DAY 11: PROGRESS CHECK_READING 1-2

READING 1: Read the article and choose the correct answers A, B, C or D, according to the writer. The first one is done for you.

www.theconversation.com/managing-across-generations-will-deliver-more productiveworkplaces-46987

Managing across generations will deliver more productive workplaces

by Martin Klaffke and Robyn Johns, University of Technology Sydney

Generation Y workers are "more demanding". Generation Z workers want "more flexibility, autonomy and recognition". And both groups want to be "creative". Should managers worry about these increasingly accepted trends in the multi-generational workforce?

The answer is yes, and lies in demographic transition and the subsequent change in conditions for business.

Economic growth depends heavily on having sufficient and productive labour. However, most OECD* populations are facing a demographic shift as a result of declining fertility rates along with increasing life expectancy.

Take Germany, where the Federal Statistical Office projects the working-age population, those aged 15 to 64 years, will shrink by six million until 2030 and will skew sharply older until 2020.

The situation in Australia is not as extreme. The working-age population is projected to grow moderately in the next 50 years, but ageing nevertheless represents a challenge with a proportionally larger increase in those aged 65 and over.

The wrong focus

To date organisations have largely focused on considering the work values of Gen Y employees and the "wellbeing" of elderly employees. Recent research suggests at least three reasons why **this** is not enough.

First, preserving physical and psychological health is indisputably the basis for work ability. Yet it is not sufficient for maintaining lifelong high performance levels. Studies by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health suggest team leadership and management practices are critical elements in keeping high levels of active performance until retirement.

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Second, we tend to assume age diversity in the workplace offers advantages, such as increased problem-solving and decision-making capacity or in-depth responses to clients. But empirical evidence is mixed. **Recent studies** suggest diverse attitudes and behaviours of employees of different ages can cause conflict, and a deterioration of productivity. Age diversity requires strong leadership from managers.

Third, tensions among employee groups can affect an employer's ability to attract talent. Surveys of young German professionals suggest a cooperative and pleasant working environment is especially important to attract and retain young talent. However, if junior employees discover that employer branding is all tinsel and glitter, and expectations are not met by reality, they might soon leave as they tend to be less willing to patiently endure job pain.

Tips for managing multiple generations

1. Don't assume older workers are not interested in development and promotion opportunities. All workers capable of active performance benefit from opportunities to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

2. Tackle generational conflict with workshops. Offer practical information to assist in understanding the distinctive perspectives, motivations and expectations of each generation employed in the organisation. Help create greater respect and understanding of generational differences and commonalities as well as anticipate common generational clash points and how these may affect communication and teamwork.

3. Individualise human resource practices. Organisations should shift from the traditional approach, which is fundamentally based on standardisation, to provide employees with the individual opportunity to negotiate work arrangements.

Why there's conflict

Clashes between people of different ages can be purely age related, linked to career or life cycle aspects, or generational differences. Although values might change over time, early imprint is how people filter and perceive experiences throughout their lives.

For example, an experienced employee who learnt as a graduate 30 years ago that hard work and adaptation were key to career progression might not easily understand the younger generation's desire for individual treatment and work-life balance. They might become annoyed when in a job interview a Gen Y candidate **turns the table** on the interviewer and asks for good reasons to accept a job offer.

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For the younger generation, a lack of openness for change and for new ways of living can be a major turn-off. Similarly, a lack of both appreciation and feedback are major irritants.

Whereas elder employees expect respect for seniority experience alone, Gen Y employees are reluctant to bow to sheer age, and tend to base praise on current performance levels.

Gen Y employees want to be treated on a par by senior colleagues, who in turn count experience and expertise as a necessary requirement for equal recognition. Gen Y's older peers often don't understand **their** expectation that a supervisor function as service provider, helping to quickly boost their young colleagues' development and career advancement.

These are just some of the reasons why organisations should adopt management strategies to address the differences in values and expectations of each employee group. Generation management is a facet of diversity management which focuses on respect and taking advantage of individual differences.

* Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

0 What are the trends in the workforce referred to in line 3?

A workers becoming more demanding ☐

B the desire for more flexibility, autonomy and recognition ☐

C the drive towards more creativity ☐

D all of those mentioned above ☑

36 What is causing a change in the population of OECD countries?

A People are having more children and living longer lives. ☐

B People are having fewer children and living shorter lives. ☐

C People are having fewer children and living longer lives. ☐

D People are having more children and living longer lives. ☐

37 In the next few years, Germany is predicted to be

A in a worse position than Australia. ☐

B in a better position than Australia. ☐

C in the same position as Australia. ☐

D in a much easier position than Australia. ☐

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38 What does *this* refer to in paragraph 6?

A three reasons for the wrong focus ☐

B recent research ☐

C the different focuses on generations ☐

D the focus on wellbeing of elderly employees ☐

39 What do *recent studies* (paragraph 8) suggest about diversity in the workplace?

A It offers only advantages. ☐

B It can increase productivity. ☐

C It may cause problems between generations. ☐

D It results in strong leadership. ☐

40 What general point is made in Tip 2?

A Managers need to understand the different generations. ☐

B Younger workers need to respect their elders. ☐

C The differences between the generations should be removed. ☐

D It is essential to help the generations appreciate their differences. ☐

41 What approach does Tip 3 suggest that Human Resources departments should take?

A They should renegotiate all the contracts. ☐

B They should focus their practice on the individual. ☐

C They should standardize practice across the board. ☐

D They should focus more on traditional approaches. ☐

42 What does the expression *turns the table on* (paragraph 12) mean in this context?

A The candidate might sit in the interviewer's chair for a particular question. ☐

B The interviewer might ask why the company should employ the candidate. ☐

C The candidate might question the interviewer. ☐

D The candidate might become angry about a particular question. ☐

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43 How might Generation Y employees appraise their older colleagues?

