CUT THE CAKE AND PASS THE TROPHY!
Employee Training in a Multi-Generational Workforce

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THE GENERATIONS

We've never had a workplace with so much generational diversity before. For most of the last century, people moved through their career in a linear fashion, with important milestones largely marked by time or seniority. Retirement age used to be 65, and that was it. You "paid your dues" before promotions. But today's workforce looks and feels different.

There are many explanations for the current demographics ranging from improved health and longevity to the financial market meltdown of 2008 which forced many people (a large number of Baby Boomers) to postpone retirement for financial reasons. We can't control why so many generations are working side-by-side. So – we have no choice but to find ways for people with very different life experiences based upon age to work well together. As employee development, training or HR professionals, we likewise don't have a choice.

So, how do HR professionals, their leadership and other business leaders keep the peace in the multi-generational workforce?

We have to design, build and deliver employee training that meets the needs of a very diverse workforce.

U.S. Total Labor Force Participation by Generation, 2012

- Traditionalists (Born 1928-1945)
- Baby Boomers (Born 1946-1965)
- Generation X (born 1965-1980)
- Millennials (Born 1980 - 2000)

5.0%

33.0%

40.0%

22.0%
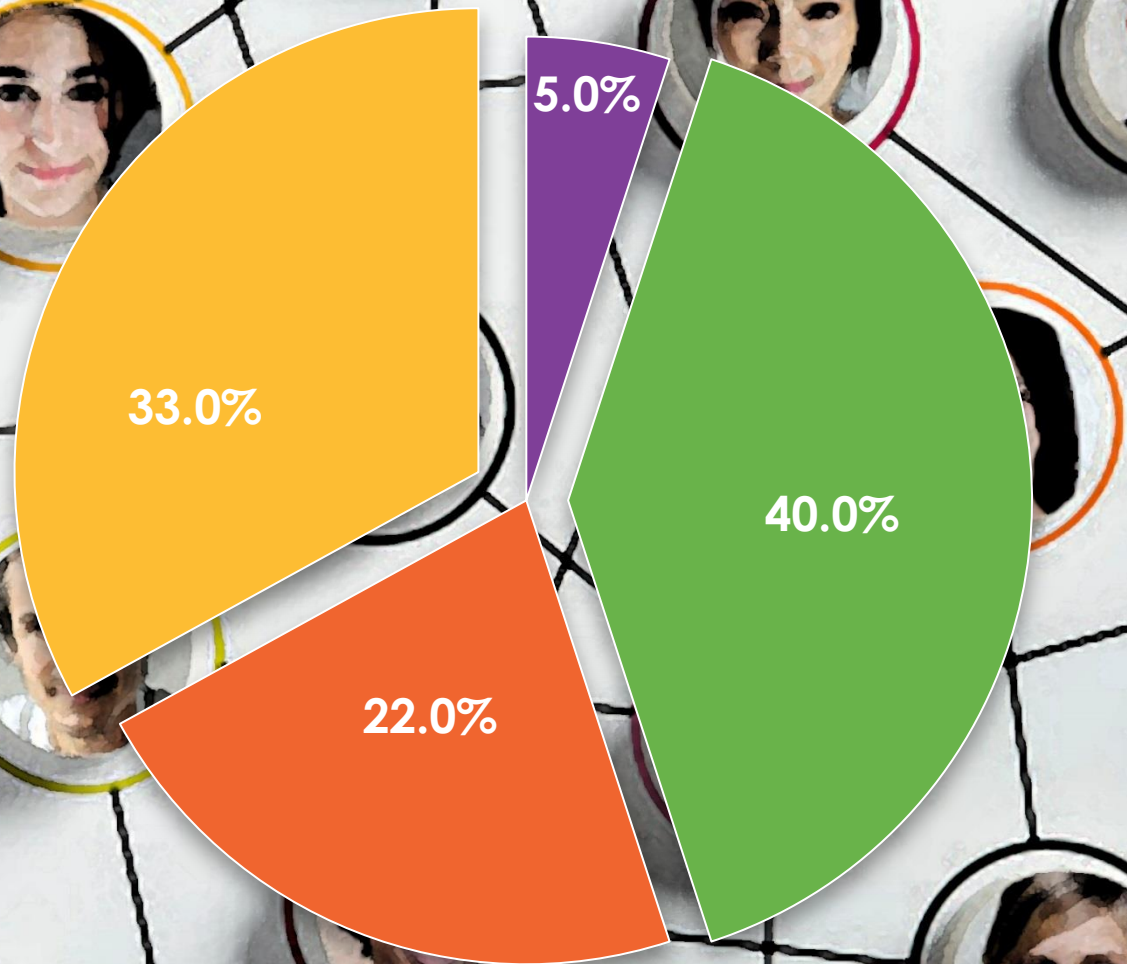
WHEN ASKED: What benefits would you value most over the next five years other than salary?

