# Effectively Engaging a Generationally Diverse Workforce

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Clash of the Generations

- For the first time in history, we have four generations in the workplace
- Half of the US workforce is now 40 or older
- One quarter of the US workforce is now 50 or older
- The fastest growing population segment is people 85 years and older
- 8 out of 10 baby boomers expect to work past the standard retirement age

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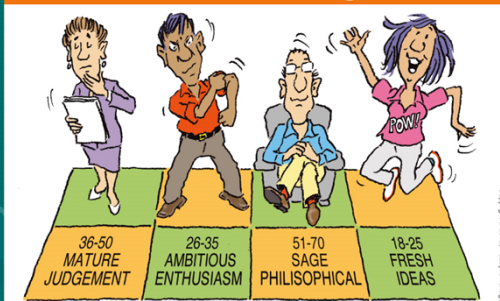
Purpose

- Learn about the four generational cohorts of today's workforce
- Gain knowledge about generational cohorts to understand not only the workforce, but also the customers, clients or patients we serve
- Learn how one's generational cohort affects values, learning, work styles, demands and issues
- Learn how to engage workers from these different generational cohorts in order to hire them, retain them and extract the maximum amount of productivity from them
- Learn the value of what each generation brings to the workforce and how to harness those strengths

The workforce is changing

- Why do young workers seem to need more direct instruction?
- Why do young workers need information on how to work? On professional behavior? On work habits?
- How do we help young workers apply the knowledge and skills typical of their generation that we don't know or share?
- How do we get them to be more like us?
- What do we need to change to accommodate them?

Four Major Generations At Work Today

- Traditionalists: Born before 1946
  Ages 74 and up (mid 70s and up)
- Baby Boomers: Born between 1946 & 1964
  Ages 55 and 73 (mid 50s to mid 70s)
- Generation X: Born between 1965 & 1979
  Ages 40 and 54 (40s-mid-50s)
- Millennials: Born between 1980 & 2000
  Ages 19-39 (20s and 30s)
- Post-Millennials or iGen: Born after 2000

Trends in the 1920s, 30s and early 40s that affect Traditionalists' Personality

- **Progress in Women's Rights-** Women won the right to vote, worked for the war effort
- **The Labor Movement-** child labor laws introduced, rise of unions- 5 day workweek, weekends, benefits
- **The Great Depression-** Almost everyone fell on hard times, high unemployment, food scarcity, loss of homes

Historic Influences continued

- **The New Deal-** Progressive solutions to regulate business and banking and to prevent economic ruin for individuals, especially the elderly (e.g. social security)
- **World War II-** First attack on US soil since the War of 1812, many men served in the war, high death rates, high trauma, many quick marriages as men went off to war

Traditionalists:
(People in their 70s, 80s and 90s) Today's Seniors Value

- **Privacy**
- **Hard work/dedication/sacrifice** (believe in paying their dues; because it is the right thing to do)
- **Career** identifies who they are
- **Trust** (his word is his bond)
- **Formality** (formal dress and organizational structures)
- **Respect for Authority** and institutional leadership
- **Social order/Law and order/Adherence to rules**
- **Frugality** (depression had an impact on how their families operated; believe in saving things)

How to Work Effectively with Traditionalists

- Believe their word, don't focus on body language or inferences
- Don't waste their time
- Be formal and respectful when interacting with them
- Prefer face to face or written communication
- Use their experience as an asset

When Traditionalists are Clients

- Don't rush things. Take time for a relaxed pace
- Establish rapport by being respectful in the old-fashioned way. Say thank you, please, Mr., Mrs. Sir and Ma'am
- Talk to them face to face
- Use good grammar, clear enunciation, no profanity

Trends of the 1950s, 60s and early 70s that effect the Baby Boom Generational Personality

- **Cold War-** Threat of Bomb-fear of the bomb, of lagging behind the Soviet Union, spurred the race to space
- **Camelot-** The hope of the Kennedys, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and landing on the moon was a positive influence
- **Civil Rights Movement-** Beginning of change for minorities
- **Vietnam War-** led to resistance- some to communists and some to our own government (e.g. anti-war movement).
- **Watergate-** with the downfall of Nixon, vengeance was theirs

Baby Boomers
Today's Middle Aged Value

- **Competition**
- **Change** (thrive for possibilities and constant change)
- **Hard work** (started the workaholic trend; work hard to get ahead)
- **Success**
- **Body Language**

Baby Boomer Values

- **Teamwork-** dislike command and control style of their predecessors
- **Personal gratification and growth**
- **Anti rules and regulations-** challenge the system
- **Inclusion** as long as the person performs
- **Will fight for a cause**

