Manufacturing Company's Knowledge Transfer and Collaboration Secrets Revealed Through KeS Analysis

A case study by Seity Insight

Why

A manufacturing company started an initiative to develop a culture of better collaboration among its engineers. The team included a broad range of all four generations of employees in one workplace, including Traditionalists, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials.

Each of these generations follows a preferred working style. Traditionalists are loyal team players who respect authority, and believe in dedication and sacrifice. They want to know the rules. Self-confident Boomers don't trust authority, but want a prestigious title and the corner office. They want to know "what does it mean?" Gen Xers also distrust authority, and don't like being told they *must* do something. They like wondering how things work. Millennials hold a high level of trust toward authority, but are less trustworthy of individuals. They prefer meaningful work, and like to know how things are built.

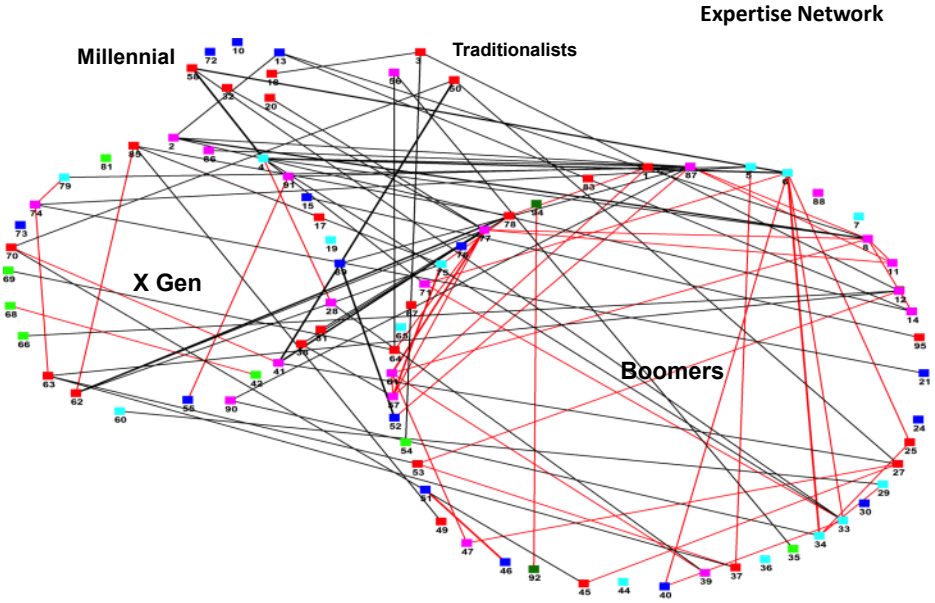
The issues at the manufacturer, as you might imagine among such a divergent workforce, involved a collaboration breakdown…. somewhere. The company needed to manage risk in two areas: the loss of intellectual capital either through retirement or resignation; and the lack of sharing internal knowledge, thereby slowing innovation and affecting the competitive advantage of the company. The CEO wanted information to reduce and manage these risks, and needed a solution to enhance retention and knowledge transfer.

How

Seity Insight conducted an Organization Network Analysis (ONA) to look at the engineering employees' inner workings. After meeting with the manufacturer's executives to define questions, employees were asked to spend an average of 15 minutes answering the online questions.

Processing the data gathered from a 99% response, Seity created employee network displays, or maps, telling a story about the team's work and collaboration. Follow-up meetings allowed the leadership to dig deeper, and further define the findings.

The data showed exactly how knowledge was shared and communication flowed within the engineering group. It uncovered and mapped a group of Millennials who were talking to Boomers, but ignoring the Gen Xers and Traditionalists, and not even sharing information and knowledge among themselves.



What

The specific data and mapping results showed that the manufacturer must find ways to involve the groups with one another, and improve collaboration. So, they are currently developing a knowledge-transfer program.

Most of the manufacturer's Millennial engineers were hired straight out of college. The ONA data showed management the importance of tracking the progression and involvement of these hires over time. This will allow the management to more quickly recognize the natural leaders among the young professionals, and find ways to recognize and retain them, and to tap their ability to attract others. The program will also help develop the knowledge-transfer process to retain the manufacturer's intellectual property, typically lost through retirements.

The company plans to conduct another Organization Network Analysis at year-end to measure results and track improvement.

Do you have issues caused by a multigenerational workforce?

Contact Seity Insight at info@seity.com for a free consultation to help you find ways to manage it.