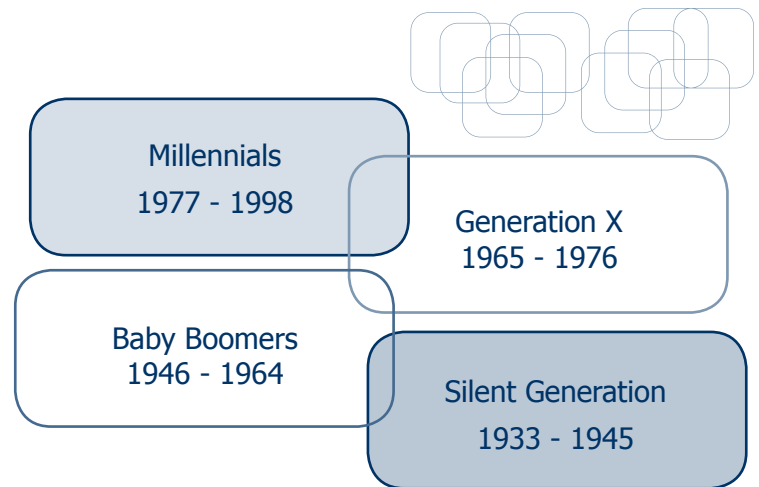


Welcome to the Generations

Today's managers and organizations have their work cut out for them. With four different generations sharing the workplace, it is harder than ever to understand what will motivate, engage and retain each employee. In addition, every generation has its own attitudes, perceptions and values that shape how its members regard work, and the influences that stimulate them to surpass expectations.



Millennials 1977 – 1998

The 75 million members of this youngest generation in today's workforce were raised at the most child-centric time in U.S. history. Millennials exude self-confidence, at times appearing cocky, perhaps a result of the shower of attention and high expectations from their parents.

The Learning Café calls them “Generation Y-not?” because this generation packs power and potential. Leaders are challenged to live up to the high standards and expectations Millennials bring to the workplace.

Sometimes coached by their parents, they do not see the value of paying their dues or earning their stripes. They perform best with some structure, especially those new to the workplace – they are learning to work as well as learning the work. Millennials also have a bit of a “whatever” view of title and position, showing less reverence for position that's simply based on experience, which they think Baby Boomers overemphasize. They respect knowledge and learning. They want a relationship with their boss. This does not always mesh with Generation X's love of independence and a hands-off style. Watch out! They will leave for greener pastures if challenge, learning and fun are absent from their work.

Millennials are typically team-oriented and work well in groups, preferring group work to individual endeavors. In addition, they are used to tackling multiple tasks with equal energy, so they expect to work hard. They are effective multi-taskers, having juggled school, sports, and social interests as children.

As you might expect, this group is technically literate like no one else. Technology has always been part of their lives, whether it is computers, the Internet, cell phones, text messaging, MySpace or YouTube.

Generation X 1965 – 1976

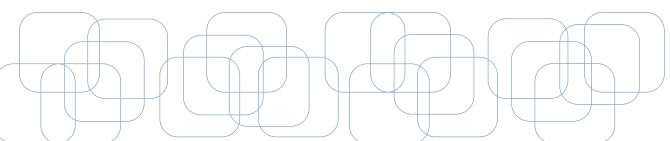
Generation X is the most documented, discussed and stereotyped generation in recent history. Living with the corporate footprint of previous generations, its 41 million members are reshaping organizations to meet their generation's priorities.

Generation X grew up in a very different world than previous generations. Divorce and working moms created latchkey kids out of over half of this generation - building traits of independence, resilience and adaptability. Generation X feels strongly that “I don't need someone looking over my shoulder.”

Generation X saw parents laid off or facing job insecurity, and many of them entered the workplace during the economic downturn of the '80s. Because of these factors, they redefined loyalty. Instead of remaining loyal to their company, their loyalty is most often to their work, their team and their immediate boss.

Today, Generation X is solidly at mid-career. They are managers, tenured employees, business owners - and they are busy raising families and contributing to their communities. They expect time flexibility that allows a separation of work from family.

This generation takes employability seriously; although for them, building a career portfolio supersedes climbing the career ladder. They continue to build a skill set that supports their need for independence even as they attain increasing levels of responsibility. They can move laterally, stop and start; their careers are more fluid with on ramps and off ramps.





Baby Boomers 1946 – 1964

The most populous generation in the U.S., 76 million Baby Boomers typically grew up amid economic prosperity, suburban affluence and strong nuclear families with stay-at-home moms. Some researchers divide the Baby Boomers into two groups – those born between 1946 and 1954 (the “Woodstock” group, known for their idealistic endeavors and social conscience) and those born between 1955 and 1964 (the “Zoomer” group, known for their preoccupation with “self”).

Boomers came into the workforce en masse, and made the rules by which many companies play. The Boomers’ paradox is that many are reaching a stage in their lives marked by ambivalence about the very rules they created. Nevertheless, this generation tends to be optimistic, competitive and focus on personal accomplishment. They have been on the world stage since infancy and were Time’s Person of the Year in 1966 (Time Magazine “Twenty-Five and Under”). Boomers have redefined everything from social values, politics, economics, corporations, environment to the media.

They work hard – maybe too hard. This generation amazingly increased our historical 40-hour workweek by one full month per year! As younger generations enter the workplace, Boomers are waiting for them to pick up this traditional approach to work.

This generation is comfortable in the culture they have created, and they view change as sometimes painful, yet inevitable. Many companies experience their biggest generational conflict when Boomer managers are confronted with younger employees who do not fit the mold that they, the Boomers, created.

Silent Generation 1933 – 1945

There are 52 million members of the Silent Generation and they defy generalization more than any other generation – so watch those stereotypes! While some have already left the workforce, many remain, and they are reinventing the concepts of career maturity and retirement.

The oldest members of the generation grew up in the aftermath of the Depression. However, their financial cycle moved from a cashless childhood to an affluent elderhood, due in part to economic growth, plentiful jobs, retirement benefits – and because of their propensity to live well within their means. They built their success on hard work, self-discipline and postponing material rewards.

As a generation, they put the group before the individual. Often referred to as the “facilitative generation,” many members took on national roles as diplomats, civil rights leaders and distinguished civil servants and politicians. Typically, employees from this generation are disciplined, loyal team players who work within the system. They have a huge knowledge legacy to share and embody a traditional work ethic.

Today’s economic climate, longer life expectancy and an enjoyment of work, are keeping Silents in the workplace longer. Whether they are postponing retirement or have retired and returned to work, many Silents are eager to continue working and trying new things. They see themselves as vigorous, contributing members of the workforce.

From the casual self-confidence and high expectations of the Millennials to Silents still hungry for new challenges, each generation in today’s workplace has its own deeply rooted perceptions and beliefs that are powerful and defining.

- The Learning Café

For more information on generations in the workplace
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