

TEAM BUILDING

Each generation has their own identity that’s defined by the time period they grew up in and the cultural influences they’ve been exposed to during their lifetime. Once a generation enters the workforce, these influences begin shaping their attitudes in the workplace. It is unlikely for a business to strictly employ members of only one generation, so it’s important to understand how to manage a multigenerational workplace and utilize the unique strengths every team member has to offer.

BABY BOOMERS

live to work,
like to be part
of a discussion

GEN-XERS

work to live,
seek less
feedback

MILLENNIALS

value a fun work
environment, seek
frequent feedback

Claire Raines Associates, known as Generations at Work, is an organization devoted completely to multigenerational businesses. They offer sessions, workshops, strategies and assessments based on generational research, and help businesses gain a better understanding of each generation, including their employees and clients and how to make everyone—from the Millennials to the Boomers—feel valued in the workplace.

Tammy Hughes, CEO, said the key is understanding every value and perspective.

Put a few members of each generation around a table, and goals and expectations may not always align. For example, a Boomer who appreciates discussion could be more willing to provide feedback to a Millennial, while a Gen-Xer might prefer to work more independently with less supervision or dialogue. Or, a Millennial may choose to solve a problem using technology other generations aren’t as familiar with.

Another challenge businesses may face is managing employees who were born into one generation, but have values and beliefs that are consistent with another.

“Not everyone fits squarely in the middle of the generation they were born into,” Hughes said. “Often, people assume they are expected to fit into their demographic profile, but if they feel they’re not like everyone else in their generation, they wonder if that leaves them with nothing to contribute.”

To that end, Hughes cautions, don’t assume you know the tendencies or habits of any team member or generation, including the WWII or Silent Generation. While there may be fewer and fewer employees or clients who fall into this category by age, it is certain there are members of other generations that hold these values. ■

Visit www.generationsatwork.com to learn more.

THE BOTTOM LINE

A one-size-fits-all solution is not suitable for a multigenerational workplace. Claire Raines Associates offers these strategies on how to best connect with your team, no matter their generational value system:

SILENTS VALUES:	BOOMERS VALUES:	GEN X VALUES:	MILLENNIAL VALUES:
Be logical and linear	Be personable	Be direct and straight forward	Be positive
Be more formal and conservative	Make the conversation two-way, with lots of give and take	Avoid clichés, hyperbole and buzzwords	Know the individual and refer to personal goals and achievements
Refer to history and tradition	Build the relationship	Don't take challenges personally	Coach, mentor and inspire
Use good grammar, "please" and "thank you"	Emphasize vision, mission and values	Tie your message to tangible results	Encourage questions, answer them and check for understanding
DO		DON'T	
Consider HR practices, work-life balance concerns, communication style and workplace culture through all generational lenses.	Take the time to learn each person's values, and ask questions if you don't understand.	Organize multiple ways to do everything to suit all generations separately.	Organize one way to do everything to suit the most prevalent generation in your workplace.
Find common ground, despite any differing values.	Expect the best, listen and respect what kind of value each person can contribute.	Assume you know someone's values based on the generation they were born into.	Expect reciprocity. Be willing to invest and put energy into connecting with team members, for the sake of the project, even if the other person doesn't invest back into you.