



# Adapting to a Multi-Generational Workforce





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# Agenda



Talking about Generations  
The Four Generation Workforce  
Aligning To Workplace Culture  
Aligning to Your Workforce





# Talking About Generations



# What a generation is not

Fate or destiny

A universal set of behaviors or attitudes

A job qualification



# What is a generation?

A construction

Group identification

- Ascribed
- Avowed

An idea with some scientific validity



# Type your answers in the chat window

What is a trait you hear ascribed to millennials?

What is a trait you believe many millennials avow?





# What is a generation?

A hypothesis

Shorthand for commonalities  
and differences

A potential guide for more  
effective interactions



# What makes a generation?



## Environment



# The Four Generation Workforce



# The Four Generations

## Traditionalists

- Born before 1946

## Generation X

- Born 1965-1980

## Baby Boomers

- Born 1946-1964

## Millennials

- Born 1981-2004



# Traditionalists (Born before 1946)

- Formative Events

- Great Depression
- World War II
- American pre-eminence
- Cold War



- Typical Attitudes

- Traditional view of family
- Seek financial security

- At Work

- Loyal to employer (and expect employers to be loyal to them)
- Seniority key



# Baby Boomers (Born 1946-1964)

- Formative Events

- Cold War
- Civil Rights
- 1960s Social Revolution
- Watergate



- Typical Attitudes

- Skeptical toward authority
- Individualistic

- At Work

- Loyal to the team
- Experience key



# Generation X (Born 1965-1980)

- Formative Events

- Watergate
- Stagflation
- End of the Cold War
- The normalization of divorce
- Personal computer



- Typical Attitudes

- Independent
- Informal

- At Work

- Personal loyalty to individual leader
- Merit key



# Millennials (Born 1981-2004)

- Formative Events

- Polarized politics/media
- The Internet
- Terrorism/Continuous war
- Personal digital devices
- Social media



- Typical Attitudes

- Individualistic, yet group-oriented
- Tolerant
- Impatient
- Very close to family

- At Work

- Want mentors/coaches
- Contribution key







# Aligning to Workplace Culture



# Hire for Cultural Fit

Imparting skills and knowledge  
is relatively easy

Instilling values is not



# Workplace Culture

Workplaces take on the culture of those who occupy them, as well as those who lead them

We may be very comfortable with the current culture . . .

But that doesn't make all aspects of the current culture essential



# Intrinsic Values



Those things the workforce needs to consider important for their own sake



# Instrumental Values



Those things the workforce needs to value in the workplace in order to achieve certain organizational goals

- Whether they personally value these things for their own sake is not important



# Nonessential Values



What has come to be expected

What those already in the organization  
are comfortable with



Example:



Punctuality



# Type your answers in the chat window

What is a workplace value you believe is essential to the success of your organization?

What is a value commonly shared in your workplace that probably *isn't* essential to your organization's success?





# Hiring for the intrinsic values

## Application review

- What they say about themselves
- Work history evidence

## The interview

- “Can you remember a time when . . .”
- Hypothetical situations

## Probationary period

- Coach and evaluate



# Developing Instrumental Values

Illustrate the importance of these values to achieving organizational goals

Encourage or discipline with clarity about *why* the value is important





# Aligning to Your Workforce



# Communication



Be clear about expectations

Be open to innovative methods

Don't jettison what works

Adapt to the preferences of others when important



# Teach Everyone to Lead

## Lead themselves

- Solve your own problems alone or by seeking appropriate help

## Lead peers

- Collaborate effectively

## Lead upward

- Asking good questions of those up the chain of authority
- (Of course, this means the boss needs to be open to questions!)



# Don't stereotype Millennials



# Don't obsess over Millennials



# Move beyond command and control





# Model what you want to see



# Be open and honest



# Ask, don't assume



Be patient

With others

With yourself



For you, which of the following is most difficult to do in the workplace?

- A. Move beyond command and control
- B. Model what you want to see
- C. Be open and honest
- D. Ask, don't assume
- E. Be patient



Challenges are *opportunities*,  
not *liabilities*



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