



Generations at Work
AWAR
of TALENTS

Innovating to integrate an emerging generation into the workplace

introduction

A new generation is taking its place in the workforce and with it comes new influences, new attitudes and an explosion of technology.

Right now today, if you look around any office of reasonable size, you can see an historic landmark. For the first time ever, there are 4 generations sharing the workspace. But the significance of this moment is immense – it is the start of the transition of power within the workplace.

Just for a year or two longer, four generations share the same workplace, each with very different attitudes and needs. A majority of **Baby Boomers** (1945 - 1965), a slightly smaller group of **Generation Xers** (1965 – 80), and a handful of both **Traditionalists** (pre 1945) and **Millenials** (post 1980).

However, as the final few Traditionalists retire over the next year or so, the oldest Baby Boomers reach retirement age also. **Whilst many intend to keep working, Boomers will generally leave the workplace en mass over the next decade, and with them will go valuable experience and know-how.** How an organisation manages this transition has huge implications for its future well-being. At the same time, a new generation is taking its place in the workforce and with it comes new influences, new attitudes and an explosion of technology.

Multi generational staffs have worked together throughout the ages, each accommodating younger employees through compromise and discipline. But as the pace of work increases and technological advances take hold, the arrival of the Millenials brings the issue of workplace management into sharp focus.

In this Knowledge Paper we will explain who the Generations are and what defines them and their workplace attitudes; we will introduce the Millenials and attempt to interpret their future impact on the workplace.

Finally we will tackle the challenge that faces all employers, large and small - to understand the dynamics at play and to design and create a workplace which attracts and retains the most talented staff of all ages.

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introduction

Who are the Generations at work?

4 different generations, 4 attitudes and 4 ways of working



Traditionals 1909-1945

Influences Privation of WWs, Churchill, Roosevelt, De Gaulle, Military Service, Class system, train travel

Characteristics Dedication, sacrifice, conformity, respect, hierarchy, patience, duty before pleasure

Pros Stable, loyal, detail orientated, thorough, hard working

Cons Resistance to change, reluctant to rock the boat, shy from conflict, unexpressive and reserved

Workplace style Derive identity from place, space reflects accomplishment and position, hierarchy, boundaries



Boomers 1946-1964

Influences JFK, contraception, television, Beatles, Swinging 60's

Characteristics Optimistic, team orientated, personal gratification, health and wellbeing, personal growth, work involvement, forever young

Pros Driven, aggressive, aim to please, team players, relationship focused, service orientated

Cons Technologically challenged, reluctant to disagree with peers, process ahead of result, self-centered, not budget minded

Workplace style Importance of corporate culture, and feeling part of the whole; private office, break away private enclaves, collaboration spaces, centralized knowledge centre



Gen X'ers 1965-1978

Influences The Cold War, Thatcher, Mitterrand, Kohl, Star Wars, Rock music, European Union, car travel

Characteristics Independent, diverse, global thinkers, technological, fun, informal, self reliant, pragmatic, detached, entrepreneurial

Pros Adaptable, techno literate, independent, un-intimidated by authority, creative

Cons Impatient, different manners, skeptical, perceived as lazy, quick to criticize, lack of assertiveness, emphasize result over process

Workplace style Look and quality are important, enjoy the extras, support expression in individual space; personal, flexible mobile workstations; alternative officing; open accessible leadership team areas



Millenials 1979-2000

Influences Computers, Internet, mobile phones, Instant messaging, gaming, global warming, Facebook, cheap air travel.

Characteristics Optimism, civic duty, confident, easily bored, sociable, moral, streetwise, environmental, nurtured.

Pros Meaningful work, tenacious, multi tasking, realistic, tech savvy, heroic spirit

Cons Need for structure and supervision, inexperienced, job hoppers, work isn't everything

Workplace style They can work anywhere, informal and fluid use of space, space for mentoring; fun open collaborative spaces, plug and play tech environment, no boundaries or hierarchy

the millennials

As employees, Millennials want a flexible work environment and schedule...

...one that incorporates work/life balance as standard. Only **23%** of Millennials want to work all day in a full partitioned and personal office

The latest omnipresent flexible and mobile technology, innovatively and intelligently applied

Teamwork, mentoring and collaboration. 69% of Millennials say they foster relationships to learn from each other with and 32% declare to collaborate only because they like sharing and communicating.

A forward thinking, responsive and innovative culture

Streamlined business processes and speed of access



As consumers, Millennials bring with them a new peer-to-peer phenomenon, called Social Computing, which is already having a big impact on business.

Social Computing is a social structure in which technology puts power into the hands of communities, and takes it away from Institutions. **The result of which is a total change to the attitude and practice of the consumer.** Social Computing is about the immediate sharing and comparing of information and opinion about everything from car insurance to the colour of the next M&M. This is the world Millennials live in and business must learn, engage and profit.

With a major shift in power between generations on the horizon, and a major influence coming from the youngest entrant to the workplace, it is even more important than ever to attract and retain a skilled workforce of all ages and to manage the change ahead.

conclusion

The march of time is inevitable, and with it comes generational change in the workplace.

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What is different this time is that both the world and the workplace have radically changed even since the last generation arrived. The vast majority of graduates and school leavers today will find work in an office environment alongside the widest ever spectrum of age, experience, ability and aspiration.

The implications and consequences of the four generational workplace must be realised and understood. But for business to thrive in the short to medium future, they must trigger a chain reaction that redesigns your workplace to best accommodate and inspire your particular workforce.

All businesses must recruit new, young people. But this new generation have unique demands and businesses which are slow to understand and react to them will lose out in the rush to attract new talent.

Steelcase have shown that, with a little knowledge and understanding, it is possible to apply certain principles to the design of a workplace which attracts new staff and retains existing staff in equal measure.

Mobile work surfaces allow colleagues to work in partnership and collaborate; lounge spaces support casual interaction, private coaching and relaxed inspiration; private spaces enhance concentration, and conventional spaces enable ideas to be developed and materials to be collected.

Younger workers will especially welcome an open collaborative working environment, but so long as a balance is struck, older staff will warm to it too.

While accommodating the needs of a four generation workforce does pose certain challenges, it also creates an unprecedented opportunity. Never before have younger generations been so poised to learn from their older colleagues. Supporting that exchange of knowledge before it is too late is essential to the future of many businesses.

Steelcase

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About Steelcase

#1 global leader in the office furniture industry

\$3.4 billion annual revenue in 2007

Complete global reach with **13,500 employees worldwide**

31 plants: located in America, Europe, Asia, Middle East & Africa

Management systems for Quality (**ISO 9000**) and for Environment (**ISO 14000**)

Multi-site **PEFC** certification in 4 European plants

More than 650 dealers in **over 850 locations** worldwide

More than 500 product lines

\$152.5 million invested in research, design and development activities over the past 3 years alone

More than 1200 active patents worldwide

80,000+ clients served in the past 5 years