1/3 chose training and development as their first-choice benefit other than salary.

Price Waterhouse Cooper

40 MILLION

Millennials are already in the workforce.

BY 2025 - 3 OUT OF 4 WORKERS WILL BE A MILLENNIAL

80% of Millennials want **regular feedback** from their managers.

MTV study, "No Collar Workers."

Nearly 9 in 10 want a workplace to be social and fun.

Millennials want to feel like they are part of a community at work.

MTV study,
"No Collar Workers"

As we start thinking carefully about the various generations, it's important to understand that the differences between them are not simply a matter of age.

Each generation has been shaped by events, and it's the events during the formative years for people that make the most lasting and important impressions.

These "formative" or "sign post" events, help inform attitudes about everything from politics, home, entertainment, to work or careers. It's also important to bear in mind that making sweeping generalizations about large groups of people is not an accurate predictor of personality, traits, character, skills, motivations, etc. The generational differences we're going to explore that impact our employee training efforts tell some of each person's story, but in the end, everyone is unique and may or may not fit neatly into the broad categories or characterizations usually associated with their generation.

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen Xers	Gen Ys
WORK STYLE	Linear work style	Structured work style	Informal work style	Fluid work style
CHANGE =	Something's wrong	Caution	Potential opportunity	improvement
CAREER	Build a legacy	Build a stellar career	Build a portable career	Build parallel careers

Source: n-gen People Performance Inc.
www.ngenperformance.com

Source: n-gen People Performance Inc. www.ngenperformance.com

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES

Stereotyping generations can be very limiting, however if we take the time to understand our employees and generational influences we can benefit from:

• More effective communication
• Increased engagement
• Improved employee retention
• Motivated employees
• Increased productivity and teamwork

In addition, just because you were born in one generation, you may or may not display the behaviors and tendencies of the generation. For example, The Pew Internet and American Life project has a simple quiz that asks "How Millennial Are You?" We did a comparison of employees in our company and there were Millennials that scored in the low 80's and Boomers that scored in the 70's.

Jessica Batz, Marketing Specialist – Gen Y

MILLENNIAL

Chris Osborn, VP of Marketing – Boomer
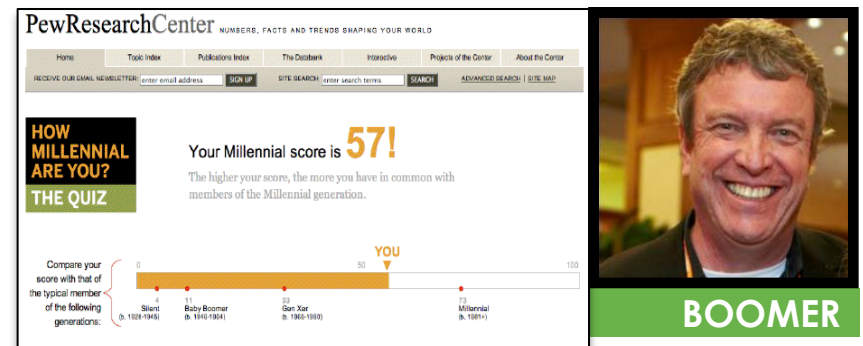
BOOMER

