Generations at Work:
Collision, Confusion or Collaboration?

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Communication skills coach & trainer

- Performance coaching
- Generational differences
- Conflict skills
- Working to strengths
- Building teams

Author: Dancing with Strangers: Communication skills for transforming your life at work and home and 52 Communication Tips
Demographics are Changing

Figure 1
**Millennials will comprise the majority of the workforce by 2025**

2015  |  2020  |  2025  |  2030  |  2040
---|---|---|---|---

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
The Conflict

• More than 70% of older employees are dismissive of younger worker’s abilities.
• 50% of employers say the younger employees are dismissive of the abilities of their older co-workers.
When Generations Fail To Communicate: the Impact

- Turnover rates
- Tangible costs (recruitment, hiring, training, retention)
- Intangible costs (morale)
- Grievances and complaints
- Loss of productivity
- Perceptions of fairness & equity
What is a Generation?

A society-wide peer group born over approximately 20 years, who possess common characteristics, distinct attitudes, behaviors, expectations, and motivational buttons.
Common experiences
+ shared values
YOUR GENERATION
Generations in the Workplace

- Traditionalists (1922-45)
- Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- Generation X (1965-1980)
- Millennials/Gen Y (1980 and on)
The Four Generations at Work

- Traditionalists: 35%
- Boomers: 30%
- Gen Xers: 18%
- Millennials: 17%

Legend:
- Traditionalists
- Boomers
- Gen Xers
- Millennials
What were you into when you were about age 10?

The first 20 years of our lives is when we are most impressionable and when our personality is most open to influence.
Our four generation workforce provides challenges

Traditionalists  Boomers  Gen X  Gen Y
TRADITIONALISTS

- 95% have retired
- Have institutional knowledge
- Strong work ethics and values
- See themselves as vigorous, contributing members of the workforce
Who are they?

- 1924-1945
  - 66+ years in age – still in the workforce
- GI Generation: WWII (Builders)
- Disciplined, self-sacrificing; teamwork; unified; loyal
- Respect authority
- Place duty before pleasure
- Delay gratification; savers
- Feedback: no news is good news
Defining Events

- Great Depression
- World War II
- Korean War
- GI Bill
- The A-Bomb

- Government Expansion
- Social Security
- Golden Age of Radio
- Silver Screen
- Patriotism
Traditionalists in the Workplace

- Are loyal to employer
- Expect loyalty in return
- Good interpersonal skills
- Believe promotions, raises and recognition should come from tenure
- Measure work ethic on timeliness, productivity, and not drawing attention

Traditionalists (1922-45)
Generational Interaction

Working with Traditionalists

What they bring to the team:
- Good interpersonal skills
- Good work ethic

Areas of conflict:
- May struggle with diversity of workforce
- May struggle with technology
BABY BOOMERS

• The “Me” generation.
• Managers running our organizations today.
• Career oriented.
• Feedback: Love it!
Who are they?

1946 - 1964

• 47-65 years old

Largest population – 80 million

• Started nine months after WWII ended
• Huge consumers.
• Want conveniences.
• Team and process oriented.
• Instant gratification – willing to go into debt.
Defining Events

- Civil Rights
- Sexual Revolution
- Cold War
- Space Travel

- Assassinations
- Vietnam
- Environment Revolution
- Original “Sit In”
- Television
- Space Travel
Boomers in the Workplace

• Strong work ethic
• Hard work measured in hours
• Believe teamwork is critical to success
• Believe relationship building is important
• Expect loyalty from those they work with
Generational Interaction

Working with Boomers’

What they bring to the team:
• Driven and service oriented
• Good team players

Areas of conflict:
• Dealing with conflict
• Self-promotion
GENERATION X

- The next generation of leaders
- The most well educated generation
- Goal-oriented
- Free agents vs. company loyalists
- Want to be challenged
- Led the dot.com boom
- Independent
Who are they?

- 1965-1980
  - 35-46 years old
- About 44 million of them
- Independent, disillusioned; skeptical; defensive; flexible
- Well educated
- Work to live, not live to work
- Stay with job if challenged/opportunities
- View money as only part of equation
Defining Events

- Fall of Berlin Wall
- Watergate
- Women’s Liberation
- Desert Storm
- Energy Crisis
- Aids
- Divorce rate – broken homes
- Latchkey kids
- Cable TV, 24-hr media
- Cell phones
- Microwaves
- Personal computers
Gen Xers in the Workplace

• Want open communication regardless of position, title, or tenure
• Respect production over tenure
• Value control of their time
• Look for a person to whom they can invest loyalty, not company
Generational Interaction

Working with Gen Xers’

What they bring to the team:
• Open to receiving feedback
• Good at networking

Areas of conflict:
• Nomadic
• Fear of becoming stagnant
MILLENNIALS

Born after 1980
- Age 34 and younger
- 81 million – larger than Boomers

Characteristics
- Strong self-image; very inclusive; technologically superior; diverse
- Socially conscious; out in record numbers working for social causes
Gen Y Is The Largest Percentage Of The Workforce

- Matures: 17%
- Gen X: 18%
- Gen Y: 35% (46% by 2020)
- Boomers: 30%
Who are they?

