Engaging a Multi-Generational Workforce: Practical Advice for Government Managers

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IBM Center for
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On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, *Engaging a Multi-Generational Workforce: Practical for Government Managers,* by Susan Hannam, Dean of the College of Health, Environment, and Science at Slippery Rock University, and Bonni Yordi, Director of Surveys and Business Research for MRA–The Management Association.

Hannam and Yordi observe that the U.S. workplace is "undergoing a significant transition that presents unchartered territory and tremendous opportunity." This transformation includes a workforce that now includes four generations. They also report that over half of the workforce is currently unsatisfied with their jobs. These two challenges are compounded by rapid technology changes in the workplace. When taken together, this creates enormous challenges, as well as opportunities, for managers today in both the public and private sectors.

Jonathan D. Breul

This report examines six trends now occurring in the workplace and describes how managers can successfully engage all four generations and "commit" to the organization. For example, each of the four generations has different learning and communication styles, different work-life balance needs, and different preferences in how their contributions should be recognized. Understanding these differences and preferences can lead to a more effective organization.

One key to successful organizations today is to have workers bring their discretionary energy and passion to work. Hannam and Yordi describe successful techniques in doing so, such as increased mentoring of young employees and "reverse mentoring" where young employees assist older workers to develop social media skills and assist them in better understanding the networking styles of the "Millennial Generation."
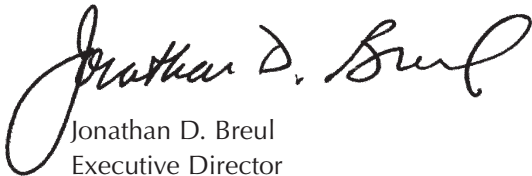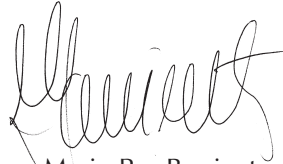
Maria-Paz Barrientos

The authors conclude that the diversity in the workforce today will be a challenge to managers, but successful integration of the four generations can lead to a stronger organization. Each generation can bring different sets of skills and life experiences to the workplace. Studies show that successful integration of the generations can also increase innovation and improve productivity if properly managed. We hope this report provides practical and concrete tips for federal managers to do so.

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Introduction to a Multi-Generational Workforce

The American workplace, the federal government workplace included, is undergoing a significant transition that presents both serious challenges and tremendous opportunities. There are three major shifts taking place, each of which has the potential to create disruptions or opportunities within the workforce:

- **A multi-generational workforce:** The American workforce now spans four generations. The cohort known as the "Millennials" or "Gen Y" is the largest group to enter the workforce in U.S. history.

- **An increasingly dissatisfied workforce:** Over half of the American workforce is now unsatisfied with their job. Although the youngest workers are the least satisfied, older workers have the lowest satisfaction rates in two decades.[1]

- **Rapid technological change and innovation:** Technology makes things possible that simply were not possible before in the workplace. For example, connecting with anyone, anywhere, anytime.

As a result, today's managers face an unprecedented set of challenges. As organizations prepare for the coming generational shift, they need to take full advantage of the knowledge of their experienced workers, while at the same time rethinking old paradigms about what work is and how it gets done.

A major challenge for today's Traditionalist and Baby Boomer managers is to figure out how to develop younger workers into tomorrow's managers under a new model. A pivotal question for managers is, "Do we want our legacy to be of mentoring and empowering the next generations, or of fighting them tooth

and nail?" Organizations that embrace generational differences in values, ways of getting things done, and ways of communicating will thrive.

Never before have four generations worked side-by-side in the workplace. After World War II, the Traditionalist generation, born 1922 to 1945, tended to work at the same employer for an entire career. Beginning with the Boomers, born 1946–64, women and ethnic groups began entering the workforce in increasing numbers, bringing different needs and perspectives to the workplace. As the Gen Xers entered the workforce, they increased job hopping in an effort to increase their income and/or to balance their lifestyle. Although some employers made accommodations in response to the demographic shifts, the basic work model — top down, command and control, one size fits all, 8–5 workday — did not radically change. Now, the emergence of the digital-savvy Millennials has the potential to change the face of work to be more collaborative, to use virtual teams, to use social media, and to offer more flexible work hours. The four generations and their birth years are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: The Multi-Generation Workforce

Generations	Current Age	Years Born
Traditionalists (also known as Greatest Generation or the Silent Generation)	66+	1922–1945
Boomers	47-65	1946–1964
Gen Xers	31-46	1965–1980
Millennials (also known as Gen Y, Net)	21-30	1981–1990

While there have always been multiple generations in the workplace, what is drastically different today is the rapid influx of technology–savvy employees and the resultant cultural, social, and attitudinal changes they bring. Meister and Willyerd state that, "Never has a generation entered the workplace using technologies so far ahead of those adopted by their employer."[2] This can be a major advantage for a given organization or a problem, depending upon how it is handled.

Increasing generational diversity and technological change is causing a transformation in the way employers must manage human resources. The Human Capital Institute notes that, "The homogenous human capital model of the past simply will not work with such diverse cohorts in the workforce…It is time to throw out the one-size-fits-all model of talent management and embrace a more flexible model."[3]

Managers who harness this unprecedented opportunity for growth, development, and collaboration, and build bridges between generations, will thrive.