How to Work Effectively with Baby Boomers

- Be careful how you communicate non-verbally
- Be open and direct, but not controlling
- Answer questions thoroughly and expect to be pressed for details
- Present options to show flexibility in your thinking
- Give them a voice
- Recognize their accomplishments

When Boomers are Clients

- Be personable- won't chat but like warmth
- Use their name- like name recognition
- In a meeting take time to interact and establish rapport before getting down to business
- Recognize their loyalty

Trends from the 1970s and 80s that shaped the Generation Xers

- **US Stock Market Crash and Recession-** Gas lines, emphasis on conserving home energy
- **Latch Key Children**- Divorce rate began to rise and more mothers began entering the workforce
- **AIDS epidemic**
- **Disasters-** Chernobyl nuclear accident, Exxon Valdez oil spill, Challenger space shuttle exploded, Tiananmen Square massacre in China
- **Fall of the Berlin Wall-** End of the Cold War
- **Emergence of the PC and Web**

Generation X
Today's Adults Value

- **Entrepreneurial spirit-** believe in investing in their own development rather than their organization's. Cautious about investing in relationships with employers because experience has shown that these relationships are not reliable.
- **Independence and creativity-** have clear goals and prefer to manage their own time and solve their own problems rather than having them managed by a supervisor
- **Value access to information**
- **Feedback**- need continuous feedback, use this feedback to adapt to new situations. Generation is flexible

Gen X Values

- **Pragmatic-** work hard, but would rather find quicker more efficient ways to working so that they can have time for fun.
- **Quality of Work and Life**- While Boomers are working hard to climb the ladder and stay on top, Gen Xers are working harder to have more time to balance work and life responsibilities
- **Can be cynical, aloof and self reliant**, especially as compared to the Millennials. They were the latchkey kids, children of divorce, kids with 2 working parents, made to work in high school and college, in the shadow of the Boomers

How to Effectively Work with Those from Generation X

- Use e-mail as primary communication tool
- Talk in short sound bites to keep their attention
- Ask them for their feedback and provide them with regular feedback
- Share information with them on a regular basis and strive to keep them in the loop
- Use an informal communication style
- Let them do a job their own way and in own time
- Take time out for those who are struggling
- Tap into their adaptability

When Gen Xers are Clients

- Be efficient. Competence more important than schmoozing
- Ask a lot of questions. Be available. Be prepared with facts and figures
- Don't hover
- Like technology and self service

Conflict Between Boomers and Xers

- Boomer say Xers:
  - Aren't loyal; Have no work ethic; Are not committed; Are self focused; Have no respect
- Xers say Boomers:
  - Are too political; Are hypocritical; Are workaholics; Need validation; Are self righteous
- Xers just want to get the job done; Boomers driven by the mission of the organization
- Xers will change jobs 7 times over the course of their careers

New Life Stage Has Been Added: Emerging Adulthood

- Gen Xers and Millennials did or are becoming adults as late as 28-30
- Partly due to economy: Can't easily be financially independent at 18. Need for more education and/or training to get a decent paying job
- College and graduate school extend dependence on parents into the late 20s
- Average age of marriage is now 27 for women and 29 for men

Trends of the 1990s and 00s that effect the Millennial Generational Personality

- **Focus on children and family-**more attention on this generation while growing up than even the Boomers experienced
- **Scheduled, structured lives-** busiest generation of children, facing time pressures traditionally reserved for adults
- **Multiculturalism**- more daily interaction with other ethnicities and cultures than ever before
- **Terrorism**- Oklahoma City, Columbine and other school shootings, 911

Trends Affecting Millennials

- **Heroism**- Emerging out of those acts of violence, watched the American hero- police, firefighters
- **Patriotism**- very politically engaged
- **Crash of 2008-** reduced job prospects, even as college debt high
- **Parent advocacy-** raised by active, involved parents who often interceded on their behalf. Challenged poor grades, negotiated with the soccer coach, visited college campuses, etc. Millennials actually LIKE their parents.
- **Globalism**- see things as global, connected and open for business 24/7

Treated in a Particular Way by Parents and In School: Messages

- **Be smart- You are special**- Catered to- Nickelodeon, Baby Gap
- **Leave no one behind**- taught to be inclusive and tolerant of other races, religions and sexual orientations
- **Connect 24/7**- Learned to be interdependent on family, friends and teachers.
- **Achieve now!**- Parents gave them the best they could
- **Serve your community**- Volunteer and have a strong sense of social and environmental justice

Digital Divide

- However, many did not grow up with these advantages- mostly due to lack of technology of many
- 20-30% grew up in poverty- more dramatic difference between those from affluent families and those from poor families than in any other generation

