SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE

SWWC

Education & Administrative Resources

How to Communicate With a Multigenerational Workforce
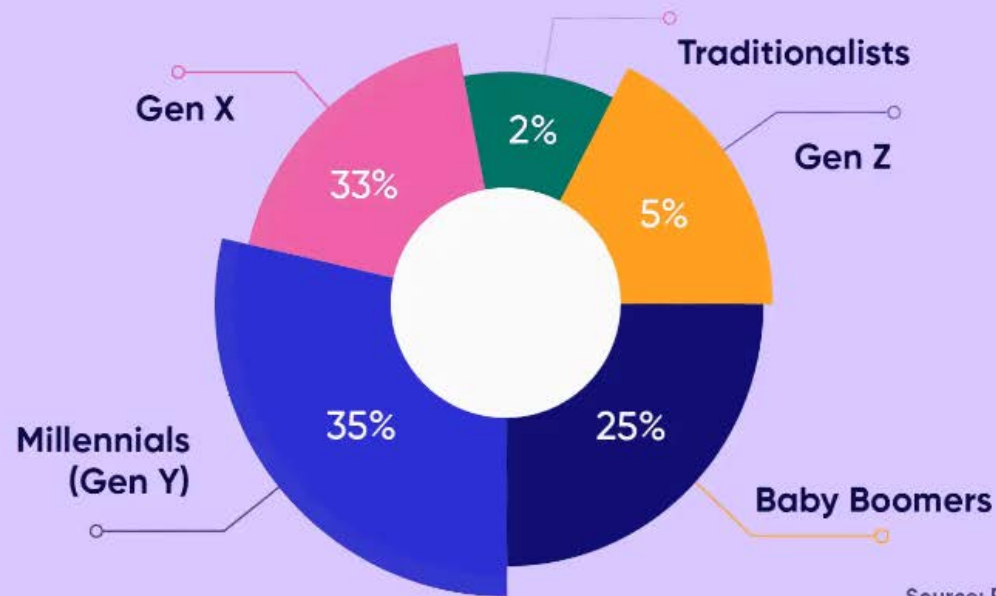
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The Generations

- Traditionalists: (1945 and before)

- Baby Boomers: (1946 to 1964)

- Gen X: (1965 to 1976)

- Millennials/Gen Y: (1977 to 1995)

- Gen Z: (1996 to 2017)

Generations in the Workforce

- Gen X: 33%
- Traditionalists: 2%
- Gen Z: 5%
- Millennials (Gen Y): 35%
- Baby Boomers: 25%

Source: Pew Research Center

The Generations

- Office interactions are framed as negative:

  - "Boomers are resistant to change"

  - "Gen Z are glued to their phones"

- Essential for a healthy workplace to not have it this way!

- 1 layer of their overall identity

 - Differences do not have to be divisive

Trends

- People living longer, more active lives so they're able to work longer

- Traditionalists and Baby Boomers not being in a financial position to retire

- Traditionalists and Baby Boomers *wanting* to work until an older age, as work has helped define them for decades

- Baby Boomers financially supporting their "adult" Millennial children into their late 20s and even 30s

- Generations potentially becoming shorter in duration as the rate of change increases in areas such as communication, tech use, etc.

