

Multi-Generational Workforce: Bridging The Gap at Work



The Challenge: Multi-Generational Workforce

The values, skills, and preferences at work of each generation are quite different. This can lead to each group judging the preferences and choices of the others, thus further widening the generational divide. Having multiple generations in the workforce is not a new challenge, but it can still be hard to address without truly understanding each generation and their work styles.

General Overview



Baby Boomers

Born between 1946 to the early 60's

Baby Boomers are still the largest portion of the U.S. population and like the Traditionalists, they also prefer a hierarchy at work to constant collaboration.

Events that shaped Boomers were the economic boom, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement and TV becoming a primary form of media.

The 60s saw this generation as non-conformists who wanted greater autonomy and the ability to do things their way. They are often self-reliant and motivated by position, perks and prestige. Face-to-face communication is ideal with this generation.





Gen Xers

Born during the early 60's to early 80's

Gen Xers were the first generation to believe that they wouldn't do as well financially as their parents did and they are more skeptical and cynical about institutions.

There were several major events of incompetence that have shaped the Gen X worldview – Watergate, the Iranian hostage crisis, Three Mile Island and the energy crisis, to name a few.

Their life plans are more cautious and they don't live to work, they work to live. They prompt change in workplace culture and technology and produce high-quality results. They often view themselves as more of a free agent than an older employee would because in their experience, employers usually don't reciprocate loyalty in tough situations.



Millennials

Born during the early 80's to early 2000's

Millennials are particularly uncertain of their futures, surrounded by nationwide political corruption and social unrest. They are pessimistic towards institutions, but highly inclined to find better solutions.

Many of their parents were and are excessively involved in their lives, and their close relationships with parents translate to a strong desire for coaching and feedback at work. They realize that the skills needed to succeed change rapidly and are consistently looking for career development.

Having grown up with internet and instant communication across distances, Millennials are more connected than any other generation, but are also more isolated. Relationships often aren't as deep as older generations have developed, and genuine communities are harder to find.





Zoomers

Born during the late 90's

This generation is just beginning to enter the workforce. They are likely to have many applicable skills, rather than a specific skillset.

Characteristics: Entrepreneurial, tech-savvy, multi-taskers, high stress

What They Need: Independence, security, feedback, transparency, economic stability, professional network, rewards

Common Threads

Would it surprise you to know that each generation's top values are more alike than they are different? When you look deeper than preferences in communication and adeptness with technology, the two common values across every generation are:



Contributing to meaningful work



Developing genuine relationships

Contributing to meaningful work. No one wants to do work that doesn't mean something.

RESOURCE: Building Relationships Competency Guide:

To learn how to develop stronger relationships with colleagues, download our free guide.



Not utilizing the gifts each generation comes with can be a detriment to business. Tailoring your workplace, not to appease one generation, but all generations, can help ensure every employee can reach their potential.



Adapt communication styles.

Consider how each generation prefers to communicate. Older generations likely prefer to communicate about important matters in person, while younger generations like to ingest information via digital means, such as through email.

Avoid stereotypes.

Not everyone in each generation will act the same way, so thinking that they will, can lead to conflict down the road. Treating each person as the individual they are, will get you much further.

Train collaboratively.

Present opportunities where senior employees can train younger employees. The senior employee could present on a topic they are passionate about vis-à-vis a lunch and learn, or you could allow employees to sign up for training on the skills that interest them.

Be flexible.

Every person, regardless of generation, has their own priorities. But some do align with generations. Consider hybrid working situations to best suit the needs of your employees. Take into consideration the needs of each generation to find what works best for them.

Create a sense of belonging.

Developing a culture of mutual respect can help employees develop pride in their work and teammates. Be inclusive when considering team building and social activities.

Multi-generational learning helps employees of varying ages collaborate better while learning from one another. Training your workers about unconscious bias, emotional intelligence, communication, and more can help dismantle pre-conceived notions and give all workers the tools they need to work with different generations. Through this training, offered by BizLibrary, you can start to build a culture of learning that will also help to bridge generational gaps, boost morale, and improve engagement and performance.

Additional Resources:

