

Engaging a Multigenerational Workforce

Five Generations in the Workforce

Gen Z

Approximate birth years: 1996–2015

- Do not remember 9/11 Terrorist Attack

Events and technology that shaped them

- “After 9/11” lifestyle: travel security protocols.
- The Great Recession (2007-2009).
- The Great Resignation and COVID-19 lockdown protocols.
- First Black U.S. President.
- COVID-19 was a highly impactful event in Gen Z lives, the tail-end of their high school years.
- Technology is “assumed.”
- YouTube and social media platforms “on demand” (free) Internet learning.
- Impacted by social media influencer celebrities.
- Amazon selling and purchasing global commerce platform.
- Smartphones are always available.

Characteristics and motivation at work

- Global mindset, entrepreneurial, independent, value diversity and innovation.
- Expect personalization and new technologies.
- Motivation: Scheduling and flexibility, pay, likable coworkers and boss, job perks, including regular pay raises.

Expectations of the work environment

- They want to work in jobs where they learn new skills to help them advance in their careers.
- They expect employers to pay for education or training toward work skill competencies.

Millennials (Gen Y)

Approximate birth years: 1977–1995

- The largest generation in the workforce, nationally and worldwide.

Events and technology that shaped them

- 9/11 Terrorist Attack, nationally and globally.
- Impacted by the most rapid technological changes in human history: Internet, mobile phones, email, social media platforms and digital media at the fingertips.
- COVID-19 impact on careers: Some had complete disruption of careers and reported high stress because of unexpected and overnight adaptation to remote and hybrid work environments.
- Many reported COVID-19-related stress as a factor regularly affecting them.

- U.S. Post-9/11 Veterans: The millennial veteran generation is the largest cohort of U.S. veterans in the civilian workforce. This means that post-9/11 veterans are also some of the most educated and experienced among Millennials in the workforce. Therefore, they possess some differing work characteristics among the Millennial generation. They have excellent teamwork, technology, communication skills, organizational structure, and work accountability competencies.

Characteristics and motivation at work

- Expect to make changes that improve the work environment. They see their jobs as an opportunity to contribute to others' well-being or the greater good. Very comfortable communicating through digital technology.
- Motivation: Responsibility and a unique work experience that contributes to their growth and development. Open-minded.

Expectations of work environment

- They expect their managers to be competent and earn employees' respect through competency. They are highly loyal to colleagues and may support colleagues over managers if they perceive an injustice. They expect their job to be enjoyable and contribute to work-life balance.

Gen X

Approximate birth years: 1965–1976

Events and technology that shaped them

Mostly from two parents working households (“latch-key kids”), high divorce rates, Energy Crisis and AIDS epidemic.

First, “personal computers” and other personal technology: Atari, Walkman and Commodore64.

MTV: the first platform devoted solely to video music.

First to experience the dot-com boom and Internet businesses.

Characteristics and motivation at work

Beginning to step into senior leadership roles. Favor diversity and life-work balance.

Motivation: Personal-professional interests over company interests. Generally, if a change occurs and there's a conflict between the two, the employee chooses personal values over company values.

Expectations of work environment

Value competence and skills. Therefore, they expect skills and work competence of themselves and those they work with or for.

Boomers

Approximate birth years: 1946–1964

- Do not remember World War II

Events and technology that shaped them

- Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, massive social change and 60's Counterculture and the first man on the moon.
- Any technology that is best for the moment to effectively meet the needs at hand.

Characteristics and motivation at work

- Currently, they may fill senior leadership positions in the workforce and challenge authority but follow the rules.
- Competitive and optimistic.
- Motivation: Company loyalty

Expectations of the work environment

- Expect a structured environment with nonfrequent change. Teamwork is valued, and “working hard” is expected. Expect to “pay your dues” for career growth.

Traditionalists

Approximate birth years: 1925 - 1945

Events and technology that shaped them

- The Great Depression & World War II.
- Radio and Television

Characteristics and motivation at work

- They may also hold senior leadership positions in organizations, be semi-retired, or do volunteer work. They are reliable, straightforward, respectful to others, have a long-term commitment, and communicate in person.
- Motivation: Recognition

Expectations of the work environment

- Follow the rules, not individualism, seniority based on age, progress in career through advancement through company hierarchy.

