



Generations at Work

AWAR *of* TALENTS

Innovating to integrate an emerging generation into the workplace

introduction

A new generation is taking its place in the workforce and with it comes new influences, new attitudes and an explosion of technology.

Right now today, if you look around any office of reasonable size, you can see an historic landmark. For the first time ever, there are 4 generations sharing the workspace. But the significance of this moment is immense – it is the start of the transition of power within the workplace.

Just for a year or two longer, four generations share the same workplace, each with very different attitudes and needs. A majority of **Baby Boomers** (1945 - 1965), a slightly smaller group of **Generation Xers** (1965 – 80), and a handful of both **Traditionalists** (pre 1945) and **Millenials** (post 1980).

However, as the final few Traditionalists retire over the next year or so, the oldest Baby Boomers reach retirement age also. **Whilst many intend to keep working, Boomers will generally leave the workplace en mass over the next decade, and with them will go valuable experience and know-how.** How an organisation manages this transition has huge implications for its future well-being. At the same time, a new generation is taking its place in the workforce and with it comes new influences, new attitudes and an explosion of technology.

Multi generational staffs have worked together throughout the ages, each accommodating younger employees through compromise and discipline. But as the pace of work increases and technological advances take hold, the arrival of the Millenials brings the issue of workplace management into sharp focus.

In this Knowledge Paper we will explain who the Generations are and what defines them and their workplace attitudes; we will introduce the Millenials and attempt to interpret their future impact on the workplace.

Finally we will tackle the challenge that faces all employers, large and small - to understand the dynamics at play and to design and create a workplace which attracts and retains the most talented staff of all ages.

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introduction

Who are the Generations at work?

4 different generations, 4 attitudes and 4 ways of working



Traditionals 1909-1945

Influences Privation of WWs, Churchill, Roosevelt, De Gaulle, Military Service, Class system, train travel

Characteristics Dedication, sacrifice, conformity, respect, hierarchy, patience, duty before pleasure

Pros Stable, loyal, detail orientated, thorough, hard working

Cons Resistance to change, reluctant to rock the boat, shy from conflict, unexpressive and reserved

Workplace style Derive identity from place, space reflects accomplishment and position, hierarchy, boundaries



Boomers 1946-1964

Influences JFK, contraception, television, Beatles, Swinging 60's

Characteristics Optimistic, team orientated, personal gratification, health and wellbeing, personal growth, work involvement, forever young

Pros Driven, aggressive, aim to please, team players, relationship focused, service orientated

Cons Technologically challenged, reluctant to disagree with peers, process ahead of result, self-centered, not budget minded

Workplace style Importance of corporate culture, and feeling part of the whole; private office, break away private enclaves, collaboration spaces, centralized knowledge centre



Gen X'ers 1965-1978

Influences The Cold War, Thatcher, Mitterrand, Kohl, Star Wars, Rock music, European Union, car travel

Characteristics Independent, diverse, global thinkers, technological, fun, informal, self reliant, pragmatic, detached, entrepreneurial

Pros Adaptable, techno literate, independent, un-intimidated by authority, creative

Cons Impatient, different manners, skeptical, perceived as lazy, quick to criticize, lack of assertiveness, emphasize result over process

Workplace style Look and quality are important, enjoy the extras, support expression in individual space; personal, flexible mobile workstations; alternative officing; open accessible leadership team areas



Millenials 1979-2000

Influences Computers, Internet, mobile phones, Instant messaging, gaming, global warming, Facebook, cheap air travel.

Characteristics Optimism, civic duty, confident, easily bored, sociable, moral, streetwise, environmental, nurtured.

Pros Meaningful work, tenacious, multi tasking, realistic, tech savvy, heroic spirit

Cons Need for structure and supervision, inexperienced, job hoppers, work isn't everything

Workplace style They can work anywhere, informal and fluid use of space, space for mentoring; fun open collaborative spaces, plug and play tech environment, no boundaries or hierarchy areas

influential factors

The Changing Worklife Pattern

With each new generation comes a re-interpretation of the work/life relationship.

For Traditionalist, work was an obligation and a duty that involved sacrifice.

