

## STRATEGIES

## ON YOUR SIDE

## Managing today's multigenerational workplace



Quesenberry



Rogers

**Question:** Today five generations are working side by side. How can I best manage the multigenerational work force?

**Answer:** The work force is made up of traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y and Generation 2020.

Born between 1925 and 1945, traditionalists were impacted by the Great Depression and World War II.

According to Anick Tolbize, a researcher at the University of Minnesota, traditionalists tend to like top-down command, need respect and prefer to make decisions based on what worked in the past.

Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 and experienced civil riots, the Vietnam War, and the John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations.

According to Tolbize, boomers believe that hard work and sacrifice are the price to pay for success. They started the workaholic trend.

Born between 1965 and 1980, Generation X ("Xers") are not overly loyal to their employers but are more concerned about having a balanced

work life and a flexible schedule, according to Tolbize.

The Society for Human Resource Management suggests that Xers are likely to ask for promotions, flexible work locations and nonscheduled bonuses.

Millennials were born between 1981 and 1995 and have been heavily influenced by technological advances. They are great multitaskers.

According to SHRM, millennials do not feel compelled to stay in a job but believe people should stay just until they have learned enough to move ahead.

Members of Generation 2020 (or "Generation Zen") were born after 1996. According to Cathleen Carlos, a blogger for Oklahoma Human Resources, Generation Zen is affected heavily by technology and is described as demanding with short attention spans.

**How to manage five generations**

To successfully manage a multigenerational workplace, an organization should formulate a plan to make all generations feel comfortable and productive:

According to Ron Zemke, Claire Raines and Bob Filipczak, authors of "Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace," the "ACORN" imperatives should be used as a means to manage such a work force:

Accommodate employees' differences; Create workplace choices; Operate from a sophisticated management style; Respect competence and initiative; and Nourish retention.

The authors believe a more sophisticated management approach entails adapting leadership style to employee traits and characteristics as well as to context.

Tolbize recommends that employers consider decreasing bureaucracy and allowing the workplace to shape itself, which encourages workplace choices and respects generational differences.

She believes managers can respect competence by encouraging the best of employees and by recognizing their achievements.

Moreover, training that is appropriately geared to the employee's characteristics can nourish retention of even boomers and millennials.

Employers should give employees regular guidance, keep them informed about business changes and initiatives, track training in regular performance reviews, and provide employees with prompt feedback.

*Kathryn A. Quesenberry is a partner Dinsmore & Shohl LLP where Vanessa Rogers is an associate. On Your Side is a periodic column that provides educated answers from professionals associated with the Louisville Bar Association or the Kentucky Society of Certified Public Accountants. Send legal questions to Jenny Bencomo, jbencomo@loubar.org.*

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