

# Generational diversity important topic

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When we think of diversity in the workplace, we tend to start with the topics of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Something we don't always associate with this topic is generational diversity.

However, in today's workforce, the modern workplace resembles a one-room school house, with all ages working side by side. Whether we are talking about employees, volunteers or committee members, three to four generations are likely involved.

A multitude of charts, graphs and research can be found showing that each generation comes with unique values, views, communication styles, and attributes which are associated with the era in which they were raised.

While it is true that every generation is influenced by its experiences, rushing to judgement can be just as harmful as ignoring the differences. In looking at the research, we may find that we identify with characteristics across several generations.

We must work together to find what motivates each of us to become and remain engaged, thus creating organizational effectiveness.

According to Jennifer J. Deal, a research scientist with the Center for Creative Leadership, all age groups have some characteristics in common such as:

- Everyone has something to contribute
- Everyone wants to feel valued
- Everyone wants to learn
- Everyone likes feedback
- Everyone wants recognition for a job well done

It is true that not everyone likes to be rewarded in the same way, to learn in the same format or contribute at the same level. Communication is the key. Engaging all generations in conversation will lead to stronger, more cohesive organizations. General knowledge of the differences throughout the generations is important and will certainly help us navigate possible conflicts that arise.

However, don't assume that no Traditionalist likes to receive text messages or that a Millennial is the only one that can hook up the laptop to the projector. It is up to us to get to know the person, not the stereotype, in order to create a work environment that is respectful of differences.