Communicating at Work with Veterans, Boomers, Xers, Millennials & Gen Z
Communicating Across the Generations

Veterans / Traditionals 1922-1943
Baby Boomers 1943-1960
Generation Xers 1960-1980
Gen Z / iGen 1995-present

Workforce

Currently:

Veterans/Traditionals greater than 1% of the workforce
Baby Boomers 30%
Generation Xers 27%
Millennials 28%
Gen Z 14%

2020:

Veterans/Traditionals less than 1% of the workforce
Baby Boomers 20%
Generation Xers 26%
Millennials 27%
Generation Z 26%
Defining Events and Trends

Veterans / Traditionals
   Patriotism – The Great Depression – WWII

Baby Boomers
   Vietnam – Civil Rights Movement – Women’s Liberation

Generation Xers
   Watergate – Single-Parent Homes – MTV – AIDS

Millenials
   School Violence – Oklahoma City – Multiculturalism
Gen Z / iGen
   Digital / Cloud Natives – 2008 Recession – Social Media

Attitude Toward Authority
Traditionals – Chain of Command
Boomers – Change of Command
Gen Xers – Self-Command
Millennials / Gen Z – Don’t Command – Collaborate

Career Goals
Traditionals – Build a Legacy
Boomers – Build a stellar career
Gen Xers – Build a portable career
Millennials / Gen Z – Build parallel careers

Rewards
Traditionals – The satisfaction of a job well-done
Boomers – Money, title, recognition
Gen Xers – Freedom is the ultimate award
Millennials / Gen Z – Work has to have meaning for me
Balance
Tradionals – Support me in my shifting balance
Boomers – Help me balance everyone else and meaning myself
Gen Xers - Give me balance now, not when I’m sixty-five
Millennials / Gen Z – Work isn’t everything, I need flexibility so I can balance all of my activities.

Changing Jobs
Tradionals – Job changing carries a stigma
Boomers – Job changing puts you behind
Gen Xers – Job changing is necessary to stay current
Millennials / Gen Z – Job changing is part of my daily routine

Feedback
Tradionals – No news is good news
Boomers – Feedback once per year with lots of documentation
Gen Xers – Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing
Millennials / Gen Z – Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button

Training
Tradionals – I learned it the hard way – on the job training
Boomers – Train them too much and they will leave
Gen Xers – The more they learn, the more they will stay
Millennials / Gen Z – Continuous learning is a way of life

Retirement
Tradionals - Reward
Boomers - Retool
Gen Xers - Renew
Millennials / Gen Z – Recycle - Repurpose
THE VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS - Born Before 1943

CORE VALUES
Dedication - Hard work - Respect for authority - Honor

VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS' PERSONALITY
Veterans like things done on a grand scale.
Veterans are past-oriented and history-absorbed.
Veterans have always believed in law and order.

THE VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS ON THE JOB
ASSETS
Stable - Thorough - Loyal - Hardworking

LIABILITIES
Inept with ambiguity and change - Reluctant to buck the system
Uncomfortable with conflict - Reticent

MESSAGES THAT MOTIVATE
"Your experience is respected here."
"It's valuable to the rest of us to hear what has-and hasn't-worked in the past."

RECRUITING THE VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS
Be open-minded and consider using older workers for part-time, project
employment, or full-time employment.
Phrases like "I could really use your help and experience on this project".
Use clear enunciation and good grammar. Include "please" and "thank you," and
avoid profanity.

ORIENTING VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS
1. They want to know what to expect, what the policies are, and who's who.
2. Bring them up to date on the history of the department and organization.
3. Emphasize long-term organization goals and how they will contribute.

OPPORTUNITIES
1. Stress the long haul; communicate in months and years, not weeks.
2. Keep in mind, if your client base includes seniors, your workforce should, too.
3. Keep gender roles in mind. At no other stage of life do lifestyles of men and
women differ so greatly.

DEVELOPING VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS
1. When training, avoid situations where older employees can "lose face" where
others are watching or waiting.
2. Find older trainers or teach your younger trainers to speak the language of the
Veteran.
3. Use larger text in printed materials.

MOTIVATING VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS
1. Use the personal touch. Handwrite a note.
2. Traditional perks were visual symbols; consider plaques and photos of them with
important visitors or leaders.