For Baby Boomers, work is / was an exciting adventure rushing towards personal gain and fulfilment, with no time for rest. All work no life.

For Gen Xers, work is a challenge and it is to be achieved within a contract but not at the cost of social or family life.

Work and life, separate but in proper measure.

Now the Millenials bring a full integration of work and life. They seek fulfilment and meaning and want both to contribute to this.

Company Expectations

With each generation comes a change in working emphasis and expectation.

Traditionals and Baby Boomers represent "knowledge working" where knowledge determined position.

Gen Xers bring "creative working" where creativity and innovation are increasingly important.

Millenials have now overlaid "networking" where it is the ability to find knowledge and connect knowledge within a network. Theirs is a sharing, collaborative style.

Influential factors can help us anticipate for the needs of future generations and to understand how those influential factors might continue to evolve.

The Role of Technology

To have traveled from typewriter to the I-Phone, via PC's, internet, email mobiles and Blackberries, in little more than 20 years merely underlines the speed at which technology has and continues to change the workplace. Older generations must embrace technology and harness it, or face humiliation.

The Role of Sustainability

While the Millenials bring with them a very serious concern for environmental sustainability and a demand for minimal environmental damage, here we refer to the sustainability of the business model. How does your workspace contribute to the flow of information and the sharing of ideas through your workforce? How adaptable and flexible is your business to recognising change and re-organizing to gain from it?

Why do Millenials matter?

Millenials will bring all their experiences and drivers with them as they enter the workplace and this is accelerating a business change. Understanding the drivers of this new generation, both as employees and as consumers, will help companies manage this transition and come out on top.

the millennials

Across Europe the Millennials account for around 11% of the workforce, but as their number grows so will their influence on the workplace and business practices. Who are they and why does it matter?

The Millennials are a generation who have grown up very differently to any other. Their existence has been nurtured through an 'equality for all' culture and **shaped by the immediacy of computer driven information.** They are the Internet generation and they expect it to play a part in every aspect of their life.

They embrace the connectivity of technology to keep them in touch with others, deliver services and access information where ever and whenever they wish. Millennials keep in touch with everyone they know via instant messaging and Facebook. They never remember a time when they couldn't.

They are a **talented, mobile generation** who take parallel processing and multi-tasking to extremes. They are tuned into the "24 hour news" culture, they expect and demand a certain speed of life. They are moral, environmentally aware, and highly sociable. Millennials are empowered by access to information and technology in a way older generations can hardly

conceive. They work through collaboration and tend to reject strictly disciplined hierarchies and regimes.

As learners they prefer graphics and short bursts of information as opposed to thick texts and at work Millennials expect instant **collaboration with colleagues, suppliers and customers.** Their first and instant port of call for anything they don't know is Google. They seek information from a wide range of personal sources, search engines and peer networks. They are resourceful and will download what they need quickly rather than wait for it to be provided. **They often think company processes are bureaucratic and slow.** They respect their elders, and they seek mentors not substitute parents.

Millennials blend work and life together with minimal fuss. They are flexible and neither want nor need to be anchored to a desk. Most importantly, they expect to be able to harness technology so that they can work from anywhere and at anytime. **Laptops, Blackberries, remote terminal access are all minimal expectations.**

the millennials

As employees, Millennials want a flexible work environment and schedule...

...one that incorporates work/life balance as standard. Only **23%** of Millennials want to work all day in a full partitioned and personal office

The latest omnipresent flexible and mobile technology, innovatively and intelligently applied

Teamwork, mentoring and collaboration. 69% of Millennials say they foster relationships to learn from each other with and 32% declare to collaborate only because they like sharing and communicating.

A forward thinking, responsive and innovative culture

Streamlined business processes and speed of access



As consumers, Millennials bring with them a new peer-to-peer phenomenon, called Social Computing, which is already having a big impact on business.

Social Computing is a social structure in which technology puts power into the hands of communities, and takes it away from Institutions. **The result of which is a total change to the attitude and practice of the consumer.** Social Computing is about the immediate sharing and comparing of information and opinion about everything from car insurance to the colour of the next M&M. This is the world Millennials live in and business must learn, engage and profit.