Generational Influences in the Workplace

Influences of life span development

- Each generation is in a different stage of lifespan development.
- Adults experience continuous development in the psychological and social domains.
- Adults at any age bring their strengths and challenges to the work environment through:
 - Interpersonal interactions
 - Helping each other develop work performance skills

What you can do:

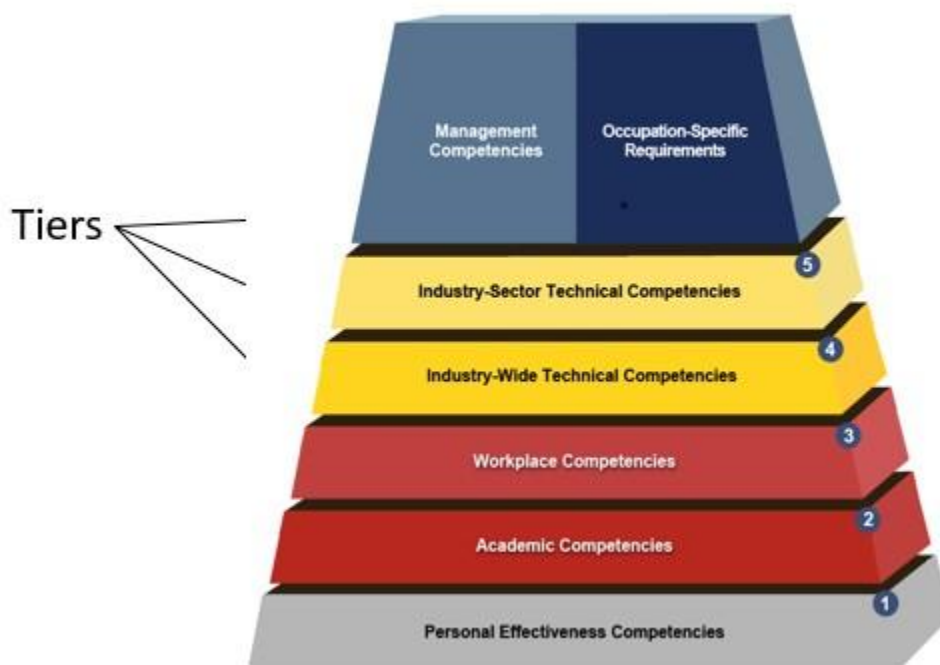
- Think about your staff members’ life stages. Is it different from yours?
- Consider how the differences could impact what is “important” to them and possibly their approach at work.

Influences of career stage development

- Each person is in a different career development stage—not based on age.
- Some experienced individuals may have transferred to a new industry or role
- According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers (N.A.C.E.) Veterans bring to the civilian workplace “Career-Readiness Competencies,” such as:
 - Career Development

- Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Equity & Inclusion
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Teamwork
- Technology
- Workers displaced from their original careers

Competency Model Tiers



Reference: [Click here for CareerOneStop is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration](#)

Tips to Help You Successfully Engage a Multigenerational Workforce

Recognize the need for flexibility when considering all the different approaches and skills of the employee team.

- Recognize that seeing employees through the lens of generational stereotypes is faulty.

What you can do:

Remember your staff members' life stages and that their career and work-life balance needs may be different from those of other workers in the same role.

- Encourage mentoring and open conversations among all team members

Ask yourself, “What do we need to do to continue producing these successful outcomes?”

- Develop a communication plan and expect employees to follow it

What you can do:

Tell yourself, “I choose to remain open to learning from my team members, and if they ask for help, I won’t assume something negative about the situation.”

What is your takeaway?

*References for “Characteristics of Generations”

Dimock, M. (January 17, 2019). [Click here for article, Defining generations: Where Millennials end and Generation Z begins \[Short Reads\]. Pew Research Center.](#)

Dorsey, J. (n.d.). [Click here for article Generation FAQs.](#)

Gittleman, M. (July 22). [Click here for article The “Great Resignation” in Perspective \[Article\]. Monthly Labor Review. U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)

Morris, T. (July 6, 2021). [Click here for article The pandemic changed boomers’ relationship with tech. Here’s how \[Chart of the Week\]. Global Web Index](#)

Purdue Global. (n.d.). [Click here for article Generational Differences in the Workplace \[infographic\].](#)

Smith, A. (September 10, 2021). [Click here for article Generational mindsets affect the workforce \[Viewpoint\]. Workplace News & Trends. Society for Human Resource Management.](#)

The Center for Generational Kinetics. (2020). [Click here for article The state of Gen Z 2020: Gen Z as employees and emerging leaders.](#)