Millennials
Adolescents and Emerging Adults Value

- **Positive reinforcement-** members of the cyber generation value positive reinforcement at accelerated rates
- **Autonomy-** want more input into how they are learning and the independence to do it
- **Optimism and Positive attitudes-** grew up during tranquil times and have an optimistic outlook on life in general
- **Diversity-**grew up with more diversity
- **Money-** is used to making and spending money
- **Technology-** valued and used as a tool for multi-tasking
- **Civic minded-** group work, collaboration, services

How Millennials are Described

- Also called the Boomlet, Nexters, Gen Y, Echo Boomers, Internet Generation, Nintendo Generation
- Have more in common with BB and Traditionalists than Gen Xers
- Sociable, optimistic, talented, well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, influential, and achievement oriented.
- Arriving to the workplace with higher expectations than any generation before them

How to Work Effectively with Millennials

- Use action words and challenge them at every opportunity
- Don't talk down to them- they will resent it
- They prefer e-mail, text messaging, IMing and web communication
- Seek their feedback constantly and provide them with regular feedback
- Use humor and create a fun learning and work environment. Don't take yourself too seriously
- Encourage them to take risks so that they can explore new ways of learning and getting job tasks done

How to work with Millennials

- **Be a leader-** they like good role models and structure
- **Challenge them** – they want learning opportunities, to be assigned projects they can learn from, looking for growth, development and career path
- **Like to work with friends-** like being friends with co-workers, add social aspects to workplace
- **Let's have fun-** Add humor to the workplace
- **Respect them**- they want their ideas treated respectfully
- **Be flexible**- rigid schedules don't fit with their action packed lifestyles

Differences

- While Millennials have been in school, more than in any time in our history have been diagnosed with learning differences and disabilities and were accommodated
- More college students the last 15 years have been diagnosed with moderate to severe mental health issues- better medication has helped them cope better and do more in the world than ever before
- As the Millennials have left college and entered the workforce the past 17 years, more are coming to work on medications to manage learning, behavioral and emotional issues
- These differences and societal shifts mean that each young worker is used to being treated as an individual
- I am not sure HR Departments and management in workplaces recognize or are ready for this

When Millennials are Clients

- Savvy shoppers due to on-line exposure
- Be respectful
- Be positive- avoid sarcasm and irony unless it is very clever and funny
- Pick up the pace- bored by methodical people and long lines
- Make website and space visually appealing to young people.

Post-Millennials or iGen is Coming

- Grew up after 9/11- have only known US at war
- Grew up during 2008 crash, decline of middle class- stress on families
- Fear of student debt, affordable college, school shootings and other forms of terrorism
- More risk averse- lower substance use, teen pregnancy.
- Greater on-time high school graduation
- More progressive

Important Take Away

- a) We are all shaped by circumstances that are out of our control
- b) These circumstances affect our values
- c) People often assume that if they value something that they are "right" or "correct" and that people who don't share their values are "wrong." But, really most of the values we discussed have an upside and a downside.

Important Take Away continued

- For example- it is good to be frugal but not to the point of depriving people of what they need- sometimes generosity is what is needed.

- d) Thinking that we are "right" and others are "wrong" can lead to conflict that is unnecessary

Important Take Away continued

- We need to value the diversity that people bring to the workplace- whether that diversity stems from race, ethnicity, personality or what generation you come from.
- All of those various types of diversity give us a slightly different lens of the world and a different value set.

Important Take Away continued

- The value of having a diverse team in the workplace is that people with diverse values and lenses can help one another avoid errors, bad decisions due to groupthink- that happens when everyone shares the same worldview and values- they have blind spots and miss important information as a result and make terrible errors- like the Bay of Pigs incident.

Important Take Away continued

- So we need to embrace the differences our co-workers bring to the workplace.
- Utilize the strengths of each generation and test to make sure all voices are heard on important decisions so that the best decision can be made will all viewpoints and values represented.
- This is particularly true of public servants like everyone working in human services!

Generational Handoff

- Huge numbers of Boomers will be retiring over the next 10 years
- Millennials and Gen Xers will be needed to step into leadership positions- need to think of them as leaders now!!!
- With Millennials- be prepared for high expectations
- Don't expect them to "pay their dues"
- Don't throw a wet blanket on their enthusiasm
- Encourage them
- Mentor them
- Learn from them

The handoff

- Hate menial work but can multitask
- Lack skills for dealing with difficult bosses but goal oriented
- Impatient but have a positive attitude
- Lack experience but have technical savvy
- Overconfident but collaborative

Conflict Between Xers and Millennials

- Xers say Millennials:
  - Don't know how to work, don't work hard enough, need too much instruction, need too much flexibility, need too much praise, are spoiled and narcissistic
- Millennials say Xers:
  - Are too micromanaging, don't explain tasks well enough, are dismissive of their skills and talents, won't pass along organizational knowledge
- Millennials want to learn and grow; Xers just want to get the job done with as little hassle as possible
- Millennials will change jobs 10 or more times over the course of their careers