- This all leads to more generations in a single workforce

472 total employees

- Traditionalists = 0

- Baby Boomers = 41

- Gen X = 96

- Millennials (Gen Y) = 267

- Gen Z = 68

SWWC Workforce

Generation	Value
Gen Z	~68
Millennials	~267
Gen X	~96
Baby Boomers	~41
Traditionalists	0
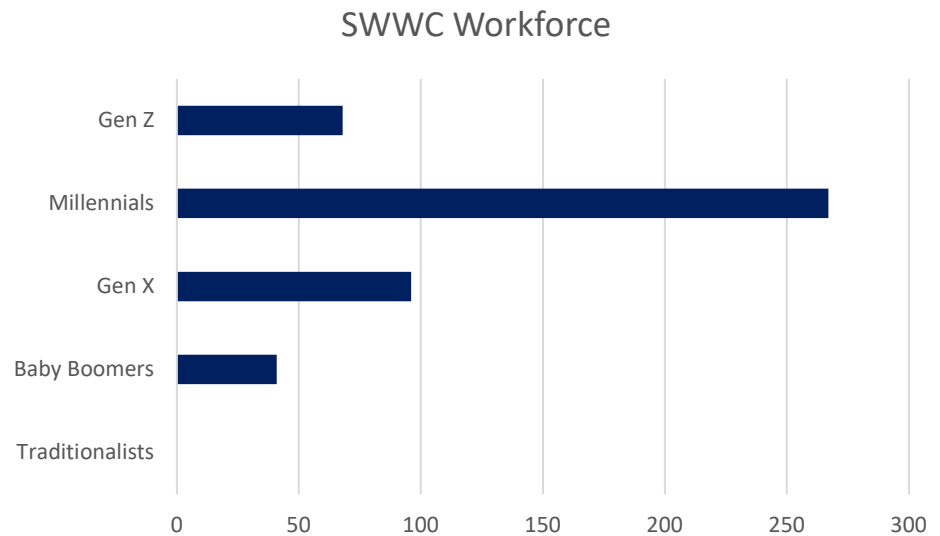
57% of workforce is Millennial generation

Think About…

- How does your organization break down by generation?

  - Is yours similar to SWWC?

- A generation gap you have experienced at work?

- Where does your team experience gaps?

- Has communication been an example of those gaps?

Traditionalists (1900-1945)

- Great Depression

- Strong work ethic

- Extremely loyal

- Value consistency

- Respectful of authority

FUN FACT: No members of the Silent Generation have served as president.

Traditionalists (1900-1945)

In the Workplace

- Authority is based on seniority and tenure

- "Punch the clock" mentality

- Looking for recognition and respect for their experience

- Clearly defined rules/policies

- Face-to-face communication

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

- Booming birthrate

- Civil rights movement

- Postwar social change

- Questions Authority

- Competitive and Independent

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

In the Workplace

- Excellent teamwork skills

- Invented 50hr work week

- Skills are not as important as work ethic and "face time."

- Resistant to change

- Phone call as preferred communication method

Gen X (1965-1976)

- Lay-offs

- Adaptive to change

- Work/life balance

- Resourceful

Gen X (1965-1976)

In the Workplace

- Work smarter, not harder

- Work/life balance is important

- Forward thinking companies

- Adapt well to change

- E-mail oriented generation

Millennials (1977-1995)

- Afraid of the phone ;)

- Media savvy

- Globally concerned

- Entitled

- Most Educated

- Highly socialized

Millennials (1977-1995)

In the Workplace

- Ambitious – What's next?

- View work as a "gig"

- Motivated by results

- Takes work/life balance to another level

  - Flexible work environment

- Preferred Communication Method: Texting

Gen Z (1996-present)

- Multi-taskers

- Technologically dependent

- Entrepreneurial

- Self-aware

- Enter workforce earlier

- Most diverse generation

Gen Z (1996-present)

In the workplace

- Are likely to be using social media to find jobs.

- Clear career goals

  - Employer vs. Employee

- Extremely tech savvy

- Prefer to communicate face-to-face or over social media

- Have large networks but not much job experience. Employers can leverage these networks.

3 Main Differences

- Leadership Style

- Communication style

- Development style

Leadership Styles

✓ Traditionalists

      o Hierarchy

      o Directive

      o Command-and-control

✓ Baby Boomers

      o Consensus

      o Collegial

Leadership Styles

- ✓ Gen X

  - o Competence

  - o Challenge others

  - o Ask Why?

- ✓ Millennials (Gen Y)

  - o Achievers

  - o Visionary

  - o Optimistic

Leadership Styles

✓ Gen Z

    o Enables change

    o Technology driven atmosphere

    o Non-traditional office hierarchy

Communication Styles

✓Traditionalists

- o Discrete

- o Memos

- o Hand-written notes, less e-mail and more personal interaction

✓Baby Boomers

- o Diplomatic

- o Uses body language

- o Direct, in-person style

Communication Styles

✓ Gen X

    o Blunt/Direct

    o Immediate

    o E-mail is #1 tool

    o Does not micromanage

✓ Millennials (Gen Y)

    o Polite

    o Instant messaging or text messaging are #1 tools

    o Positive

    o Be humorous – show you are human

Communication Styles

✓ Gen Z

    o In-person

    o Instant messaging or social media

    o Realistic and direct

Communication Styles

- Foster open communication and mutual understanding

- Create an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas

- Use a variety of communication channels

  - Email, newsletters, digital platforms

- Method of communication is really important!