TRADITIONALISTS AND BOOMERS

CHRIS OSBORN, VP OF MARKETING – BOOMER

I am usually included as a member of the BOOMER Generation. But some demographers now say there is a separate generation in that broad category called Generation Jones (born between 1955 and 1964). So - am I BOOMER or something else? Based upon my experiences, I believe there is a difference between me and my older

BOOMER

friends that are clearly BABY BOOMERS, and the differences can be linked directly to events during our formative years. But - the broad traits associated with Boomers usually apply to me and others my age.

Major signposts or events for Boomers are a mixed bag. Older (Boomers) got The Beatles. People closer to my age got the Bee Gees. Older Boomers got Woodstock. We got disco. They got Neil Armstrong walking on the moon, we got Watergate. Younger Boomers like me came of age in the early 1970's. By the mid-1970's, the great hope and promise of the 1960's vanished. Race and anti-war riots helped shred the political and social fabric of the nation, and we are still seeing the great divides among us that really took center stage in the very late 1960's and early 1970's. Our government failed. By the early to mid-1970's we were awash in political scandal, exiting from a war we'd lost, and the nation faced an energy crisis that blunted economic opportunities for millions. These events fueled skepticism about institutions, and this skepticism is a true hallmark of BOOMERS.

TRADITIONALISTS: BORN BEFORE 1946	
• The Great Depression	• Pearl Harbor & World War II
• The Cold War, Atom Bomb & Sputnik	• The GI Bill & Social Security
• Jackie Robinson	• Frank Sinatra

BABY BOOMERS: BORN 1946 - 1965	
• Booming Birthrate & Suburbia	• Vietnam
• OPEC Oil Embargo	• Apollo 8 & Moon Landing
• Martin Luther King, Jr.	• The Beatles

GEN X AND MILLENNIALS

JESSICA BATZ, MARKETING SPECIALIST – MILLENNIAL

As a member of Gen Y I grew up with computers in my school and at home. The internet grew exponentially – I distinctly remember tracking the Iditarod, Alaskan dog sled race on "THE INTERNET" in grade school. I, like many of my peers, was involved in more than 4 sports teams and at least 3 extracurricular activities outside of sports.

MILLENNIAL

It's weird to think about meeting up with people without having a cell phone – you mean you had to set an exact time and meeting place?

I grew up wanting world peace, to save the whales, and to reduce-reuse and recycle – although I'm not sure I really even understood the full meaning. Our view of the United States and the World quickly and forever changed after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. College and higher education are a requirement. Technology is essential to our effectiveness and success.

We're more connected, can find and sort more information more quickly, relentlessly curious (why and awesome may be the most frequently used words in our vocabulary) and require a work environment that's both flexible, meaningful and committed to continuous growth and development.

GENERATION X: BORN 1965 - 1980	
• Divorce	• AIDS
• The Personal Computer	• Challenger
• Title IX	• Grunge, rap and Madonna

MILLENNIALS: BORN 1980 - 2000	
• Diversity	• Social Networking
• Terrorism and 9/11	• High Speed Internet
• Pop Culture	• Technology

Influences, Pressures And Work Life

These important events (and there are several more for each generation) help frame a world view people bring to their jobs everyday. This broad-based world view impacts work styles, our attitudes towards change and towards our careers. This chart from n-gen People Performance, Inc. provides a summary for each of these areas by generation.

