

The Quips and Quests of Generations at Work

Facilitated by Pam Confer, Ph.D.

Learning Summary

Influences that Shape Each Generation:

- Notable societal events
- State of the economy
- Parenting styles
- Changing technology

How those Influences are Manifested:

- Demonstration of values
- Source of motivation
- Preferences of communication

Baby Boomers: “Stick and Stay” (1946–1964)

- Value competition, drive, personal gratification
- Believe loyalty is equal to longevity
- Believe work ethic is measured by “face time” and long hours at the office
- Prefer speaking face-to-face or over the phone, but are also comfortable with email
- Prefer annual performance appraisals
- View questioning authority as disrespectful

Gen Xers: “Aspire and Ascend” (1965–1979)

- Value adaptability, self-reliance, work-life balance, humor
- Believe loyalty is equal to expressing a commitment to results
- Believe there should be a healthy balance of work/life, but are willing to stay late to complete important projects
- Prefer email, but are comfortable with most forms of communication
- Believe in offering feedback as the situation calls rather than in a formal review process
- Believe it is acceptable to questioning those in positions of power, but don’t feel equal to them

Millennials: “Grow and Go” (1980–1995)

- Value frequent and positive feedback, instant gratification, meaningful work
- Believe loyalty must be earned by providing frequent opportunities for growth
- Integrate their professional and personal lives by completing work outside of normal office hours
- Prefer texting and social media over face-to-face and phone conversations
- Prefer instant feedback, preferably following the completion of a task
- Believe their opinions hold just as much weight as those in higher positions

Overcome Differences

- **Acknowledge:** Engage in civil conversation, seek to understand, listen
- **Accept:** Demonstrate empathy, examine your own attitude
- **Adjust:** Openly discuss preferences

**Remember: We are more alike than different!
We all hold the same fundamental values.**

Motivate Each Generation

- **Baby Boomers:** Acknowledge their hard work, express their importance to the organization, provide public recognition
- **Gen Xers:** Eliminate unnecessary rules, allow them flexibility in their work
- **Millennials:** Provide a mentor, help them find meaning, create a fun atmosphere

Unite Employees of All Ages

- Share institutional knowledge
- Build community: Connect personally, use reverse mentoring, develop traditions, serve others together