

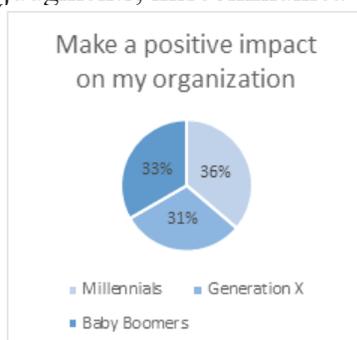
The Multi-generational Workplace

A lot has been written about generational differences in the workplace. Numerous articles discuss, often negatively, the differences between Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. As a new generation; Generation Z, born between approximately 1995 to 2010; prepares to enter the workforce, it is important to focus on what the generations have in common in our goal to create a productive, harmonious workplace.

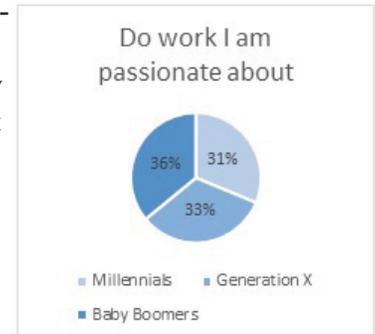
Not as Different as we Think

Researchers from George Washington University and the Department of Defense analyzed the results of over 20 studies on generational differences in the workplace. They found that “meaningful differences among generations probably do not exist in the workplace”. Perceived generational differences have more to do with age and life stage than generation, so as Elspeth Reeve wrote in her 2013 *The Atlantic* article about Millennials, “It’s not that people born after 1980 are narcissists, it’s that young people are narcissists, and they get over themselves as they get older.”

Multi-generational conflict in the workforce is often caused by generational judgments, miscommunication, and stereotypes, like the one mentioned above. However, a 2015 survey by IBM’s Institute for Business Values found that Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers held similar long-term work goals. In fact, the generations scored within a few percentage points of each other when asked a series of 10 questions like



“How important is it to make a positive impact on your organization?” or “How important is it to do work you are passionate about?”. Results like these show that despite different levels of comfort with technology or different communication styles, the generations share common goals.



Common Ground

As an employer, you can use this common ground to build a bridge between generations. Do not give into the temptation to stereotype workers. Relying on stereotypes blinds us to the depth and complexity each individual brings to the workplace and can lead to misunderstandings and resentment. Instead ensure that all employees know what is expected of them in terms of goals, deadlines, and responsibilities. Focus on building a culture that promotes communication between generations to head off any misunderstandings.

What This Means for Counties

Managing a workplace with workers spanning multiple life stages and experiences has its challenges. However, the things that make a successful workplace: mutual respect, common goals, and strong communication have no generational boundaries. For assistance with workplace conflict and other human-resource related issues, contact CTSI at (303) 861 0507. 