

LEADING THE MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE



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OLIVE STRACHAN RESOURCES**



This report presents the findings of a survey conducted by Olive Strachan Consultancy (OSC), aimed at understanding the experiences of Human Resource Professionals responsible for leading multi-generational teams. The study encompassed both micro and large businesses to identify the challenges and benefits associated with managing a multi-generational workforce, the factors that have the greatest impact on business, and how companies are fostering an inclusive culture in the face of such diversity.

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What is the Multi-Generational Workforce?

A multigenerational workforce is an employment environment where employees from different generational cohorts work together. This typically includes five generations working together simultaneously ranging from Baby Boomers to Generation Z.

Baby Boomers

Born between 1946 and 1964
Independent, goal-oriented, competitive

The Silent Generation

Born between 1928 and 1945
Hardworking, loyal, disciplined

Generation X

Born between 1965 and 1980
Self-reliant, adaptable, tech-savvy

Millennials

Born between 1981 and 1996
Tech-savvy, collaborative, socially conscious



Generation Z

Born between 1997 and 2012
Entrepreneurial, innovative, digital natives

"MANAGERS ARE FACING A COMPLEX AND INTRICATE DILEMMA OF LEADING A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE."

Navigating Multigenerational Dynamics in the Modern Workplace: Balancing Expectations and Working Styles

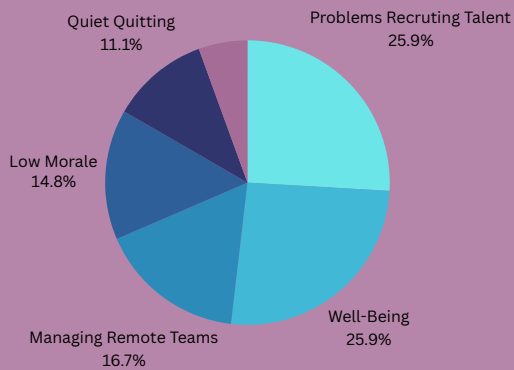


HR professionals tasked with leading a multigenerational workforce face unique experiences and challenges. They are expected to balance the expectations and working styles of employees from different age groups. The key experiences include:

- **Diverse Communication Styles:** Different generations prefer different modes of communication. Baby Boomers and Generation X may favor face-to-face or email communication, while Millennials and Generation Z often prefer digital communication, such as instant messaging and social media.
- **Varied Work-Life Balance Expectations:** Older generations may prioritize job stability and have a traditional 9-to-5 work ethic, whereas younger generations often value flexibility and work-life balance, seeking remote work options and flexible hours.
- **Technological Proficiency:** There is a wide range of comfort levels with technology. Younger employees tend to be more tech-savvy, while older employees might require additional training and support to adapt to new technologies.

CHALLENGES OF A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

IN THIS CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND POSSIBLE GLOBAL RECESSION, RESPONDENTS OF THE OLIVE STRACHAN CONSULTANCY SURVEY INDICATED THAT THE FOLLOWING FACTORS, AS PRESENTED IN THE GRAPH BELOW, HAD IMPACTED THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.



BASED ON THE OSC SURVEY, 50% OF LEADERS HAVE FACED THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES MANAGING MULTIGENERATIONAL TEAMS:

- Gender Bias
- Intergenerational Conflict
- Erratic Behaviours
- Lack of Commitment
- Communication Challenges
- Salary Expectations
- Respecting Different Values
- Flexibility and Portfolio Career
- Adoption of New Technology
- Annual Leave Expectations

Work Ethics and Technology Utilization:

In a 2006 article about leading a multi-generational nursing workforce in Florida, it was stated that variations in work ethics and technology utilization are the primary drivers of conflict in the nursing setting.

Promoting an Age-Inclusive Workforce for Sustainable Growth

With the world's population age 50 and over projected to increase from 37% in 2020 to 45% in 2050, leveraging a multigenerational workforce is becoming increasingly important for leaders in promoting an age-inclusive workforce and extending business growth (OECD, 2020).

Varied Communication Preferences Across Generations:

Communication styles can also vary, with younger generations preferring to use digital communication methods such as email or messaging, while older generations may prefer face-to-face or phone communication.

Generational Stereotypes:

Preconceived notions about each generation can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. For example, older employees may view younger ones as entitled, while younger employees may see older ones as resistant to change.

Bridging Generational Divides

MasterCard, for example, is implementing reverse mentoring, where younger employees mentor more seasoned staff on emerging trends and technologies, while senior staff gain insight into social dialogue and new cultural phenomena, building confidence and leadership skills (Khan, 2022).

Differing Expectations of Employers Across Generations:

Different generations may have different expectations of their employers, with younger generations placing more emphasis on social responsibility and workplace culture, while older generations may prioritize salary and benefits.

Managing a Multigenerational Nursing Workforce:

Leading a multigenerational workforce can be challenging due to differences in values, work styles, communication preferences, and attitudes toward work. Baby Boomers, for example, tend to place a high value on job security and may resist change, while Millennials and Generation Z prioritize work-life balance and are more comfortable with rapid technological changes.

