Mixing and Managing Four Generations of Employees

By Greg Hammill

futures resource partners inc
your workplace...your results
Think of the last time you heard comments like these ...

- You're right, but I'm the boss!
- Just do your job!
- I remember when ...
- The kid wants a promotion after six months on the job!
- No!

Four Generations at Work
### Generational Timeline Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans, Silent, Traditionalists</td>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>Generation X, Gen X, Xers</td>
<td>Generation Y, Gen Y, Millennial, Echo Boomers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Personal and Lifestyle Characteristics by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Values</td>
<td>Respect for authority</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Skepticism</td>
<td>Realism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conformers</td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td>Informality</td>
<td>Extreme fun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Disintegrating</td>
<td>Latch-key kids</td>
<td>Merged families</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>A dream</td>
<td>A birthright</td>
<td>A way to get there</td>
<td>An incredible expense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Media</td>
<td>Rotary phones</td>
<td>Touch-tone phones</td>
<td>Cell phones</td>
<td>Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One-on-one</td>
<td>Call me anytime</td>
<td>Call me only at work</td>
<td>Picture phones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write a memo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Money</td>
<td>Put it away</td>
<td>Buy now, pay later</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
<td>Earn to spend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pay cash</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Save, save, save</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**WORKPLACE CHARACTERISTICS**

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Ethic and Values</strong></td>
<td>Hard work, Respect authority, Sacrifice, Duty before fun, Adhere to rules</td>
<td>Workaholics, Work efficiently, Crusading causes, Personal fulfillment, Desire quality, Question authority</td>
<td>Eliminate the task, Self-reliance, Want structure and direction, Skeptical</td>
<td>What’s next, Multitasking, Tenacity, Entrepreneurial, Tolerant, Goal oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work Is ...</strong></td>
<td>An obligation</td>
<td>An exciting adventure</td>
<td>A difficult challenge, A contract</td>
<td>A means to an end, Fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Style</strong></td>
<td>Directive, Command-and-control</td>
<td>Consensual, Collegial</td>
<td>Everyone is the same, Challenge others, Ask why</td>
<td>*TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactive Style</strong></td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Team player, Loves to have meetings</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Participative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications</strong></td>
<td>Formal, Memo</td>
<td>In person</td>
<td>Direct, Immediate</td>
<td>E-mail, Voice mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feedback and Rewards</strong></td>
<td>No news is good news, Satisfaction in a job well done</td>
<td>Don’t appreciate it, Money, Title recognition</td>
<td>Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?, Freedom is the best reward</td>
<td>Whenever I want it, at the push of a button, Meaningful work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Messages That Motivate</strong></td>
<td>Your experience is respected</td>
<td>You are valued, You are needed</td>
<td>Do it your way, Forget the rules</td>
<td>You will work with other bright, creative people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work and Family Life</strong></td>
<td>Ne’er the twain shall meet</td>
<td>No balance, Work to live</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As this group has not spent much time in the workforce, this characteristic has yet to be determined.*
Generational Insights: “Mixing” Four Generations at work
All four generations rate their workspace as “important”

Knoll Study
## Most and Least important workspace features by generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Most Important</th>
<th>Least Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans</td>
<td>Physical comfort</td>
<td>Acoustic privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>Acoustic Privacy and Meeting Spaces</td>
<td>Engaging Workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>Engaging Workplace</td>
<td>Acoustic Privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>Engaging Workplace</td>
<td>Meeting Spaces</td>
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Importance of workspace features by generation

- Engaging Workplace
- Safety & Security
- Support for Casual Interaction
- Physical Comfort
- Acoustic Privacy
- Quality of Meeting Spaces

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Veterans

- The Great Depression
- The New Deal
- World War II
- Korean War

Politically conservative having lived through trying times

Expect Minimal Pampering

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Baby Boomers

- Cuban Missile Crisis
- Peace Corp
- Civil Rights Movement
- Vietnam War
- Moon landing
- Economic Recession
- Watergate
- Iranian Hostage Crisis

Split in 2:
- Traditional “older” boomers experimental, free-spirited, social cause oriented
- Younger “generation Jones” – jonesing – a general desire for material success
Generation X

- Fall of the Berlin Wall
- MTV Launch

“Baby Bust” due to the steep drop in the birth rate

Deeply affected by the lack of social and economic uncertainty in their childhoods.

Difficult job market – unfairly labeled the “slackers”
Generation Y

- 9/11
- Internet
- Social Media
- Portable computing

Larger cohort than the baby boomers because they are the offspring

Close to their doting parents and families

Seeks connection, values peer groups

Pragmatic, civic minded consensus building – not protesting and tearing down.
Future Workspace Themes

Workspace is transitioning between Baby Boomers, who designed the current workspaces, and Generation Y, who will influence the transition to a new workspace design....

- Choice
- Experience
- Integrated work
- Distributed Interaction
Importance of workspace features by generation

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Theme 1: Choice

- Setting for social activities
- Collaboration and interaction
- High degree of employee control
- Flexible workspace opportunities
- Technology, policies and features that enhance employee choice
Theme 2: Experience

- Shift from a supporting function to creating an experience
- Gen Y values connection, blends their work and private lives to let them connect within each
- Will evolve to become part of a holistic system that creates a work experience
Theme 3: Integrated work

- Future effective spaces will support the seamless transition of people moving between individual and group work modes
- Active Feel
- Will support the transition between individual and group work
- Individual spaces will be smaller and have less enclosures
- Flexible task seating
- Accommodate many functions at once
Meetings will be shorter in length, more casual and meeting spaces will need to reflect this.

Many informal workspaces – huddle rooms, touch down space

Wireless at work and accustomed to moving around the office while working
Generational Insights: “Managing” Four Generations at work
Involve all generations in design changes
Understand and respect preferences

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Allow time and design space for interaction
Educate all generations
Provide intergenerational insights
Respect each other’s preferences
Other Ideas
First time ever where we’ve had 4 generations mixing and mingling in the workplace
All four generations rate their workspace as important to them, but they value different characteristics in that space
Difficulty arises when we are too “single generationally” focused.
Give all generations the opportunity to identify preferences
Respect differences
Know that the workspaces today will look very different in a generation
Baby Boomers remember…it’s the Generation “Y”’s that will be looking after us as we age... 😊