

Generational Differences in the Workplace

A discussion on generational differences can be a useful tool in more deeply understanding peoples' perspectives. Generational trends assist people in considering life experiences and perspectives that a group of people may have in common. Defining a generation, though, is nuanced and not exact. While the generational trends can be used as a common language tool, there is caution in how we use the knowledge gained. It is more important to learn leadership skills around how to work with people, and generational trends provide a common language to **BEGIN** the discussion and dialogue.

Named Generations

- **"The Lost Generation."** Born 1883-1900. Refers to the "wandering spirit" due to war survivors, expatriates (particularly in France), Spanish flu pandemic, and the Great Depression.
- **"The Greatest Generation."** Born 1901-1927. Said to have saved the world, this generation won WWII.
- **"The Silent Generation."** Born 1928-1945. Known for their traditional and civic instincts.
- **"Baby Boomers."** Born 1946-1964. Known for being leaders of countercultural upheavals from the 1960s.
- **"Generation X."** Born 1965-1980. Depicted as savvy and entrepreneurial. Considered in their prime earning years, but did suffer major setbacks during the Great Recession from 2007-2009.
- **"Millennials."** Born 1981-1996. Considered one of the most diverse generations. Surpassing Baby Boomers as the largest group – growing influence in society, the workplace, and politics.
- **"Generation Z."** Born 1997-2012. Considered digital natives. Social patterns include spending more time alone, and higher rates of depression and anxiety.
- **"Generation Alpha."** Born 2012-2024. The first to all be born entirely in the 21st century.
- **"Generation Beta."** Born 2025-2039?

Adapted from Pew Research

Generational Perspectives

Generation Name	Baby Boomers; Moral Authority	Generation X; Baby Busters; Forgotten	Millennials; Generation Y; Echo Boom	Gen Z; iGen; Homelander Centennials	Alpha; Gen Glass; Gen C (Coronials); iPad
Birth Years (approximate)	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-1996	1997-2012	2013-2024
Words Used to Describe					
Values (3-5 words)					
Global or National Issues or Experiences					
Motivations & Priorities (what motivates employees? What are the employees' priorities?)					

Now What?

1. What was your most significant takeaway from the conversation?

2. What is one action you can commit to, starting today, to better navigate generational differences?

“Legacy is not what I did for myself. It’s what I’m doing for the next generation.”
~Vitor Belfort

About the Presenter



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Dr. Christine Gravelle is a leadership trainer, coach, and curriculum designer with over 15 years of leadership development experience. Christine currently serves as a Director in the Center for Executive Development - Mays Business School at Texas A&M University. She teaches Business Communication in the full-time MBA program and owns her own coaching and training business.

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Christine designs and facilitates leadership solutions for organizations to help them identify their leadership style, build high performing teams, and execute strategy. Her passion for leadership development, emotional intelligence, and team development has led her to consult internationally with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Rwanda and Peru on organizational development. Christine has also served as a representative to the United Nations on behalf of an NGO, focusing on global leadership competency development.

Christine is a Certified Professional Coach (CPC) through iPEC; Positive Intelligence Coach; Gallup Global Strengths Coach; Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) facilitator; DISC partner; 6 Working Genius facilitator; Hogan facilitator; Gallup CliftonStrengths facilitator; Energy Leadership Index (ELI) assessor; EQ-i 2.0 and EQ-i 360 assessor; and a trainer through *Leadership Trainer*. Christine earned a Ph.D. in Comparative & International Education with a focus on global leadership, M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction, and B.S. in Social Sciences.