MENTORING VETERANS/TRADITIONALISTS
1. Find a coach who is respected as a leader and has experience.
2. Suggest ways of improving performance that focus on long-term goals.
3. Establish rapport by acknowledging the employee's background and experience.
Baby Boomers

Core Values:
Optimism – Team-oriented, personal gratification – Personal growth

Personality:
Pursued their own personal gratification, uncompromisingly
Searched their souls, repeatedly, and believe they are “cool”

Assets:
Service-oriented – Driven – Good team players

Liabilities:
Not naturally budget-minded putting process ahead of result
Uncomfortable with conflict – reluctant to go against their peers
Overly sensitive to feedback – self-centered

Messages that Motivate:
“You’re important to our success.”
“Your contribution is unique and valued here.”

Recruiting:
Tell them they can be a change agent and make a difference
Show them how they can be a star
Stress this is a warm, humane, and dynamic organization

Orienting:
Discuss the near future – weeks and months
Focus on challenges: “We really need your talent here.”

Opportunities:
Get to know your Boomers as individuals – their hobbies and interests
Build personal relationship and provide unique personalized treatment

Developing:
Provide developmental experiences and give them gold stars
Encourage Boomers to read books or watch DVDs

Motivating:
Try the personal touch, “I really need you to do this for me.”
Give them lots of public recognition - hard work and long hours

Mentoring:
Be nice and warm and ask questions to get to the issues
Respect them. Don’t call Boomers “sir” or “ma’am”
**Gen Xers**

**Core Values:**
Techno-literacy – Informality – Self-reliance

**Personality:**
Gen Xers want balance. Approach to authority is casual. Skeptical

**Assets:**
Independent – Not intimidated by authority – Creative

**Liabilities:**
Impatient – Poor people skills – Inexperienced – Cynical

**Messages that Motivate:**
“Do it your way.”
“There aren’t a lot of rules here.”

**Recruiting:**
“We want you to have a life here and spend some time with us.”
Make it a fun and relaxed place to be

**Orienting:**
Give them a list of people to call or email if they have questions

**Opportunities:**
Be there when they have questions and then back off
Xers are nomads and like a broad range of activities

**Developing:**
Tap into their ability to multi-task – so they learn as they do
Keep printed materials brief and scannable – use bullet points

**Motivating:**
Delegate – gives them the feeling they have more control

**Mentoring:**
Ask Questions:
“How do you plan to go about solving this?”
“What do you think the best approach would be?”
Millennials

Core Values:
Optimism – Confidence – Achievement-oriented – Diversity-oriented

Assets:
Heroic spirit – Multi-tasking capabilities – Techno-savvy

Liabilities:
Need for supervision and structure
Inexperienced, particularly handling difficult people issues

Messages that Motivate:
“You will be spending time with other bright, creative people.”
“You can help this organization.” “You can be a hero/heroine here.”

Recruiting:
Ask current millennial members why they chose you
Use social media to show positive community impact

Orienting:
Talk about loyalty, making a difference, and the mission
Inform them that you welcome diversity in the organization

Opportunities:
Encourage them to network with all members
Encourage them to participate fully and provide feedback

Developing:
Ask them to share their observations
Welcome their comments and ideas about community involvement

Motivating:
See your Millennials as Rock Stars
Life of the party, seat at the head table, given opportunities to perform

Mentoring:
Be pleasant, understanding, caring, open-minded, and respectful
Generation Z / iGen: 1995 - present

Self-Aware, Self-Reliant, Innovative, Goal-Oriented

Appear to be more pragmatic than Millennials.

Some studies show that Z’ers are more cautious, more financially conservative, and more globally connected than Millennials.

Overwhelming majority are eco-conscious and concerned about humanity’s impact on the environment, human rights, poverty, racial inequality

With the development of the internet, and as more of the world comes online, Gen Z’ers are more global in their thinking, interactions, and relatability.

Gen Z is the most diverse generation – last generation - Caucasian majority

Hooked on their smartphones – peer-to-peer social media – messaging apps – Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, Vine, Facebook – a full 40% are self-identified digital device addicts

Gen Z lives in a world of continuous updates – attention spans might be significantly lower than Millennials – now measuring at 8 seconds

Better multi-taskers – can quickly and efficiently shift between work and play with multiple distractions going on in the background

Comfort with web-based research and often self-educates with online sources such as YouTube and Pinterest

Place a priority on how fast they can find the right information rather than on whether or not they know the right information.