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen Xers	Millennials
Training	The hard way	Too much and I'm outta here	Required to keep me	Continuous and expected
Learning Style	Classroom	Facilitated	Independent	Collaborative and networked
Communication style	Top down	Guarded	Hub and spoke	Collaborative
Problem-solving	Hierarchical	Horizontal	Independent	Collaborative
Decision-making	Seeks approval	Team informed	Team included	Team decided
Leadership style	Command & control	Get out of the way	Coach	Partner
Feedback	No news is good news	Once per year	Weekly/daily	On demand
Technology use	Uncomfortable	Unsure	Unable to work without it	Unfathomable if not provided
Job changing	Sets me back	Sets me back	Necessary	Part of my daily routine

Again, we want to avoid stereotyping, but the differences between generations on these three elements of our work lives matter. Not surprisingly, Traditionalists came of age when huge institutions rose to the occasion and actually delivered great results. They have a different level of trust that carries over to their employers, and they generally look at work as a lifelong commitment to an employer. Boomers came along and blew everything up in the 1960's, but as they've matured in the workplace and in their careers, their attitudes are looking more and more like Traditionalists – with some modifications. Boomers, as a group, are highly competitive and driven. The term "workaholic" likely conjures an image of a Baby Boomer working away on that career. Gen Xers, the latchkey generation, bring us a whole new set of challenges. As a group, they shun formality, are generally open to change and are motivated to look out for themselves. The youngest generation of workers, Gen Y, frequently get a bad rap, but as a group these young people are turning out to be great employees. But they bring some attitudes and expectations to work fostered by a different type of home and social environment. For many of these workers, change is a very good thing and that applies to their jobs, too!

Chart Source: Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman. When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How To Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work (HarperBusiness, 2002)

DEVELOPING GENERATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Make training and mentoring a priority.
Focus on generational perceptions in the workplace and provide advice to managers and employees on how to adapt communication, learning, and engagement styles.

Set clear objectives.
People aren't mind readers – regardless of generation. Make sure that you sit down with each new employee and discuss company culture, team norms, and individual preferences, likes and dislikes.

Consider the medium/methods for training.
Focus on how your employees are accessing new knowledge and information in their personal lives and incorporate that into your employee training. BizLibrary's Streaming Video Library is a great option for mobile-friendly videos on any topic imaginable.

Provide feedback early and often
Everyone appreciates feedback and recognition. Millennials are accustomed to frequent feedback. Boomers may feel that continuous feedback is a form of micromanaging. Focus on the positive to keep feedback constructive.

Check out a 2 minute video on giving feed back here.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM

TRADITIONALISTS
BOOMERS
GEN X
MILLENNIALS

Here are some ideas and tips for providing training and development to your employees across generations. Remember these tips are based on general characteristics, every employee is an individual with their own preferences.

TRADITIONALSTS

›   Use a lot of classroom training. As a rule, this generation responds well to subject-mater experts, presentations, and lectures.

›   Show your veteran employees they are respected and valued members of your workforce. They might not respond well to coaching, or help, without being asked first if they need or want some help.

›   Be mindful of the physical demands of classroom training on these employees. So plan for frequent breaks and chances to move around a little.

›   Provide access to books, resources, and opportunities for self-study.

›   Be sure to place value on time.

›   Make sure your materials and handouts can be read with bifocals.

›   Assume these employees are technologically capable. Some may take a little longer to learn new technologies, and some may simply resist, but a surprising number of this generation are open to learning new technologies.

›   This group will usually prefer chances to practice new skills in private and on their own.

›   Seminars and in-person events allow Traditionalists to use their interpersonal skills.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM

TRADITIONALISTS
BOOMERS
GEN X
MILLENNIALS

BOOMERS

> This is the generation that coined the phrase, "Never trust anyone over 30." Guess who's over 30 now? This core mistrust of authority carries over, so try not to include managers in the same sessions with their employees. The Boomers might feel they are being watched, monitored and even evaluated by their bosses.

> Also – try to play down any sense that training is required by those in authority – even when it might be.

> Narratives like stories and anecdotes can help set a friendly, open atmosphere for classroom sessions.

> Make Boomers feel valued. Provide feed-back, thanks for efforts, learn their names, give them chances to talk, ask for input, and refer to their experience.

