

How to Manage Different Generations

- **Send your managers to class so they can learn to recognize generational differences and adapt.** It's important that managers change rather than trying to change the staff.
- **Facilitate mentoring between different aged employees to encourage more cross-generational interaction.** Younger employees should learn to seek the experience and wisdom offered by senior employees. Older employees should learn to be open to the fresh perspectives offered by younger employees.
- **Offer different working options like telecommuting and working offsite.** Focus on the results employees produce rather than on how they get it done. This will give employees some flexibility on how they want to work and put everybody, regardless of where they spent most of their time working, on the same scale to measure success. Telecommuting can also encourage Boomers nearing retirement to stay on staff longer since the option allows them to 'gear down' their workloads.
- **Accommodate different learning styles.** Baby Boomers may favor more traditional and static training methods like Power Point presentations and handbooks, while younger workers may gravitate towards more interactive, technology-based forms of learning.
- **Keep employees engaged.** Provide regular educational and training opportunities as well as career advice to keep all workers interested in the company. Fuel the high expectations of ambitious Millennials with special assignments that are outside of their job descriptions. Consider putting them on a task force to solve a problem or establishing a regular presence on social networking sites for the company.
- **Open up the office.** Millennials generally don't work well under rigid management structure. They prefer open collaborations that allow employees to share information and for everybody to contribute to decision-making. Assign work to teams of employees and have them present finished product to the entire department. The idea is to take advantage of the Millennials' preference for teamwork and to encourage more solidarity throughout the workplace.
- **Toss the routines.** Experts say Millennials and Gen Xers dislike the formality of regular meetings, especially when there's nothing to discuss. Limit meetings to when there's a real need.
- **Create recognition programs.** Even simple gestures like a pat on the back or positive email congratulations can help boost productivity with Gen Xers. Boomers may seek status so may respond

best to an office-wide memo that announces that they are meeting or exceeding their goals. Millennials may seek validation and approval so will appreciate increased responsibility and additional training opportunities. To this end, Millennials may also prefer more frequent employee reviews.

- **Accommodate personal employee needs.** Different generations of employees will be in different stages of life and may require that employers offer some scheduling flexibility to manage their personal time. But maintain parity so other employees don't feel alienated. Boomers who are thinking of retirement, for example, may want to cut the number of hours they work in exchange for reduced pay. Gen Xers who need to leave work early to attend a parent/teacher function can agree to make up lost time at another date. Support Millennials who may want to pursue another degree part time and extend the same educational opportunities to other employees.
- **Give all employees a voice.** Regardless of age and tenure, give all employees a forum in which to present ideas, concerns and complaints. Department heads should facilitate open communication throughout the office and set aside time to provide honest feedback.
- **Don't apply a blanket communication-method policy.** Boomers may prefer to communicate by phone or in person. Millennials grew up being in constant communication with peers and coworkers so are accustomed to emailing, texting or sending instant messages.
- **Don't confuse character issues like immaturity, laziness or intractability with generational traits.** Whereas Boomers may see a 60-hour work week as a prerequisite to achieving success, many hard-working Millennials may prefer a more balanced life that includes reasonable working hours—with occasional bouts of overtime—and weekends off. The latter may also voluntarily choose to make up the time in unstructured settings like working at a Starbucks on weekends.