Baby Boomers are their grandparents rather than their parents, and they think Millennials are old.

Seeking work life integration versus work-life balance. Interested in careers that allow work and life to coexist and often times blend together.
More Success Strategies:

Create “snack-size” Courses – break sessions into bite-sized chunks

Incorporate Experiential Learning – engage employees by gamifying your training, keep them engaged by using simulations, anecdotes, case studies, third-party materials, learning management system

Create Three Training Tiers to Keep Them Interested

Immediate: Performance Support – job basics, organizational information, benefits, job responsibilities, key processes

Intermediate: Current Role and Competency Expansion – deepening employees’ skills for their current jobs and begins developing competencies for additional tasks

Transitional: Skills that Meet Long-Term Organizational Goals and Individual Career Plans – big picture training such as public speaking, leadership, mentorship, collaboration, and online certifications

Develop Focused Teams Within the Organization – instead of silo departments, use collaborative teams to solve problems – customer needs, product launches, missions, specific markets

Establish a Command Center or Real-Time Information Network – house all key resources and project updates so employees can quickly and independently find information they need, even from their mobile devices

Be Mobile – job openings, descriptions, applications, web site

Use short video to promote your workplace and its meaningful work and how it impacts the customer and the world.

Be competitive with salary, work-life balance, and job security. Show your organization’s social responsibility issues and activities.

Keep Engagement at your organization high by focusing on meaning, purpose, and passion.
Additional Ideas for Attracting Millennials and Gen Z’ers

1. Explain the organization’s vision. If you can explain the whole picture, it connects the meaning to the person.

2. Discuss how the organization prioritizes community service. Allow younger employees to form creative committees and teams to organize and support their causes to fulfill their desire for social consciousness. This demonstrates the organization’s respect for the things they care about.

3. Outline your organization’s culture in the job description.

4. Create short videos and share high-quality photos of your current Millennial and Gen Z employees sharing information about your organization and services on social media so potential applicants can relate to and connect with your organization.

5. Involve your Millennial and Gen Z employees in your marketing strategies. Get your Millennial and Gen Z employees to help by actively posting positive messages about what life is like working with the organization, which is more authentic than the organization’s page blasting out a message. Consider focus groups, surveys, or incentives.

6. Get social. Conduct some research and determine where your target Millennial and Gen Z audiences typically congregate on social. Push out messages that will appeal to this audience such as highlighting the organization’s culture, behind-the-scenes videos (raw and real), employee spotlights, etc.

7. Meet Millennial and Gen Z candidates where they are. Millennials and Gen Z want a process that is fluid, unique, and truly interactive, so it’s important to make it interesting and meaningful. Use social media, gaming, fun apps, and texting to grab their attention.

8. Invest time in monitoring and influencing conversations online. Post stories that show what it is actually like to work with you, with staff, with consumers, within your brand, and see the organization’s missions and values in action.
9. Be personal and authentic with great client, consumer, or customer success stories in your marketing content.

10. Snap them up with Snapchat. Millennials and Gen Z’ers are the dominate users of Snapchat, with college students ranking it as their first, daily online stop. Consider apps like LinkedIn Recruiter, InstaJob, or WhatsApp.

11. Tell candidates in the interview process that while you expect them to get their work done, you completely respect that they have a life outside of work. Is there any flexibility to the 9-to-5 schedule? Can employees individualize their schedules in some small way?

12. Communicate that your organization has a “development culture” and is dedicated to providing training opportunities and resources. Make employee education a core component.

13. Promote that there is a collaborative spirit within your organization with short-term goals and frequent check-ins and not just annual reviews.

14. Mention that you are a people-driven culture or a tight-knit culture with employees that work together, are bound together, and responsible for one another.

15. Communicate clearly why and how your organization makes the world a better place to live and how they will be contributing to something good.

16. Embrace mobile to give prospects a chance to browse for career opportunities online. Focus on being mobile friendly, applications, information, frequently asked questions, etc.