For managers who have four generations of employees sitting in a meeting or working on a project, it can seem like each generation has its own worldviews, priorities, career models and motives. The goal of this report is to increase managers' understanding of generational characteristics and the impact of their own management practices on these groups. The report also contains practical tips to help managers leverage the strengths of each generation. Taking full advantage of the multi-generational workforce will enable employers to effectively attract and retain employees, build teams, deal with change, and increase employee engagement.

Six Trends Affecting the Multi-Generational Workforce

We begin by defining six trends within the work-place, each of which opens a window of opportunity for managers to build bridges across generations. The trends are:

- Trend One: Increased use of new technologies to communicate

- Trend Two: Increased expectation for work-life flexibility

- Trend Three: Increased expectation for continual development

- Trend Four: Increased need for new ways to reward and recognize employees

- Trend Five: Increased need to engage the entire workforce

- Trend Six: Increased emphasis on innovation

Trend One: Increased Use of New Technologies to Communicate

Rapid demographic change, both generational and ethnic, can lead to communication problems within an organization. If managers do not pay close attention to the dynamics in their organization, operating only within their comfort zone, this can lead to misperceptions and a less productive work environment. Managers should think about how they can communicate with multiple groups.

Research has shown that Millennials thrive in a team environment and engage frequently through social media. Members of this generation may feel that older workers are unable to grasp technology.

Baby Boomers, on the other hand, can do their part to communicate to younger generations in a way

that takes into consideration their different perspective. For example:

> Imagine telling a Generation Xer about your organization. "We have one hundred offices in forty countries around the world," you might say. Maybe you even helped open some of those offices yourself. But the Xer may assume that the organization's large size and number of offices may make it particularly bureaucratic.
>
> What if instead, you understood the values that motivated that Gen Xer and you also talked about the benefits? "One reason we're so excited about our presence in forty countries is that it enables us to provide our employees with an opportunity to live and work abroad if that's what interests them. And of course, our technology is incredible. All the countries are linked by an intranet, so the networking and learning opportunities are stellar. Plus, it's really expanded the size of projects we can take on. So even while you're in a U.S. office, if you're interested in Latin America business issues, you could be working on one of their projects." Thus, one organization has taken a feature and, by understanding how it might affect the target audience, has turned it into a benefit for Generation X.[4]

A diverse and inclusive workplace requires open communication with an awareness of these growing generational differences. It is a matter of strong leadership, embracing new approaches, and communicating in a way that engages all employees.

Understanding the Multi-Generation Workforce

Traditionalists (1922–1945)

Common Traits:

- Grew up in a "do-without" era
- Respect authority, generally comfortable with hierarchy
- Like details, tendency to be less comfortable with ambiguity and change
- Believe in dedication, sacrifice, duty, and hard work

Experience in the Workplace:

- Work was performed in the office
- Work was measured by hours worked
- No discussion of work-life balance

Source: Adapted from Don Tapscott, Grown Up Digital *(New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 40; Neil Howe and William Strauss,* Millennials Go to College, *(Great Falls, VA: Life Course Associates, 2007).*

Trend Two: Increased Expectation for Work-Life Flexibility

To retain top talent, organizations are now increasing so-called "lifestyle benefits." More work-life flexibility is now being sought by all four generations, not just Gen Xers or Millennials.

Generational differences in how work is defined and the technology that makes it possible to work anywhere and anytime are fostering this trend toward flexibility. The Boomer generation that "lives to work is becoming a thing of the past. Managers must realize that the conditions under which we became professionals are largely gone, not to return."[5]

Work-life balance impacts workers of every generation. Gen Xers led the movement toward flexibility, which has become increasingly important in the last few years as the Millennials enter the workforce. However, Boomers too are beginning to seek more flexibility as they find themselves "sandwiched" between caring for children and elderly parents, or as they consider working beyond a traditional retirement age. In a recent survey conducted by nGenera Insight, 50 percent of Millennials, 38 percent of Gen Xers, and 27 percent of Boomers stated that flexible hours were critical to their acceptance of a job offer.[6] Currently Traditionalists and Boomers occupy most of

the positions of authority within the workplace. Senior leaders in the federal government have not yet demonstrated as much support for work-life balance as those in the private sector. In the 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint survey, the scores for work-life balance questions have been trending downward since 2008. In 2010 just over half (55 percent) of employees agreed that senior leaders in government demonstrate support for work-life programs.[7] To increase this number, senior leaders and managers should reexamine how they define success at work.

To attract and retain top employees, it will become essential for organizations to create a work culture that embraces work-life flexibility. Although balancing organizational needs with individual needs may take creative thinking, it can be done.