Development Styles

✓Traditionalists

    o Very loyal

    o Should contribute to organization's goals

    o Not really an option

✓Baby Boomers

    o Also loyal

    o Same as above, but also a path to a promotion

    o Develop careers through opportunities within organization

Development Styles

✓ Gen X

- Less loyal

- Pro-active approach to career development

- Enhances their versatility in the marketplace

✓ Millennials (Gen Y)

- More experiences than any other generation

- What's next?

- Eager to take risks; considers it a learning opportunity

Development Styles

✓ iGen (Gen Z)

 o Entrepreneurial

 o Visionary

 o Progressive

How to resolve intergenerational conflicts

1. Understand work styles

   - Choose curiosity over judgement

2. Consider generational values

   - What experiences shaped each generation?

3. Share perceptions

   - "Help me understand…" rather than "I don't understand why…"

   - One is a request, while the other is perceived as judgement

How to resolve intergenerational conflicts

4. Find a generationally appropriate fix.

5. Find commonality.

6. Learn from each other.

Similarities Between Generations

7 Values:

1. Feeling respected

2. Being listened to

3. Having opportunities for mentoring

4. Understanding the big picture

5. Receiving effective communication

6. Receiving positive feedback

7. Experiencing an exchange of ideas

Benefits of having all 5

- Wider breadth of talent

- Traditionalists understand complex structures and objectives

- Baby Boomers know the value of structure and also rebelling against it

- Gen Xer's are the most resourceful

- Millennials are open-minded and have an intuitive facility connection

- Gen Z are natural collaborators and realistic about challenges
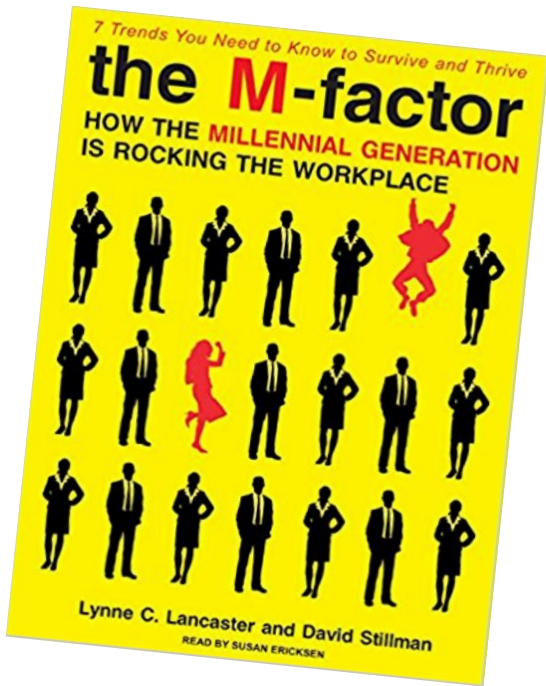
We need each other.

Don't dwell on the differences but focus on the possibilities!

Build collaborative relationships.

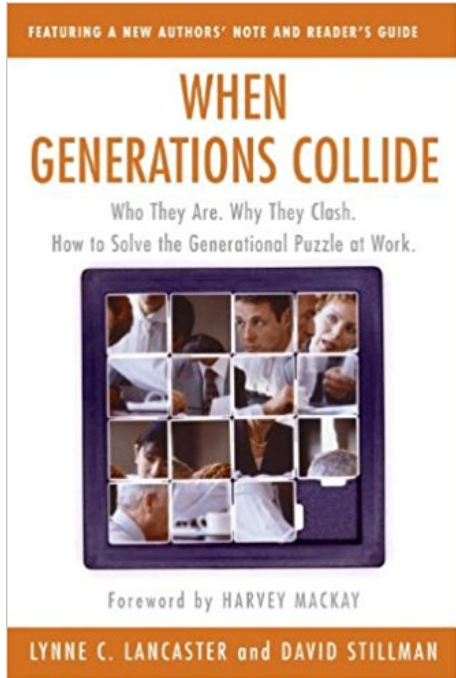No generation is better than the other, just different!

Sources & References

Thank you!

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