With a major shift in power between generations on the horizon, and a major influence coming from the youngest entrant to the workplace, it is even more important than ever to attract and retain a skilled workforce of all ages and to manage the change ahead.

the multigenerational office

As a crucial generational transition takes place, it must be managed consciously and willingly to avoid a “War of Talents”. Offices must understand the variety of generational dynamics and the challenge is to design a workspace which enables communication and knowledge transfer - in both directions!

Steelcase suggests that, rather than a liability with increasing costs to be battled and cut at every turn, offices and workspaces should be considered an asset which with proper design, can enable your staff to work at their best and deliver an increasing workload under ever more demanding time constraints.

Our workspaces are not currently designed well enough. A clever office space can offer an environment that minimizes stress factors and optimizes performance. Here are our design principles:

Support Mobility

Workplaces must become more flexible and multipurpose. Staff must have a range of work settings to choose from according to the activity they are doing, and their preferences. They should also have unrestrained access to collaboration with colleagues.

Open spaces, meeting rooms, enclaves, concentration areas, informal collaboration points are all part of the jigsaw and they all offer each generation a little of what they like. Technology can be incorporated intelligently to promote mobility.

How then, with all these differences, can we enable the generations to work together when workspaces are not currently designed to accommodate such a broad spectrum of age and ability?

Foster collaboration

Acknowledge the increasing importance of the office as a space for social and interactive engagement. Provide a new balance between collective and individual spaces. Provide workspaces for inspiration and collaboration. Enable instant collaboration combined with mobility. Communication is key to this.

Office space can offer zones for idea creation, one-on-one exchange, quick informal gatherings, idea visualization, collective decision making. Collaboration is simply the act of linking and uniting your resources be they local or global. It is also fundamental to supporting knowledge transfer.

Take advantage of technologies

We know that technology is not a cure-all, but a proper analysis of your workload and work style will reveal where technology can deliver maximum efficiencies.

Technologies enable and connect people and ideas. Mobile IT devices are just the beginning of a work culture that

frees itself from the boundaries of time and space. As corporate cultures evolve from hierarchies to networks, work life is changing in profound ways. Today's workspace has to react to this by offering exactly what a workforce on the move needs – and that is not a desk that is deserted most of the time.

Adapt your HR structure and culture

The three principles above should be supported by a change of mentality in company policies and HR processes. New policies can provide balance between instruction and inspiration.

Work can happen at any time and in any place, not just at a desk, in front of a computer during work hours. Staff must be encouraged to feel liberated. More guidance, less control leads to less stress, more creativity and greater output. Our solution is to rethink how the traditional private or open plan office works. Dividing your space into different zones supports various types of work and movement throughout the day.

conclusion

The march of time is inevitable, and with it comes generational change in the workplace.

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What is different this time is that both the world and the workplace have radically changed even since the last generation arrived. The vast majority of graduates and school leavers today will find work in an office environment alongside the widest ever spectrum of age, experience, ability and aspiration.

The implications and consequences of the four generational workplace must be realised and understood. But for business to thrive in the short to medium future, they must trigger a chain reaction that redesigns your workplace to best accommodate and inspire your particular workforce.

All businesses must recruit new, young people. But this new generation have unique demands and businesses which are slow to understand and react to them will lose out in the rush to attract new talent.

Steelcase have shown that, with a little knowledge and understanding, it is possible to apply certain principles to the design of a workplace which attracts new staff and retains existing staff in equal measure.

Mobile work surfaces allow colleagues to work in partnership and collaborate; lounge spaces support casual interaction, private coaching and relaxed inspiration; private spaces enhance concentration, and conventional spaces enable ideas to be developed and materials to be collected.

Younger workers will especially welcome an open collaborative working environment, but so long as a balance is struck, older staff will warm to it too.

While accommodating the needs of a four generation workforce does pose certain challenges, it also creates an unprecedented opportunity. Never before have younger generations been so poised to learn from their older colleagues. Supporting that exchange of knowledge before it is too late is essential to the future of many businesses.

