

Managing blended generations within the workplace may not be as challenging as you think. Each unique generation brings a different prospective and valuable input to organizations and work teams, but its important to understand their unique work motivations and aspirations. Flexibility in adapting to the different work styles and accommodating their preferences is important in building successful multi-generational work environments. Merging and leveraging their diversity and knowledge creates a connected and collaborative work environment that can be quite beneficial to your organization.

Identifying Which Generations Your Employees Fall Into:

- Veterans - born between 1922 and 1945
- Baby Boomers - born between 1946 and 1964
- Generation X - born between 1965 and 1980
- Millennials (also called Generation Y) - born between 1980 and 2000

About Veterans

The Veteran generation, also referred to as the “greatest generation” were influenced by rationing, closed businesses and failed banks. Members of this generation spend money conservatively. The Great Depression forced one of every four workers to beg for work after savings and jobs were lost. When they entered the work force, there was a clear pecking order, a division of labor and always a clear distance between the boss and worker. Neither the bosses nor the workers thought of themselves as intellectual equals. This generation of workers may lack computer skills, although most are willing to learn. For the Veteran generation member, teamwork means working with a large group with a clearly designated leader who is in control and can convey and enforce the rules and keep members on task. Veterans prefer personal forms of communication, such as personal conversations or hand-written notes, and are most

comfortable with a directive management style and workplace formality.

Veteran Generation

- Are highly patriotic
- Are loyal to their employer
- Work well in a hierarchical management structure
- Leave their personal life at home
- Are dedicated to tasks

About Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomer generation spent its youth fighting power and demanding change and has been at the forefront of the expansion of individual freedom. They were leaders in the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, gay rights, handicapped rights and the rights to privacy and are enjoying meaningful and fulfilling lives well into their 80s. Baby Boomers are considered to be top performers with a wealth of knowledge and a multitude of valuable experience that you won't find through any Internet search or on a networking site. Baby Boomers are optimistic and driven and are healthier and better educated than their parents were at this age. Baby Boomers who are willing to share their high levels of knowledge in the workplace are a valuable asset to companies. They can be key players in mentoring programs, coaching other employees, developing new strategies and conducting company research. A large majority of Baby Boomers are technically savvy, which aids in creating a smooth and easy blend in the multi-generational work environment.

Baby Boomers

- Have a wealth of experiential knowledge
- Are willing to share their knowledge with others
- Are independent workers but enjoy working with teams
- Are driven to succeed
- Look at a job as a “calling”

About Generation X

Generation Xers take their employment seriously and have redefined the definition of loyalty. Generation Xers experienced their parents being laid off work, job insecurity, and divorce. Many Gen Xers were "latch-key" kids, which lead to their high levels of independence, resilience and adaptability. They work well in multicultural settings and desire a fun place to work and a practical approach to getting the job done. Gen Xers see a career lattice, not a career ladder. This generation is typically noncommittal and enjoys the option to move laterally, stop, and restart their career as needed. They dislike rigid or very authoritative work requirements and prefer mentoring that is more hands-off. Gen Xers work best when they are given the desired outcome and the opportunity to strategize out how to achieve it.

Gen X

- Strive for work-life balance
- Crave feedback
- Are independent and resourceful
- Have a "free-agency" mentality
- Are technologically savvy
- Look at a job as a contract

About Millennials

Millennials are optimistic, ambitious, enthusiastic, social, educated, and goal-oriented and the largest generation since the Baby Boomers. Millennials are accustomed to quick answers, a constant flow of information, and immediate gratification. They want challenging work with clear direction and leadership and thrive on regular praise and rewards for their efforts. It is important for Millennials to be included on teams while working in a positive, friendly and fun environment. Millennials want to feel valued, respected and enjoy a work-life balance. This generation does not cope well with critical feedback or failure. Millennials keep their options open and if an employer does not meet their expectations, they can communicate that to thousands of their associates with a click of the mouse.

Millennials

- Are called the "always on" generation
- Are technologically savvy
- Are energetic
- Are politically savvy
- Are collaborative and team-oriented
- Relate to those born between 1900-1945

Effectively Managing the Blended Workplace

Each generation exhibits great passion for the work they do and brings an array of valuable perspectives and ideas to the workplace. Managers should be prepared to provide appropriate employee training along with clear goals and expectations and providing regular feedback. Each generation has the ability and the capacity to easily blend and work extraordinarily well together. Team managers can help create a more cohesive team by understanding there are generational differences and being open to talking about them. Managers can initiate conversation related to each generation and ask team members about their individual needs and preferences. Encouraging open communication creates an increased comfort level where team members can speak openly about what is or is not working well. Managers will want to be sensitive and respectful of individual views and different perspectives. These are all positive steps toward achieving success in effectively managing your blended workforce.

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