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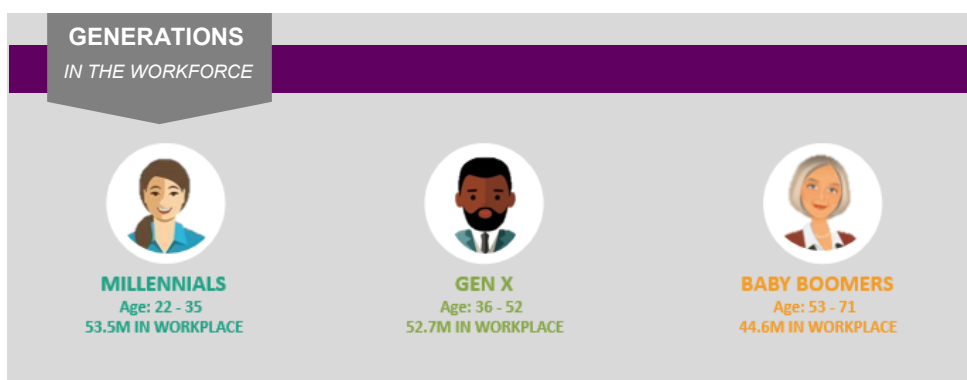
Capitalize on each generation in the workplace's strengths



By Lori Stutsman, President, Extra Mile Marketing

Imagine a new college graduate in their early 20's working alongside a 50 year old employee, with 25 years tenure. Now, think about the differences you might see in their work style. One big challenge facing most organizations today is the diversity of generations in the workforce (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials) and how each generation views and consumes technology.

Each generation has a different standard of which technology is preferable, which, in extreme cases, can lead to a generational divide. There are many benefits and drawbacks to having a diverse workforce, and by analyzing the technological preferences of each generation, organizations have the opportunity to capitalize on their diversity.



Unconscious biases or opinions of the generations can often become a roadblock when working with a diverse workforce. Take a step back to see the strengths of each generation and how they can benefit others.

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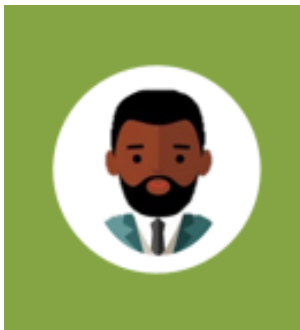
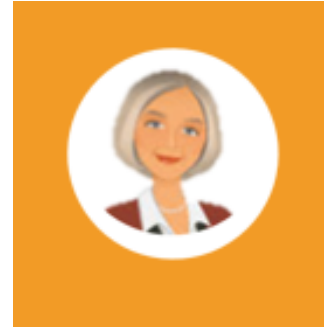
STATS & FACTS

Next year, more than **3.6 million baby boomers are set to retire** and more than **one-fourth of millennial workers will become managers**.

64% of managers expect their employees to be reachable outside of the office on their personal time.

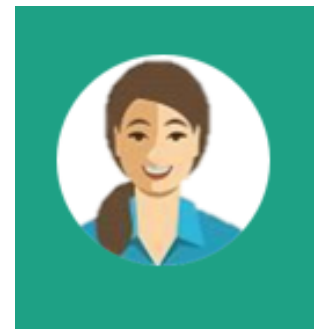
By 2020, Millennials are expected to make up **50% of the workplace**.

While Baby Boomers understand the practical need to use technology, they believe it can cause communication to lose its personal touch. This group highly values face-to-face communication and has strong skills in reading nonverbal cues. When using technology in the workplace, Boomers prefer to use devices that allow them to speak directly with someone, or over a phone or video camera in real-time. According to Eide Bailly Technology Consulting's article Generations & Technology: The Millennial Influence, "Baby Boomers are strong believers in 'face time' and phone calls." Their strength in interpersonal communication is an opportunity for mentorship of employees whose skills are not quite so refined.



Generation Xer's are comfortable using technology, although it has not yet become a central part of their lives. This generation also appreciates the value of face-to-face communication, while also easily adapting their methods to align with new technology. In Herman Miller's article Generations at Work, Katya Filippetti, the Marketing Manager at Herman Miller, said "they've (Generation X) become digital pioneers who value the attributes that technology offers, such as adaptability, user control, and mobility." Generation Xer's can provide important lessons about flexibility and adaptability in the workplace.

Millennials are the generation that are "always on" and connected, having been raised with technology. While technology is an essential part of their daily routine, their reliance on it has limited their experiences with face-to-face communication. In Millennials and Technology in Today's Workplace, an article published by the Rikleen Institute, the writer explained "as technology has guided how Millennials communicate with one another, it has also shaped their social norms". Their expectations of what is appropriate in a workplace setting do not always align with business standards. Millennials have the ability to help others hone their technology skills, while learning about social expectations in professional settings from Boomers and Gen Xers.



Each generation brings different strengths to the workplace and each have valuable skills that can help others grow. Organizations have the opportunity to create programs that promote collaboration and aid in career development for their employees. Companies should encourage each generation to appreciate the importance of the different skills brought to the table by other generations and take the opportunity to learn from those differences.

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