> Boomers tend to be casual in workplace relationships, so make sure your training team treats them as equals, even if your training team is younger. Boomers don't like to feel older – even though they are.

> Make sure you provide a training environment that is safe for open discussion.

> Create fair rules for all activities—according to generational learning expert, Julie Coates, boomers grew up in a very competitive environment, where some individuals lost and some won. It was OK to lose, as long as the rules were fair.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM

TRADITIONALISTS
BOOMERS
GEN X
MILLENNIALS

GEN X

- Build in self-directed learning opportunities.

- Assign individual research or projects.

- Provide online training and testing, and put it where learners can access it when they need it

- Get to the point, efficiently. Banish anything in the curriculum that is being done just because it has always been done. Don't waste time.

- Let the learners figure it out, then teach each other—give them the freedom, autonomy, and independence to come up with answers and alternatives.

- Speed it up, then speed it up again.

- Explain your credentials, but don't expect automatic respect based on your age or the fact that you are the trainer.

- Avoid cliché and hyperbole, and make it relevant to their generation.

- Use technology wherever it makes sense.

- Communicate the benefits of the training and clearly establish the expectations from the beginning. Make sure what you are doing is relevant to their career goals.

- Lighten up! Gen X loves humor, especially irreverent humor.

- Make it visually attractive. Avoid large blocks of text. Incorporate illustrations, cartoons, attractive graphic design, bullet points, and headers.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING A TRAINING PROGRAM

TRADITIONALISTS
BOOMERS
GEN X
MILLENNIALS

MILLENNIALS

> Be organized and provide a clear structure for the learning at the outset, including outlines, a syllabus, learning objectives, study guides, expectations, and how they will be evaluated.

> Tell them why the training matters, and make it relevant to their personal life and career goals.

> Stick to the agenda.

> Allow them to skip steps and find shortcuts; reward them for efficiency.

> Take time to link classroom learning to the big picture.

> Move quickly; then move faster.

> Provide lots of feedback, supervision, direction, and attention.

> Use technology and multimedia. Gen Y is very, very comfortable with technology and cannot imagine life without it. Try to have the latest in technology, and make sure you know how to use it.

> Make it fun and entertaining. Gen Y responds well to games, recognition, prizes, and visuals. Include multimedia, music, art, games, and creativity.

> Utilize experiential learning techniques that incorporate team interaction and hands-on participation, such as case studies, team projects, presentations, teaching others, and so on.

> Let them exchange information verbally or via texting to satisfy their need for social interaction.

Learning Preferences

Members of all generations value variety, challenge, and skills development, but in different ways.

Use the differences between generations to your advantage in a variety of delivery methods and tools.

