



# 5 Generations: What Happens When We Work Together

EXCERPTS FROM AN INSIGHT180 INDUSTRY SURVEY

July 2018

# About the Survey



**insight180** is forever curious – especially about forces and trends that shape companies' cultures and brands.

**GOAL:** We wanted to learn more about the impact of having, for the first time ever, four generations (sometimes five!) in the workplace.

**TIMING:** The survey was open from March 28 through April 3, 2018.

**APPROACH:** We used a non-scientific approach to solicit participation for this online survey. One leader of a local (Howard County, Maryland) community of business leaders agreed to invite members to participate. We also used emails and social media to invite colleagues, friends and family to respond.

**PARTICIPANTS:** We asked that respondents had professional workplace experience within the last five years.

**RESPONSES:** 97 people participated, with at least one person from each of the five generations.

# Five Generations – Forces that Shaped Each



World events, cultural norms and media helped to shape key characteristics of each generation.

|                          | <b>Traditionalists<br/>b. 1925 – 1945</b>   | <b>Baby Boomers<br/>b. 1946 – 1964</b>   | <b>Generation X<br/>b. 1965 – 1979</b>  | <b>Millennials<br/>b. 1980 – 1994</b>   | <b>Generation Z<br/>b. 1995 – 2014</b>   |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Influences</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Came of age during WWI, New Deal or Korean War</li> <li>• Parents lived through the Great Depression</li> <li>• Experienced hard times growing up, followed by prosperity</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led the Civil Rights movement and the sexual revolution</li> <li>• Protested Vietnam War</li> <li>• Highest divorce rate ever</li> <li>• Expected the American Dream</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lying politicians (Watergate)</li> <li>• Parents laid off from work</li> <li>• Latchkey kids of dual-income parents</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic recession, then boom, then bust</li> <li>• (Often divorced) parents kept kids busy and protected from disappointment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced 9/11, the War on Terror, global financial crisis</li> <li>• Globalism</li> <li>• Multiracial kids, some growing up with same-sex parents</li> </ul> |
| <b>Media</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most grew up listening to radio at home</li> <li>• Among the first to have TVs in their homes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergence of portable radios and color TV</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology to entertain (console games, Sesame Street)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTV, CNN</li> <li>• Emergence of the Internet</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC, smart phones, web, social media</li> <li>• Netflix</li> <li>• GPS</li> </ul>  |
| <b>3 Defining Traits</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient</li> <li>• Loyal</li> <li>• Task-oriented</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team-oriented</li> <li>• Calm in a crisis</li> <li>• Strong work ethic</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal</li> <li>• Self-reliant</li> <li>• Self-focused</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident</li> <li>• Hotly competitive</li> <li>• Self-focused</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepting of differences</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial</li> <li>• Wired</li> </ul>   |



# Benefits of Multiple Generations At Work

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES ABOUT THE BENEFITS  
OF WORKING WITH OTHER GENERATIONS

# QUESTION



## What have you noticed that's great about working with other generations in the workplace?

- 94% of respondents noticed something great about working with other generations
- Majority of examples fell into one of four categories:
  - Learning and Collaboration
  - Perspective and Energy
  - Knowledge and Experience
  - Balance of Strengths

# LEARNING AND COLLABORATION



With multiple generations in the workforce, we can each learn from other generations about how to do our own jobs better.

*“I work in an organization with mostly blue-collar, 40+ year old people and it’s great to see their loyalty and hard work. I try to take their positive traits and combine them with the modern day work force.” – Millennial*

*“I learned to be more proficient in technology.” – Baby Boomer*

*“I LOVE having a mentor who is older than me and happens to be a Baby Boomer. I have learned invaluable lessons about riding out storms, keeping calm under pressure, picking your battles, and remembering that there are various perspectives on every issue.” – Millennial*

*“The older generations have a much better understanding on how to work around certain tasks due to their experience in the field. They are a great help to learn more about the work we do.” – Gen Z*

*“It helps me to be more creative when faced with a difficult tasks and become more self-aware and better equipped to effectively communicate with others.” – Millennial*

## PERSPECTIVE AND ENERGY



It can be energizing to work with other generations. Different perspectives improve decision-making and team knowledge.

*“Energy level is very high when all ages are engaged in teams. Older show calm and younger show new directions. Everybody gains if minds are open.” – Gen X*

*“Being exposed to energy of younger generations.” – Traditionalist*

*“Varied types of energy and perspectives and knowledge.” – Baby Boomer*

*“Perspective! It's ALWAYS good to have so much more perspective to draw from in decision making.” – Millennial*

*“Most viewpoints on everything to get the bigger picture.” – Gen Z*

*“That they think and approach work differently than I do. I always learn from others and like that energy and different-ness.”  
– Baby Boomer*

*“It's way more fun. Great ideas are shared. We love having different perspectives.” – Gen X*

# KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE



We learn from each other's knowledge and experience.

*“They have different backgrounds and educations and can bring completely different ideas that enhance our ideas.”  
– Baby Boomer*

*“Knowledge gets passed down. There is great opportunity for mentorship.” – Millennial*

*“Different experiences.” – Gen Z*

*“Younger workers, too, have knowledge to share.” – Gen X*

*“The knowledge that can be passed on from older generations to the younger generations is fast... But it takes both generations being willing to be humble and open to learning from each other and ask good questions.” – Millennial*



# BALANCE OF STRENGTHS



Together, we get the best each generation has to offer.

*“The best and worst in each generation is balanced by other generations.” – Gen X*

*“Older generations are more unflappable and professional. More pragmatic. Younger encourage the older to have fun and that enjoying your job is a right not a privilege.” – Millennial*

*“Younger workers bring in new ideas about social interactions.” – Baby Boomer*

*“Everyone has different strengths, experiences, Baby Boomers are really great with one on one networking and bring decades of experience. Millennials are very open-minded, ready for new experiences and eager to learn.” – Gen X*

*“Working with older generations provides an immense opportunity to learn from other's experiences, gain a more seasoned perspective, and follow a proven strategy (a lot of times!).” – Millennial*

*“I love the ‘ah has’ from every generation when they learn something new or start to see a situation from a new perspective. And, I really like that every generation has some great tools, tricks of the trade. The newer ones are more apt to be apps and the older ones processes, but it's all good.” – Gen X*



# Observations

THREE SURPRISING THINGS WE LEARNED

# Frustrations Balance Benefits



Though the frustrations and benefits themselves weren't so surprising, we LOVE the examples people shared. And, more people cited benefits of having multiple generations in the workplace than cited frustrations.



# Technology



Technology is both a source of conflict between the generations at work and a benefit of working together. Older workers tend to be frustrated by younger generations' use (or overuse) of technology at work; younger workers are frustrated by older generations' limited technology skills. Yet all generations point to learning about technology from one another as a big benefit of working together.



# Eager to Learn



Of the four categories of benefits cited by survey participants, Learning and Collaboration was the most common across all generations. Clearly, generations are eager to learn from one another.



# Thank you

We hope you find it just as informative and interesting as we did!

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