

CAREER

Do age gaps impact WORKPLACE DYNAMICS?

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After being surrounded by people of the same age nearly all our lives, finding ourselves in a room full of people who belong to different age ranges can make us shift in our seats a little. But is it really all that bad? How does one navigate being one of the youngest in the room amongst people from different generations?

For Nayla*, a junior executive at NEXT Ventures, the first challenge was fitting in. Although she did not face any significant challenge regarding workplace acclimation, she found herself unable to relate to the things her coworkers were saying. "Ageism wasn't an issue since my colleagues were just a bit older, but I often felt out of place," she shared.

Joining a team where other members have known each other for longer than you have can feel isolating, considering that they share years of camaraderie. "Their inside jokes about finances, family, and kids didn't resonate with me. As one of the few women on the team, I struggled to connect, especially since they were dismissive about things like TikTok and Snapchat, and claimed that they're silly which is why I just focus on work instead," she added.

Feedback and communication can also be a tricky terrain for freshers. Lack of communication and understanding can cause major hurdles when adjusting to a new workplace. Often, many managers might forget or not feel the need to share key information

with their subordinates which creates a lack of clarity and transparency. "There was a real disconnect between my manager and I," shared Aminul Islam, a former Consulting Engineer at an IT conglomerate. "I had to manoeuvre tasks blindly because I wasn't given proper guidance or access to the resources I needed. This made the job much harder than it had to be."

In situations like this, it is extremely crucial to proactively ask for information and clarification. Maintaining a positive look, even when things don't go your way, is important albeit very difficult.

Despite these initial hurdles, many young professionals find that working with older colleagues offers benefits because a lot of coworkers are genuinely good mentors and guides. Muballigh Hossain, a solution architect at Huawei says, "If shown the ropes, learn them."

It might be hard to adjust at first due to the differences in skill set and even outlook, but with time you get familiar with how things work. "You'll be surprised how much you can learn from them if you keep an open mind and be cordial," he explained.

Elsewhere, legal counsel, Jalal Uddin Ahmed, shares the same views. He said, "Early on, I noticed differences in work styles and communication. Navigating these differences required flexibility and patience."

Building bridges with older coworkers begins with mutual respect. "I often thought that older colleagues are rigid and resistant to new ideas. Most of them

seek respect from younger colleagues whereas, they themselves extend the courtesy," said Mohd Ashraful, a marketing professional.

It is important to figure out whether it's the age gap driving the wedge between coworkers or some other factor. Effective communication and adjusting the tone of voice facilitates smoother interactions. One must focus on being assertive without coming off as abrasive.

"Despite the generational gap, I've learned that mutual respect and open-mindedness can create a collaborative environment that benefits everyone. I am fortunate that my senior colleagues were helpful and open-minded which made my job easier," expressed Jalal.

Finding common ground can further pave the way for professional rapport. Shafin Mahmud, a software engineer at Japan Bangladesh Connect Ltd, recalls bonding over his shared love for football and exploring various cuisines with his colleagues. Whether it's a shared hobby or interest, finding a common ground eases the generational gap by miles.

All seasoned professionals were once freshers, and all freshers have the potential to show their mettle and become the mentors they needed. Embrace the differences, build connections, and let the workplace become not just a job, but a place of growth and collaboration.

*Name has been changed upon request.



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