A quick example is classroom training. Traditionalists tend to like classroom events. Boomers may not. Both generations will respond very well if you can find ways to give them chances to share their valuable experiences and knowledge with younger workers. This sharing helps feed the Gen X and Millennials preferences for collaborative and social learning experiences.
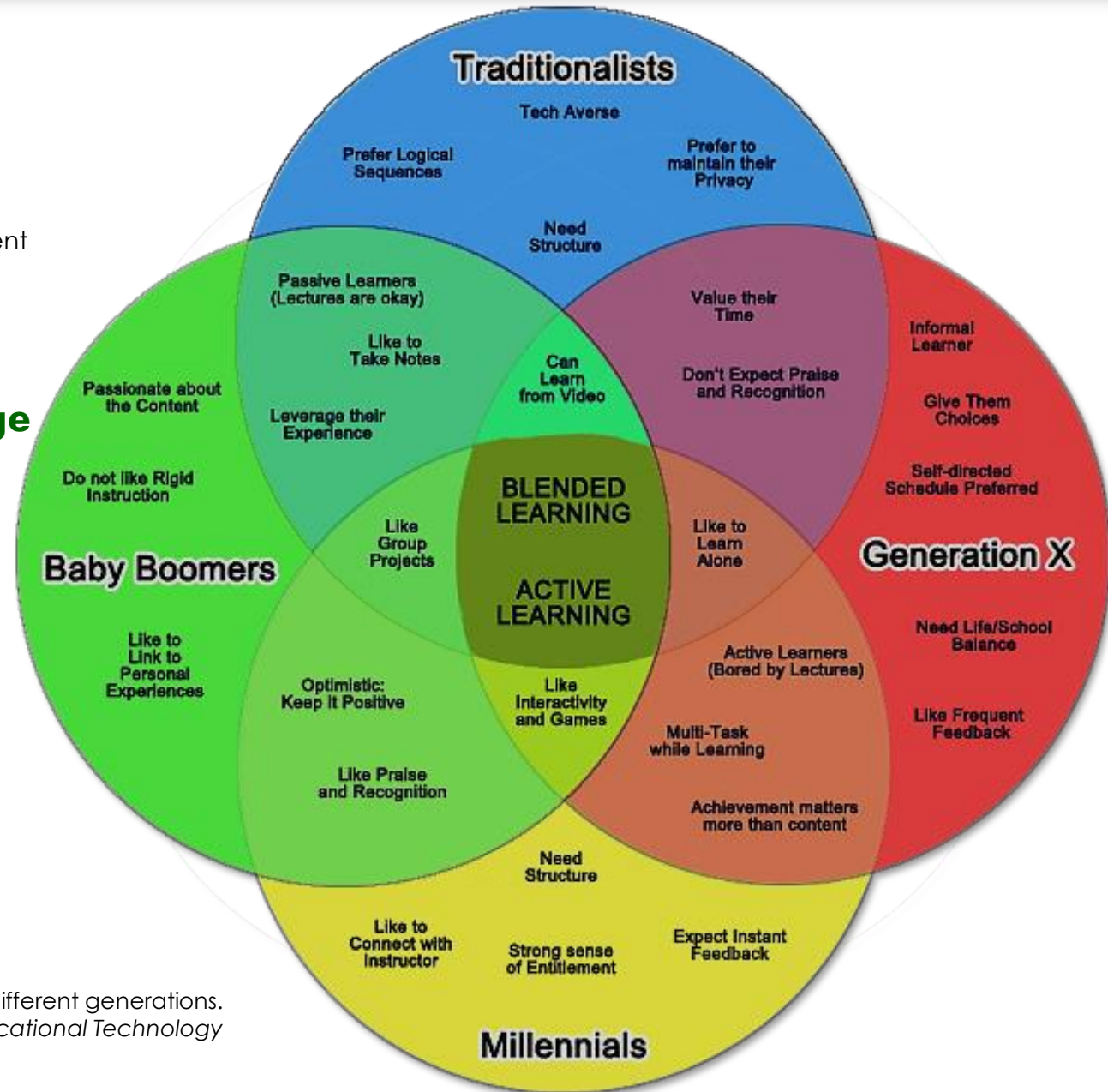
Diagram Source: Corbett, S. (2008). Targeting different generations. In B. Hoffman (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*

Traditionalists
- Tech Averse
- Prefer Logical Sequences
- Prefer to maintain their Privacy
- Need Structure
- Passive Learners (Lectures are okay)
- Like to Take Notes
- Can Learn from Video
- Value their Time
- Don't Expect Praise and Recognition

Generation X
- Informal Learner
- Give Them Choices
- Self-directed Schedule Preferred
- Like to Learn Alone
- Need Life/School Balance
- Like Frequent Feedback
- Active Learners (Bored by Lectures)
- Multi-Task while Learning
- Achievement matters more than content

Baby Boomers
- Passionate about the Content
- Leverage their Experience
- Do not like Rigid Instruction
- Like Group Projects
- Like to Link to Personal Experiences
- Optimistic: Keep it Positive
- Like Praise and Recognition

Millennials
- Like Interactivity and Games
- Need Structure
- Like to Connect with Instructor
- Strong sense of Entitlement
- Expect Instant Feedback

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ACTIVE LEARNING

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