A on the way they are currently performing ☐

B out of respect for their age alone ☐

C on the number of years they have been working ☐

D on a mixture of the above points ☐

44 What does *their* refer to in paragraph 15?

A experience and expertise ☐

B senior colleagues ☐

C Generation Y's older peers ☐

D Generation Y ☐

45 What is the main argument that the writers are making about workplace diversity?

A that it results in higher productivity ☐

B that it needs careful management ☐

C that it always involves conflict ☐

D that it is a consequence of population change ☐

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READING 2: You are going to read an article from which five paragraphs have been removed. Choose from the paragraphs A–F the one which fits each gap (36–40). There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

The Internet is eating your memory, but something better is taking its place

By Saima Noreen, University of London

In the years since the world started going digital, one of the big changes has been that we don't need to remember very much. Why risk forgetting a partner's birthday or a dinner date with a close friend when you can commit the details to your computer, laptop, smartphone or tablet and get a reminder at the appropriate time?

Paul McCartney gave a useful insight into **this** in an interview over the summer. He claimed that back in the 1960s The Beatles may have written dozens of songs that were never released because he and John Lennon would forget the songs the following morning. 'We would write a song and just have to remember it. And there was always the risk that we'd just forget it. If the next morning you couldn't remember it – it was gone.' How different to the way he records now then, when he can 'form the thing, have it all finished, remember it all, go in pretty quickly and record it'.

With technology now well integrated into our everyday life, researchers have been investigating the lasting impact that it is having on the way that we learn and remember information. Some research has suggested that our reliance on technology and the internet is leading to 'digital amnesia', where individuals are no longer able to retain information as a result of storing information on a digital device.

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But before we mourn this apparent loss of memory, more recent studies suggest that we may be adapting. One such study from 2011 conducted a series of experiments looking at how our memories rely on computers. In one of them, participants were asked to type a series of statements, such as 'an ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain'.

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In another experiment, participants were asked to type a series of statements that would be saved in specific folders. They were then asked to recall the statements and the folders in which the files were located. Overall, they were better at recalling the file locations than the statements.

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This idea that individuals prioritise where information is located has led some researchers to propose that digital devices and the Internet have become a form of transactive memory. This idea, which dates back to the 1980s, refers to a group memory that is superior to that of any individual.

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More recent research has extended this line of work and found that saving information on a computer not only changes how our brains interact with it, but also makes it easier to learn new information. In a study published last year, the participants were presented with two files that each contained a list of words. They were asked to memorise both lists. Half of the participants were asked to save the first file before moving on to the next list, while the others had to close it without saving.

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In sum, anyone worrying that technology is wrecking one of our most important abilities should take some reassurance from these findings. It doesn't necessarily mean that there is no cause for concern: for instance, McCartney said in the same interview that the songs in the 1960s that did make it to the recording studio were the most memorable ones. So it is possible that the lack of technology made The Beatles better songwriters. But it may be that just as oral storytelling was usurped by the written word, having digital devices to outsource our memories means that it is no longer necessary for us to try to remember everything. And if we can now remember more with a little help from our technology friends, **that** is arguably a great step forward. Rather than worrying about what we have lost, perhaps we need to focus on what we have gained.

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A. In one study, for example, 1,000 consumers aged 16 and over were asked about their use of technology. It found that 91% of them depended on the Internet and digital devices as a tool for remembering. In another survey of 6,000 people, the same study found that 71% of people could not remember their children's phone numbers and 57% could not remember their work phone number. **This** suggests that relying on digital devices to remember information is impairing our own memory systems.

B. An experiment was conducted focusing on differences between the generations where power of recall is concerned. In this experiment the participants were split into two groups – over and under 40 – and asked to memorize a list of numbers formed into groups containing eleven digits. They then performed a series of non-memory tasks before being asked how many groups of numbers they could remember. The older group remembered significantly more, perhaps because their generation didn't have the technological resources at their fingertips that meant they didn't need to remember phone numbers.

C. The experiment revealed that the participants recalled significantly more information from the second file if they had saved the previous file. This suggests that by saving or 'offloading' information on to a computer, we are freeing up cognitive resources that enable us to memorise and recall new information instead.

D. According to **this account**, individuals can collectively store and distribute information using a shared store of knowledge. This store of knowledge means that individuals can access details that they may not know themselves by knowing that another individual remembers it, thus enhancing what information is available to them by communicating with other people. In the same way, individuals develop a transactive memory with the Internet and rely on it for information by focusing on where details are located rather than the details themselves.

E. The conclusion from the two experiments? Technology has changed the way we organise information so that we only remember details which are no longer available, and prioritise the location of information over the content itself.

F. **Half of them** were told that their documents would be saved, and half were told that **they** would not. Everyone was then tested to see if they could remember what they had typed. Those who had been told their work would be saved were significantly poorer at remembering the information.

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