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Generational Differences

Generation Name	Traditionalist; Builders; Silent	Baby Boomers; Moral Authority	Generation X; Baby Busters; Forgotten	Millennials; Generation Y; Echo Boom	Gen Z; iGen; Homelander Zoomers	Alpha; Gen Glass; Gen C (Coronials); iPad
~Birth Years	1928-1945	1946-1964	1965-1980	1981-1996	1997-2012	2012-2025
Type	Adaptive	Idealist	Reactive	Civic	Adaptive	Idealist
Words Used to Describe	Dependable, Straightforward, Tactful, Loyal	Optimistic, Competitive, Workaholic	Flexible, Informal Skeptical, Independent	Competitive, Values Driven, Achievers	Global, Less Focus, Progressive, Entrepreneurial,	"Too clean" computer vision syndrome
Experiences	Great Depression, WWI/II GI Bill, Korean War, 1929 crash	Moon landing, Cold War, Civil Rights, Watergate, Vietnam War	DARE, Title IX, Y2K, AIDS "epidemic", Berlin Wall, PCs, dot.com, Nintendo, latchkey kid	Columbine, 9/11, Iraq war, diversity wars, mobile tech, great recession	Life after 9/11, War on Terror, global warming, tech, diversity	COVID-19, falling fertility, screen time, vaccines
Worldview	Obedience, age = seniority, advance in the hierarchy	Achievement is after paying dues, sacrifice for success	Favors diversity, move if employer fails to meet needs	Seek challenge, growth, work/life balance	Digital natives, independence, individuality, work/life integration	Digital integration
Life Paradigm	Be grateful you have a job	You owe me	Get real	Life is a cafeteria	I'm coming and hoping	Blend digital & physical for global consciousness
Parenting Style	"be seen and not heard"	"we want the best for you" Be back by dark	"we want you to be an individual" Helicopters	"positive/gentle parenting" DINK lifestyle Bulldozers	Parents as "reverse role models" Preparing (not pampering)	
Motivated By	Respect, recognition, long- term value to a company. Treated fairly	Company loyalty, teamwork, duty, staying relevant and useful	Diversity, Get job done well, personal/prof. interests	Responsibility, quality manager, meaning & purpose, find community	Diversity, personalization, creativity, supportive leaders, meaning & purpose	Engagement, technological integration, constant feedback
Communication Style	Personal touch, handwritten instead of email "no news is good news"	Efficient - phone and face to face "performance review once per year is sufficient"	Efficient - phone and face to face "frequent and honest feedback"	smartphone, IM, texts, social media, "immediate feedback"	"hand-held" devices, facetime, texts, social media "frequent, prompt, swift, & F2F	Facetime, F2F
Work Is	An obligation	Expected	A difficult challenge	A means to an end	Consistently evolving	
Changing Jobs	Stay for life	Employer-loyal connect values	If necessary for compensation	Is expected	Constantly	
Career Paths	Slow and steady Loyalty	Upward mobility Driven	Need to know options & efficiency	Switch frequent & fast; work-life integration	Career "multitaskers"; work-life balance	
Career Expectations	Believe in hierarchy, loyalty. "Do what you're told earn your way up"	Value teacher- led courses. Managers = fair, consistent. "compete & grind your way to the top"	View change as opportunity, hands-off leader, results oriented. "divide & conquer – independent"	Want coaching, technology-centric training, align values. "highly collaborative & speaking up"	Expect change in workplace, seek regular feedback. "self-directed & independent"	
Employers Should	Provide satisfying work & opportunities to contribute, emphasize stability	Specific goals and deadlines, put them in mentor roles, encourage new skills, respect status quo	Provide autonomy, give immediate feedback, flexible work schedule, work- life balance, professional development	Inspire – don't manage, get to know, real-time constructive feedback, manage by results, balance, social engagement	Allow work on multiple projects, work-life integration, self-directed, interesting & challenging, entrust with important tasks	
Technology	Hope to outlive	Master it	Employ it	Enjoy it	Hack it	
Market	Goods	Services	Experiences	Transformations	Reinventions	
Aspiration	Home ownership	Job security	Independence	Freedom & flexibility	Structure & stability	
View of Future	Seek to stabilize	Create it	Skeptical	YOLO	FOMO	

Adapted from: Pew Research Center, Center for Generational Kinetics, Purdue University Global

