

HOW TO MANAGE
generational differences
IN THE WORKPLACE

DIFFERENT GENERATIONS **WORKING TOGETHER IN HARMONY.**

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WORKING TOGETHER: 4 GENERATIONS IN HARMONY

Do you have multiple generations in your workforce? Do they work well together? Can you see what people of all ages bring to the table? Learn how to attract, retain, and make the most of different perspectives.

This Guide Explains:

- How the four generations can be defined – Boomer, Gen X, Millennial, Gen Z
- The differences and similarities between the various generations
- What each generation can learn from one another
- How differing cohorts can work harmoniously together



GENERATIONS DEFINED: THE FOUR PRIMARY AGE GROUPS IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE

From the newest entry-level employees, to those nearing retirement, most companies have employees that cross a wide range of ages.

WHAT DEFINES THESE GENERATIONAL COHORTS AND WHAT DO EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEM?

1. **Baby Boomers:** This group was born between 1946 and 1964. Their generation was part of a population spike immediately after the end of World War II. They are the most seasoned of the group with a wealth of knowledge, but often a resistance to change.
2. **Generation X:** Gen Xers were born between 1965 and 1980. As two-income families became common, they grew up to be independent and self-reliant.
3. **Millennials:** Born between 1981 and 1996, this group was the first generation to grow up with computers and the internet. They are tech-savvy and have a strong sense of social justice.
4. **Generation Z:** The newest generation to enter the workforce was born between 1997 and 2012. They are highly connected digital natives, with a diverse and global worldview.



GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Within the perceived weaknesses of each generation is a hidden strength that can be leveraged to fortify and grow the organization at every level.

Boomers: Institutional knowledge has value. As an increasing number of workers from this generation reaches retirement age, it's essential to capture what they know in a way that younger team members can easily reference. They are often described as ambitious, competitive, and focused on career advancement.

Gen X: The generation now in their forties and fifties has long had a reputation for being overlooked. Over the years, they've become known for just doing the work – often without accolades. Their strengths are independence, resourcefulness, and adaptability.

Millennials: Frequent feedback is good. Some regard the Millennial tendency to look for regular feedback as a need for validation and praise. On the contrary, regular check-ins ensure employees are on track – a much smarter model than an annual review. This group is considered to be tech-savvy, collaborative, and socially conscious.

Gen Z: Work doesn't need to have walls. Veteran employees may see their younger counterparts leaving at five on the dot or embracing remote work. They may fail to see them answering emails at nine p.m. or finishing projects from a far-flung location. They are known as digital natives, and tend to be creative and inclusive.



DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

Conversations about generational differences can devolve into negativity. But people who work in the same field or for the same company frequently have more in common than expected.

Are there differences? Sure! But employers and coworkers can learn from each other if they are willing to try.

For example, when Boomers entered the workforce, particularly women, they were expected to consider themselves lucky to have a job. It's not surprising they feel resentment when younger workers push back on job demands in favor of making time for friends and family.

By the same token, Boomers and Gen Xers would be wise to appreciate the value Millennials and Gen Zers place on relationships and notice they are getting the work done – even if it's not the way they would do it.



WHAT CAN GENERATIONS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?

Each generation has unique strengths and perspectives, and by working together, they can learn a lot from each other. Respecting each other's communication style can go a long way toward avoiding misunderstandings.

WHAT MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z CAN LEARN FROM BOOMERS AND GEN X

- **Experience and Wisdom**

Why repeat the same mistakes they already made and learned from earlier in their careers? Benefit from their skills and knowledge.

- **Work Ethic and Discipline**

They value hard work, persistence and determination.

- **Context and Perspective**

They know the history of the company and the industry – understand the evolution that got them to where they are now.

WHAT BOOMERS AND GEN X CAN LEARN FROM MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z

- **Tech-savviness and Adaptability**

Ask them about new technologies to be exposed to new ways of thinking and working.

- **Creativity and Innovation**

Their fresh perspective can help you think outside the box and embrace new ideas and approaches.

- **Open-Mindedness and Diverse Perspectives**

Follow their lead to be more inclusive and to value different cultures and backgrounds.



WHAT QUALITIES DO GENERATIONS SHARE IN THE WORKPLACE?

While each generation has unique characteristics, there are some values that all generations tend to have in common professionally. All generations want:

- **Respect:** Employees want to be recognized for their work, feel that their ideas and opinions are heard and be valued for their contributions.
- **Purpose:** They want to feel like they are making a difference and that their work is meaningful.
- **Opportunity:** They want to be challenged and learn new skills to advance their careers.
- **Work-Life Balance:** They want to find time for their personal lives and responsibilities, while enjoying a successful career.
- **Support:** They want to feel like they are part of a team with colleagues and managers who are supportive and empathetic.
- **Fair Compensation:** All generations want to be rewarded fairly for their work, being compensated in a way commensurate with the work they do.
- **Security:** They want to feel safe in their jobs and confident that their company is stable.

By recognizing and addressing these professional needs and values, employers can create a positive and inclusive work environment that appeals to employees of all generations.





HOW CAN DIFFERING COHORTS WORK HARMONIOUSLY TOGETHER?

Generations can work together by understanding and valuing each other's perspectives, skills, and experiences.

Foster open communication and mutual respect and encourage a willingness to learn from one another.

Collaboration and teamwork can also effectively bring different generations together to achieve a common goal.

Veteran employees have plenty to share with their younger counterparts but seldom get the opportunity to work with them.

Pair seasoned employees with new hires to avoid losing institutional knowledge when they retire.

Offer varied learning opportunities to employees to address their different learning styles, such as:

- Demonstrations or group training
- Manuals, videos, or online classes
- Bite-sized mobile-friendly training

Additionally, creating opportunities for intergenerational mentoring and learning can be beneficial for both older and younger generations.

HOW CAN COMPANIES RECRUIT DIFFERENT GENERATIONS?

Recruiting employees from different generations can be challenging, but several strategies can help:

- **Understand their values:** Tailor your approach to the specific needs of each group.
- **Use a variety of recruiting methods:** Attract the attention of different age groups with online job boards, social media, or networking events.
- **Use clear, concise language:** People have varying degrees of technical literacy. Use language that all candidates easily understand in job postings and other recruitment materials.
- **Highlight the company's culture:** Each generation may have different motivations for seeking employment. Communicate what sets your company apart to gain their interest.
- **Be open to flexible work arrangements:** Consider various work arrangements, such as remote work or flexible hours to accommodate work-life balance needs.

By following these strategies, you can create a recruitment process that is inclusive and welcoming to candidates from all generations.





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