



The Multi-Generational Workforce: Identifying the Individual Groups

Keep in mind.

While introducing the different generations, remember that each description will include some generalizations. It is also important to note that not everyone born in a particular era exhibits all of the behaviors or characteristics normally associated with their generation.

That said, the historical context of each generation, as well as the formative cultural events, contribute to preferences, styles and perspectives which an employee brings to the workplace.

Would you like to find out more about how you can find success on a multi-generational team? Reach out! Your EAP provides resources, coaching and consultations. We are here for you and your family.

Silent or Traditionalist Generation: Born between 1925 and 1946, these employees experienced WWII and felt the impact of the Great Depression. These events that may have resulted in family separations during war, poverty or fear of it and difficulty finding work, helped create core values that likely informed their work ethic. Respect for authority, compliance and loyalty led to a disciplined, hard-working employee who understands the value of a secure job. Their communication style is primarily written and more formal. An employee from this generation worked in a very different Postal Service than we know today and brings with them a rich history. Having adapted to many changes over the course of their career, they embody resilience.

Baby Boomer Generation: Born between 1946 and 1964, this group grew up post-WWII and initially experienced a flourishing economy. Most Boomers identify strongly with their work and have even been labeled “workaholics” with a “live to work” mentality. They are very family oriented and sometimes refer to colleagues as their “work family.” Also known as the “Me Generation,” Boomers can be competitive. Most are well-educated, hard-working and loyal to the organization. They value cooperation and prefer face-to-face communication. It’s been said that Boomers like meetings more than any generation in the workplace. And lest you harbor the misconception that Boomers were not early IT adapters, consider that both Steve Jobs and Bill Gates were born in 1955.

Generation X: was born between 1965 and 1980. This was a generation of “latch-key” kids with dual income families. With an increasing divorce rate among their parents, they were skeptical, independent and critical thinkers. Much more global in their perspective than prior generations, they accept and value diversity. They love flexibility, taking risks and dislike being micro-managed. They place high value on family and personal time, tending to “work to live.” In today’s workplace, Gen X’ers are mature, moving up the ladder and taking on positions of authority. They still possess the energy of youth and bring experience and a strong entrepreneurial spirit to their work. They are comfortable using their voice, collaborating with peers and socializing digitally.

Millennials, also known as Generation Y: Born between 1981 and 1996, this generation is the most ethnically and racially diverse to date, surpassed only by Generation Z. Many entered the workplace during the height of an economic recession which shaped their life choices. They have a mindset that prioritizes being socially conscious and pay attention to how a business contributes to society. Their impact is already changing how businesses interact with customers. Millennials are driven by convenience, connection, high-energy, authenticity and trust. They value experiences more than possessions and may seek to work remotely or with flexible schedules. Millennials crave feedback and want to work “with” an organization rather than “for” it.

Generation Z: Born between 1997 and 2014, to this group, the world has never felt safe. They grew up with global terrorism, economic uncertainty and school shootings. This generation has never lived in a world without the internet. They prefer texting and messaging on mobile apps or other online platforms over more traditional types of written or telephonic communication. They are comfortable multi-tasking and processing vast amounts of information. They perceive information visually and may have shorter attention spans. They like edgy marketing and products. They will likely respond well to structure and predictability in the workplace. While personally frugal, cautious and more health conscious, this group tends not to judge others and are very tolerant of differences.