. 5 4 3 2 1
- Kaikkia kohdellaan tasapuolisesti; sekä nuorien että vanhojen työpanos otetaan huomioon. 5 4 3 2 1
- Minua rohkaistaan näyttämään omat ideani ja työtapani. 5 4 3 2 1
- Työskentelen mieluiten oman ikäisten ihmisten kanssa. 5 4 3 2 1
- En usko voivani oppia paljon uutta vanhemmilta/nuoremmilta työntekijöiltä. 5 4 3 2 1

## 8. Olen huomannut eroja eri-ikäisten työtavoissa ja asenteissa työtä kohtaan.

En

Kyllä, minkälaisia eroja?

## 9. Työpaikalla on sattunut yhteenottoja/ristiriitoja eri sukupolvien välillä, johtuen eriävistä työtavoista ja työmoraalista.

Ei

Kyllä, minkälaisia ristiriitoja?

## 10. Johto

5=täysin samaa mieltä ... 1=täysin eri mieltä

- Ravintolan johto tietää ja tuntee omat tarpeeni, haluni ja vahvuuteni työtä kohtaan. 5 4 3 2 1
- Työtehtävät ovat tarpeeksi haasteellisia taitoihini nähden. 5 4 3 2 1
- Ravintolan johto tukee mielestäni tarpeeksi eri-ikäisten yhteistyötä. 5 4 3 2 1
- Ravintolan johto ymmärtää ja tuntee mielestäni eroavaisuudet eri sukupolvien välillä ja osaa kehittää jokaisen yksilön vahvuuksia. 5 4 3 2 1

## 11. Minkälaisia odotuksia sinulla on johtoa kohtaan? Kuvaile ihanteellinen johtaja?