17. Describe how they will personally benefit from the work itself: personal and professional growth, open communication with leadership, regular feedback, and advancement opportunities.
18. Hire for your culture, so new employees can do the job, will do the job, and fit the culture. During the job interview describe clear expectations for both hard and soft skills.

19. Adjust to this new candidate-driven market, consider interviews over Skype, informal interviews in public places, or candidate to stop by and meet with a top leader of the organization.

20. Host fun social and off-site events and encourage your current Millennial and Gen Z employees to capture and share the moment on their social media platforms, displaying your organization’s culture to their network of social media-savvy, Millennial and Gen Z friends.

21. Student loan repayment assistance.

22. Work-Life Integration. Discuss that your organization has a positive social environment that blends professional with the personal. Space that encourages movement, flexibility, community, open workplaces, free snacks, or community games areas (not necessarily a ping-pong or foosball table).

23. Promote and support health and well-being with subsidized gym memberships, yoga classes, art classes, etc.

Discuss with Your Team:
Getting Millennials and Gen Z’ers Off to a Good Start

1. Do something before their arrival on the first day (phone call or email) to let them know you were expecting them and are glad to have them on board.
2. Have another employee assigned in advance to help take care of them and answer questions when you’re not available.
3. Tell them that you know the first day is hardest day, the first week is the hardest week, and so not to worry if things seem hard, confusing, or difficult at first.
4. Tell them, on the first day, within the first hour, that, “We all enjoy working here. After you’ve been here for a few months, you’ll see why.”
5. Give them a quick overview of what they can expect for the next three hours, next three days, and next thirty days.
6. Tell them what time they can expect to go home today.
7. Tell them when they will get paid, how much, and for what time period.
8. Give them a tour of the whole facility, which gives them the feeling of being part of the team.
9. During the tour, introduce others on the staff according to what they can “help you with.” Use the introductions of new employees as an opportunity to compliment each member of the staff.
10. Give an overview of the training: what it will entail during the first day, the first week, the first month.
11. Explain / review the organization’s history and philosophy.
12. After the break, give them a run-down of organization rules and policies. Let them know the “one strike and you’re out” events.
13. Assign buddies or other coworkers to accompany new employees on their lunch breaks to make sure their first day and first week is warm and welcoming.
14. Prior to the new employee’s departure, ask for a quick review and any comments or questions about the first day’s work.
15. Prior to their arrival on their second day, do something, anything, to let them know that they are expected, they are part of the team, and the organization is grateful for their being there.
16. Sometime during the second day, have top management or someone else who is away, call them and personally welcome them on board.
17. When possible, assign someone other than you, or their lunch buddy, catch them doing something good, something right, and recognize it.
18. The same day they receive their first paycheck, include/send/write a “Welcome Aboard” or “Thanks, we’re glad you’re here” note from top management.
Retention Strategies for Millennials and Gen Z’ers

1. Clearly define the mission, vision, and values to create an opportunity for Millennials to buy into a larger sense of purpose and community. Make sure it’s everyone’s mission and becomes your organization’s brand.

2. Increase access. Develop a mentoring program. Consider designated office hours where your top leaders can mentor junior-level staff one-on-one.

3. Leverage Millennials’ and Gen Z’ers’ passion and entrepreneurial aspirations. Encourage creative thinking. Encourage intrapreneurship and internal innovation every three months.

4. Communicate and track career progression and development. Measurable skill sets and stretch projects.

5. Develop In-Between Steps and Titles to meet their desire for career progression.

6. Start a “Young Professional Employee Group” offering professional development, networking, and social events.

7. Practice “Reverse Mentoring” where Millennials and Gen Z’ers can share their perspectives, ideas, and knowledge with more seasoned employees.

8. Communicate steps involved to move Millennials and Gen Z’ers from where they are to where they want to be. Take the time to patiently explain and check in frequently and monitor progress.

9. Create unexpected, one-of-a-kind experiences - physically & mentally challenging.

10. Support Work/Life Balance and Flexible Schedules.


12. Perform Exit Interviews so you can adjust retention efforts.
13. Make “People Time” or “Mentoring Time” a priority.

14. Create a supportive communication climate so employees can vent and have the ability to express what’s troubling them.

15. Survey “Top 20% Needs” concerning work environment, professional development, leadership development, philanthropic work, etc.