• Value independence
• Look for new challenges
• Challenge the status quo
• Want to make an impact
• Earning money = immediate consumption
Defining Events

- Oklahoma Bombings
- Internet access
- Columbine
- Kids shooting kids
- Technology

- Child focused world
- 9/11
- Globalization
- Clinton/Lewinsky
- War in Afghanistan and Iraq
Millenials in the Workplace

- High-performance and high maintenance
- Want an individual to help them achieve their goals
- Want open, constant communication and positive reinforcement from their boss
- Want a job with great personal fulfillment
- Don’t tolerate micro-managers well
- Search for ways to shed stress in their lives

Millenials/Gen Y (1980-on)
Generational Interaction

Working with Millennials

What they bring to the team:
• Technologically superior
• Appreciate diversity

Areas of conflict:
• Need more recognition
• Not hierarchical – want equal access
• Value skills over experience
Working with Millennials

Be prepared for…
• high expectations
• possible involvement of parents

Don’t…
• expect them to pay their dues
• throw a wet blanket on their enthusiasm

Do…
• encourage them
• mentor them
• learn from them
Provide Leadership and Guidance

- Want daily feedback
- Want to see big picture
- Be committed to coaching and spending more time when you hire them
- Provide structure
- Demonstrate long term value of staying
- Make groups and teams part of their job
- Be flexible
Generational Feedback

- Traditionalists – “No news is good news.”
- Boomers – “Feedback once a year and lots of documentation.”
- Xers – “Sorry to interrupt but how am I doing?”
- Millennials – “Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button.”
Authority

• Traditionalist sand Boomers respect authority and hierarchy.

• Gen Xers and Millennials want a more collaborative environment; independence is a priority.
Traditionalists and Boomers
Don’t challenge or question status quo.

Xers and Millennials: Taught to speak up.
5 Core Principles to Working Well Together

1. Be aware of differences
2. Create healthy relationships
3. Teamwork is your bridge
4. Don’t make assumptions
5. Make expectations clear
1. Be Aware of Differences

- Know who you are talking to.
- Respect each other.
- Learn to accept and appreciate each other’s perspective.
PAUSE!
2. Create Relationships: People Like People Like Them

- **Find some common ground.** What do you have in common? Keep digging until you find something.

- **Listen!** Practice your active listening skills, the most powerful connector of all!
The “Platinum Rule”

...treat others the way they want to be treated!
3. Teamwork is your bridge

The commonality of all generations is collaboration and teamwork.

Embrace that!
4. Avoid the assumption trap

1. Don’t make them.

2. Ask for clarification.
Present Moment Feedback

Ask: May I give you some feedback?

1. This is what I am experiencing...

2. This is what I am feeling...

3. This is what I am wanting...
5. Make Expectations Clear

• This will reduce most, if not all, of your workplace problems!

• Here is what I expect:
  – Here’s what that looks like…..
  – Do you understand? Can you do that?
Describe what you want

**R-E-S-P-E-C-T**

What does it:
- Look like?
- Sound like?
- Feel like?
Describe the “Gap”

1. We have a problem – and I need your help.
2. Here is what we are expecting…
3. Here is what we are experiencing…
4. We need to close the gap between those two points.
Shovel while the piles are small!
Managing the Generations

- Don’t dwell on differences
- Build collaborative relationships
- Study your employees
- Create opportunities for cross-generational mentoring
- Consider life paths instead of career paths
93% of all Communication is non verbal

- 55% Tone
- 38% Visual
- 7% Verbal
Positive Communication Builders

- Tone
- Choice of Words
Positive connections

- Avoid distractions
- Use open body language
- Use eye contact
- Remember names
- Greet people (look up, smile)
- Apologize when appropriate
- Say “please” and “thank you”
Use appreciation and feedback

– Be respectful
– Give regular, positive feedback
– Catch someone doing something good
– Do it often
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Model</th>
<th>New Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Loyalty to institution</td>
<td>• Free agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rank, hierarchy and following rules</td>
<td>• Autonomy and independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• System and process</td>
<td>• Action and results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Safety security</td>
<td>• Challenge, risk and innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Career and advancement</td>
<td>• Work-life balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Experiment with mixed age teams

• Develop incentive plans that matter to each generation

• Conduct surveys to understand needs
Don’t

• Reinforce stereotypes or dwell on differences

• Act like a top-down manager

• Assume you know how to motivate employees younger or older than you
BENEFITS OF GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE 2020 WORKFORCE

"You can be my coach and mentor." - Millennials

"I have a lot of experience to share." - Baby Boomers

Common Trait: Excellent Performers

- Tech savvy
- Ambitious
- Entitlement

- Work-life balance
- Collaboration
- Efficiencies

- Independence
- Added value
- Whatever it takes

Millennials

Baby Boomers

Self-reliance
Dedication
Sacrifice
Provide Leadership for Success

- Mentor
- Lead by Example
- Vision
- Motivate
- Coach
- Inspire
- Teach
- Teamwork