BENEFITS OF A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

AS NOTED BY GAY (2017), A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE CAN BRING TOGETHER DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES AND IDEAS, PROMOTING EXCELLENCE AND ADVANCING A COMPANY'S INTERESTS. RESPONDENTS IN THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED LIFE EXPERIENCES, MEASURED RESPONSES, AND A ROBUST TALENT PIPELINE AS KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY.

Baby Boomers and Generation Y employees draw from their industry experience, while Millennials and Generation Z are adept at navigating rapid technological change (Boatman, 2023).



In a survey by the Randstad group of 400 employees in Singapore, 85% reported working in multi-generational teams, with 83% stating that age diversity led to more innovative ideas.

Harnessing Past Experience and Innovation for Business Success

This collaboration (Multi-Generational workforce) allows for the combination of past experience with new innovation, promoting efficiency and business continuity, as noted by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).

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Boosting Productivity Through Knowledge Exchange

This continual exchange of knowledge serves to boost motivation and productivity as employees are empowered to contribute to their teams while also expanding their own skill sets.

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Accelerating Problem-Solving with Multigenerational Skills Mix

Having a workforce that spans multiple generations results in a diverse mix of hard and soft skills, which in turn accelerates problem-solving by enabling cross-functional learning and exposure to different perspectives.

Fostering a Positive Culture Through Multigenerational Learning

A positive organizational culture is fostered when employees feel that they are able to add value and continually learn from their colleagues, resulting in improved retention rates (Multigenerational Workforce: Challenges, Benefits & Tips, 2022).

Recommendations for Leading a Multi-generational Workforce

Managing a workforce consisting of multiple generations can present challenges, but it also provides an opportunity to capitalize on the distinct talents and backgrounds that each generation brings. In today's business landscape, it is crucial for organizations to prioritize diversity and inclusion as integral goals.

Have an open attitude to feedback

According to the OSC survey, 83.33% of respondents believed that fostering an open attitude toward feedback was an effective way to cultivate an inclusive culture. Offering and receiving feedback across differences is a crucial element in creating a sense of belonging and can have a positive impact on a company's overall performance (Weiss-Haserot, 2022).

Create safe spaces, mentorship programs, cross-cultural engagement

Survey participants emphasized the significance of utilizing inclusive language in fostering collaboration among individuals from different generations. It is advisable to adopt neutral language and refrain from using terms or expressions that might single out a specific age group (Boatman, 2023).

Dispel age bias and generational stereotypes

The reality is that our individual values are frequently shaped by circumstances beyond our control, shaped by our early life and career experiences. Each generation began working in particular circumstances that shaped our perceptions of purpose, preferences, and motivation for success (Waldman, 2021).

Use behavioural assessments and profiling tools

Conduct sessions that incorporates personality and behavioral assessments. Generations recognize both the similarities and differences in their communication styles. Pair individuals with different styles to facilitate discussions on how to work together most effectively, regardless of generational differences. This approach can be useful for promoting better understanding and collaboration among team members of all ages (Gale, 2018).

Implement *TetraMap*

TetraMap® is a simple but powerful instrument, tool, framework and experience which helps individuals, teams and organisations to be more effective by transforming the way they communicate, collaborate, make decisions, solve problems, and plan projects or strategies. Here's how TetraMap can help, along with the challenges that multigenerational teams typically face:

In 1995, Yoshimi and Jon Brett developed TetraMap as a tool to minimize conflicts in professional settings. They employed the four natural elements to design a learning program that enhances individual wellness and group unity (TetraMap 2022).

To utilize TetraMap, users answer a few questions about themselves. The responses help uncover insights into their elemental preferences. TetraMap aims to enhance understanding of how individual differences influence workplace interactions (TetraMap-Change & Transformation, n.d.). Additionally, a team assessment can be conducted to help clarify any conflicts or challenges an organization may be experiencing.

How TetraMap Helps:

1. **Understanding Diversity:** TetraMap helps leaders recognize and appreciate the diversity within their teams by categorizing individuals based on their elemental preferences. This understanding allows leaders to tailor their leadership approach and communication style to better suit the needs of each team member.
2. **Communication Enhancement:** By understanding the elemental preferences of team members, leaders can adapt their communication styles to effectively engage with individuals from different generations. For example, they can adjust their language, tone, and methods of communication to resonate with each elemental preference.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** TetraMap provides insights into potential sources of conflict within multigenerational teams and offers resources for resolving conflicts constructively. By recognizing differences in elemental preferences, leaders can facilitate discussions that lead to greater understanding and collaboration among team members.
4. **Team Building:** TetraMap can be used to facilitate team-building activities that promote understanding, respect, and collaboration among multigenerational team members. Activities tailored to each elemental preference can help foster a sense of unity and camaraderie within the team.
5. **Leadership Development:** TetraMap offers opportunities for leadership development by helping leaders identify their own elemental preferences and understand how these preferences influence their leadership style. Leaders can then adapt their approach to better meet the needs of their multigenerational teams.

By leveraging the insights provided by TetraMap, leaders can effectively address these challenges and foster a more inclusive, collaborative, and high-performing multigenerational team. Through open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to embrace diversity, leaders can create an environment where all team members feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their best.

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