16. Draft good stories about why we do what we do and how it contributes to a bigger vision or purpose. Make Millennials and Gen Z’ers feel like they’re part of the story, and that that story is a part of a bigger cultural story.

17. Invest in training and provide the resources for personal development, health, and wellness.

18. Provide opportunities for peer-to-peer coaching.

19. Provide career planning resources that guide professional growth.

20. Clearly define their responsibilities and goals, and coach them to achieve those objectives.

21. When an employee hits an internal ceiling help them find a new role.

22. Focus on benefits for the long term that align with their values.

23. Support local charitable causes. Share achievements on your organization’s social media, giving Millennials and Gen Z’ers the recognition they crave. PTO for volunteering?

24. Schedule weekly recognition and two-way feedback sessions to show you value their opinions and ideas. Ask for their opinions and take action based on their feedback.

25. Foster growth of peer relationships among Millennials and Gen Z’ers with monthly movie nights, weekly lunches, or team-building events that require collaboration.
26. Use technology to create community and foster teamwork through team collaboration. (Google docs, Slack, etc.)

27. Create a custom social network that shares organizational news and connects Millennials and Gen Z’ers to groups formed around shared hobbies and professional pursuits.

28. Create a Slack channel or comment box for employee ideas, hold brainstorming sessions, create an innovation incubator.

29. Value technology, mobile options, and cutting-edge tools. Provide opportunities for lower-level employees to teach management a new skill.

30. Break down organizational barriers with weekly town hall meetings where leaders share updates and answer questions.

31. Focus on helping align the employee’s personal values and the organization’s work.

32. Support movement. Reward good work with the ability to try out different positions. Consider the continual infusion of new blood can be a good thing.

33. Evoke experience. Schedule group events or fun days that encourage teamwork and bonding.

34. Ask about their personal and professional needs and whether they feel these needs are being met.

35. Ask employees what would make them happier, be it a leadership course, a mentorship session, or a 30-minute call just to check in with them.

36. Cultivate an atmosphere where employee’s questions come from a desire to learn and grow – not criticize.
37. Acknowledge significant dates like birthdays and anniversaries with the entire team and make a big deal out of milestones. Create traditions employees look forward to.

38. Incorporate a fitness program into the organization’s culture. Use an app to help develop a group fitness routine and track progress.

39. Host themed events for Halloween, New Year, Midsummer, make tasks for departments to complete or compete.

40. Demonstrate that you are willing to get your hands dirty. Step in and help out from time to time, whether it’s staffing, filing stacks of reports, helping clear backlogs, hauling boxes, picking up trash, making coffee, ride-alongs, or partnering throughout the day.

Discuss with Your Team:
Succession Planning

Step 1. **Identify the Potential Candidates**
- Transition to a Family Member
- Transition to a Loyal Employee
- Transition to a Candidate from the Outside

Step 2. **Measure the Current Skill Level of Each Candidate**
- Leadership Competency
- Long-Term Commitment
- Personal Integrity
- Interpersonal Communication Skills

Step 3. **Evaluate the Needs of Your Business**
- Which features of your business need special attention?
- Who has the skills necessary to develop the business?
- Do the strengths of the candidate match the requirements of the job?

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**Methods:**
- Outside work experience
- Link to a mentor
- On-the-job experience
- Classes, courses, seminars, workshops, technical training
- Attend leadership meetings – planning, strategy, accounting
- Attend association meetings, conferences, and conventions
- Attend meetings with advisors and subject matter experts

Step 5. **Communicate with Family Members and Loyal Employees**
- Family: How to treat everyone equitably – fairly – active vs passive
- Loyal Employee: Assume the role of mentor – communicate often

Step 6. **Follow Up – Follow Through**
- The duties, rights, privileges, expectations, authority, and responsibilities should be in writing. Develop a plan for introductions to important customers, third-party vendors, and other professional relationships – accountants, bankers, attorneys, etc.
Helping People
Get More Done in Less Time

Helping Organizations
Get Their People to Work Together Better

Chaos & Change Management • Customer Service • Difficult People • Gender Communication
Generations at Work • Interpersonal Communication • Leadership • Listening • Persuading & Influencing
Problem-Solving/Decision-Making • Self-Esteem • Stress, Time & Procrastination • Team Building

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