Managing the Generational Mix

- Have Gen Xers and Millennials teach Traditionalists and Boomers about technology and in turn mentor them on organizational culture, how to be successful, etc.
- Boomers and older Gen Xers will relate well to the young because their children are Millennials
- Boomers need to get to the point, follow through on promises of "empowerment," pass along knowledge and communicate more efficiently
- Help the different generations get to understand each other better. Have Generational Awareness Week-post photos from the era, slang and popular expressions, play music popular in each era

Managing the Generational Mix

- Come up with three rewards specific to each generation
- Do a generational diversity audit for your organization
- Have people pair up to learn about each other's generation
- Watch a movie that focuses on a generation other than your own. Step into the perspective of the characters-how might you see things differently?
- Create the management profile that is ideal for each generation
- Encourage multi-generational work teams

Relevance to Government Workplace

- **Why do today's workers seem to need more direct instruction?**
  - Given more structure as children
  - Not true of all situations. If they can do research on their own using computers, web, etc they may learn better than us telling them and can apply to a work problem
  - Many lack work experience so need more instruction that may seem logical or simple

Relevance Government Workplace

- **Why do today's workers need information on how to work?**
  - Have less work experience
  - More casual, so need to be taught how workplace operates
  - More flexible, parents more indulgent, trying to fit in a lot of activities so not always on time, there the whole time, sitting at a desk. More active
  - Don't know what is expected
  - Work differently
  - We may need to change our expectations and give them more flexibility- this is very difficult in the public sector with high public scrutiny and thus high expectations for HR and policy to oversee work

Relevance to Government Workplace

- How do we help them apply the knowledge and skill typical of their generation that we don't know or share?
  - Learn from them and why they value what they do
- How do we get them to be more like us?
  - Take the time to give them feedback
  - Give feedback in positive manner
  - Show how the change in behavior will help them learn and grow and succeed
  - Be more collaborative

Given the Difference From the Baby Boomers: How to create loyalty?

- How to generate more loyalty among young workers?
  - Both Gen Xers and Millennials want to grow and learn and not just do the work
  - They want to know why things are done the way they are
  - They want to look for efficiencies- how to use technology to make the workplace better
  - They want to have time for fun, balance
  - They want feedback on what they are doing, learning

Reinforcement

- Positively reinforce good work, practice and interpersonal behavior through praise
- Extinguish poor work, practice or interpersonal behavior through ignoring, correcting, dialoguing

Reinforce New Behavior

- Help young workers retain new skills through repetition
- Give young workers refreshers of training concepts, skills, practice protocols
- Have young workers journal their experience on the job and bring up questions or observations in weekly supervision meetings
- Talk about knowledge related to skill or protocol
- Demonstrate the skill or protocol
- Observe the young worker execute the skill or protocol
- Give immediate and concrete, specific feedback on performance
- Praise positive execution of skills and protocols

Help Transfer of Learning

- Have the younger worker engage in a similar task in another case, with another client, in another setting, with a person with a different problem to see the transferability of the skill across areas or issues and to reinforce the skill
- Have them teach the skill, protocol or policy to another person to reinforce the knowledge and skill for them as they have to learn it well enough to teach it

Supportive Supervisory Relationship

- Quality of the supervisory relationship is related to successful supervision
- Worker' perceptions of the quality of supervision is the most important factor in job satisfaction (Yankeelov, Barbee, Antle & Sullivan, 2009)
- Good supervisor is respected, accomplished, competent in their area of expertise

- Personal abilities such as empathy and genuineness must be high and used in the supervisory process to convey understanding of the young worker's difficulties, struggles and sense of accomplishment (Henggeler, et al 2002)
- Recognize personal strengths and abilities of young workers and know how to impart attitudes, behaviors and practices to specific skill learning (Stein & Lambert, 1995)
- Young workers today prefer supervisors who are flexible, amicable and approachable and who model the qualities of genuineness and congruence (Baird, 2004)

- Emphasis on young worker strengths rather than their deficiencies encourage them to reach for positive alternatives to unwanted practice behaviors (Baird, 2004)
- Behaviorally oriented young workers prefer supervisors who are task oriented and psychodynamically oriented students prefer warm, supportive and friendly supervisors (Lochner & Melchert, 1997)

Critical Thinking and Reflection

- Supervisors who use critical reflection and thinking processes turn novice learners/workers into informed learners/workers
- Explore alternative ways to thinking about practice and practice situations
- This gives young workers the opportunity to reflect on values, beliefs and expectations essential to good practice