Educational Support Cell (ESC)/TLDE
Tips & Strategies

Multigenerational Learners

Working in an environment with people of multiple generations presents a unique set of challenges. With a span of three to four different generations interacting in one place, you may find that your working style doesn't always coincide with your instructors, colleagues or students. What you might not realize is that the generation in which you were born likely affects the way you learn and interact both at the schoolhouse and in your everyday life.

This month, ELC/TLDE will focus on Generational Learning Styles (GLS) and provide basic tools and information you can use to better understand GLS. Of course, the year in which you were born doesn't necessarily determine your GLS; you may find you relate more to learning styles that are more commonly seen in other generations.

Regardless, each generation has unique qualities to offer. Learning the nuances of your generation and the generations around you can create a sense of understanding and support that can greatly impact overall team success.

Generational Learning Styles: Basic Info

Generation	Born	Age Today
Traditionalists	1925 – 1945	74 – 94
Baby Boomers	1946 – 1964	54 – 73
Gen X	1965 – 1979	39 – 53
Gen Y (Millennial)	1980 – 1994	38 – 24
Gen Z	1995 – 2010	23 – 8

Traditionalists
Traditionalists are considered some of the most loyal employees in the workplace. Though many have retired, those left are dedicated and hardworking after living through the Great Depression and World War II. They follow rules, respect authority, and hold high value in face-to-face communication and relationships. However, they may face challenges in the workplace when it comes to technology.

Baby Boomers
Traditionally, Baby Boomers tend to put more focus on their work than on their personal lives and usually expect others to do the same. That said, it should come as no surprise that they still make up 27% of the workforce. Overall, Baby Boomers dislike large systems and powerful authority, but they are also optimistic and avoid conflict. They are dedicated to their work, with 63% of Baby Boomers planning to continue working at least part-time into retirement. There is still a learning curve when it comes to technology. Baby Boomers are the highest consumers of traditional media including newspapers, magazines, and radios and they prefer picking up the phone or meeting in person to emails and video meetings. However, 90% of Baby Boomers have a Facebook page, and although it may not come naturally, they are overall accepting of digital and technological trends.

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<u>Gen Xers</u>
Generation X currently makes up 35% of the U.S. workforce. Their motivation greatly differs from the generation before them, with an overall "work to live, don't live to work" attitude. They put a strong focus on work-life balance, which can look like laziness to the Baby Boomers who supervise them. They are more independent and technologically oriented than older generations. They are motivated by independence and lack of rigidity rather than traditional perks. Gen Xers are adaptive and willing to put a significant amount of time and effort into their skill set. They are excited by technological advances and typically have no issues with technology in the workplace.

<u>Gen Yers (Millennials)</u>
Gen Yers are a powerful group of people who grew up in an age of rapid technological growth, the rise of the Internet, laptops, tablets and smartphones. They are adaptable, resilient and they work well in teams. They make up the largest group (37%) of the workforce, and they are the most educated of all the generations. They want more flexibility and freedom than the generations before them and they reject the idea of traditional 9-5 jobs. They're entrepreneurial-minded and want to be "the hero" in the workplace. These qualities often look like selfishness and entitlement to older generations around them which can cause friction in the workplace.

<u>Gen Zers</u>
The oldest members of Generation Z are just now entering the workforce. They, like Millennials, care deeply about independence and making a difference. However, after growing up watching their parents navigate through the Great Recession, security may ultimately be what drives them. Gen Zers were born fully submerged in technology, and for that reason, they prefer to work alone. They like to communicate via email and text messaging rather than by phone or in person, and their constant connectedness to technology means they are great multi-taskers (but can often get distracted). Like Millennials, they can seem entitled and needy to other generations in the workplace. Overall, they're smart, driven, and can pick-up new concepts very quickly because of the constantly changing digital world of their childhood.

<u>How does this affect the workplace?</u>

Multigenerational workplaces have the potential to be both positive and negative. Establishing a sense of understanding and respect between generations is crucial for a peaceful and successful workplace. Otherwise, it is likely you will become frustrated or feel disconnected from coworkers who are much older or younger than you.

Take the information above and consider what drives each generation, how they communicate and areas where they thrive. It is clear that preferred forms of communication have vastly changed from Traditionalists to Gen Zers. Try to accommodate the preferences of other generations around you. Recognize their needs, and remember that just because someone falls into a certain generation doesn't necessarily mean they will fit the stereotype. Getting to know your coworkers on an individual level is critical for building a cohesive work team.

Learning the common ways in which each generation learns and works can greatly impact the success of the workplace and make your job more enjoyable. You'll likely work with multiple generations for the rest of your career. Continue to take the opportunity to learn from the generations around you! You'll gain new perspective, learn new skills, and find new and creative ways to thrive as a group that you never knew was possible.