Innovative management approaches and use of technology can lead to positive outcomes, as illustrated by the following case study:

> In 2005, Best Buy captured the attention of the business world when it initiated an innovative program that let employees in its corporate headquarters work wherever and whenever they wanted as long as they got the job done and delivered results on time. Known as ROWE (results-only work environment) by Best Buy, this was the beginning of a movement to stop evaluating employees by how much time they spent at their desks and instead measure their productivity. In a results-only environment, productivity tends to rise within weeks as employees start finding ways to work more efficiently. In contrast, employees who are required to put in face time for eight hours each day are often less productive than they can be. Best Buy used a variety of metrics to determine the viability of ROWE and found it was a success, with:
> - Record employee job satisfaction
> - Voluntary turnover decreased from 16 percent to 0
> - Increased productivity and quality metrics[8]

Best Buy is on the cutting edge of what the future of work may look like. In the meantime, the federal government can employ combinations of telecommuting, virtual teams, and flexible work plans. "The benefits of a less stressed, more balanced workforce

Understanding the Multi-Generation Workforce

Boomers (1946–1964)

Common Traits:

- Grew up in a healthy economic era
- Tend to be optimistic
- Often were "defined" by their job
- Demonstrate mixed attitudes toward authority and management

Experience in the workplace:

- Worked long hours
- Work was performed in the office
- Sought a stellar career
- Little emphasis on work-life balance

Source: Adapted from Don Tapscott, Grown Up Digital *(New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 40; Neil Howe and William Strauss,* Millennials Go to College, *(Great Falls, VA: Life Course Associates, 2007).*

can be measured in terms of lower absenteeism, fewer work-related accidents, and greater customer satisfaction. But the biggest benefits may be hiring and retaining hard-to-find workers."[9]

Trend Three: Increased Expectation for Continual Growth and Development

Facilitating the growth and development of all employees is a responsibility of organizational leaders. The more organizations provide opportunities for employees to develop their skills, the more employees of all generations will become engaged. Highly engaged employees believe their organization is interested in their own growth as well as the growth of the organization.

Peoples' notions of what constitutes career advancement are changing. The old paradigm was comparatively rigid; only by moving up within a hierarchical organization could one advance. Any movement laterally or downward was considered a failure or demotion.

In the new paradigm, employees may advance by moving up, down, or laterally within an organization. There is no stigma attached to moving laterally or downward; in fact, this is often the reward reserved for top employees. This accomplishes several things: employees are continually able to grow and develop their skills; as they grow, they are able to contribute even more to the organization; and they get to know the organization on multiple levels.

Generational differences also play a role. The Millennials, due to their sheer numbers and different upbringing, are prompting managers to re-think how organizations look at growth and development.

In order to effectively lead a workforce that spans several generations, managers should consider two important components of growth and development: differing learning styles and increased demand for mentoring.

Differing Learning Styles

While older generations were typically sent to formal training classes outside of the workplace, younger workers increasingly expect that learning will take place within it. With four generations in the workplace, different training approaches and venues are needed to address the different learning styles of the cohorts. Table 2 presents the predominant learning style of each generation.

Table 2: Predominant Learning Styles of Each Generation

Generation	Predominant Learning Style
Traditionalists	Traditional; instructor-led; reading; homework; "teach me"; tech-challenged
Boomers	Independent; expert or instructor led; goal-oriented; competitive; "lead me to the information"; tech-latecomers
Gen Xers	Individualists and also collaborative; peer-to-peer; "connect me to people"; tech-adept
Millennials	Need to see context and value; search and explore with each other, online, in their time, in their place; "connect me to everything"; tech-savvy

Source: Adapted from Bersin & Associates, "A New Organizational Learning Model: Learning On-Demand," (October 2007) http://joshbersin.com/2007/10/01/a-new-organizational-learning-model-learning-on-demand (accessed April 25, 2010); and others.

Young workers are particularly adept at harnessing technology to "engage the world" as social and economic actors. Meister and Willyerd state, "Never [before] has technology made it so possible to connect anyone anywhere asynchronously as a collaborator."[10]

Social media will play an increasingly important role in future workplaces, especially among the Millennials. Members of this generation are used to connecting with their social networks for information, feedback and collaborative work. Older managers will need to learn about the utility and potential benefits of practices such as text messaging and wiki collaboration. Younger workers, for their part, may need to be taught formal documentation and record keeping in order to meet state and federal statutes and regulations.[11]

Successful organizations will need to take advantage of the vast social media expertise of their young workers and their preference to work and communicate in alternative, digital ways.

Mentoring

There is a growing consensus among employers that Millennials, like all young employees, will need mentoring. This does not mean that they are coming to work unprepared with nothing to offer. On the contrary, despite some initial concerns about this cohort from employers, they have proven to be exceptional team players, collaborative, respectful of opinions of authority figures, and very eager to learn. They are concerned about community service and helping others and they are optimistic.

Millennials want to be part of a team. They crave learning and being taught. Managers who ignore this dynamic will not be able to recruit and retain the best candidates. This could lead to the slow deterioration of the organization.

Trend Four: Increased Need for New Ways to Recognize and Reward Employees

The importance of recognizing and rewarding high performance is one of the top factors correlated to high employee engagement. Lack of recognition is endemic to the workplace, cutting across all types of

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Understanding the Multi-Generation Workforce

Gen Xers (1965–1980)

Common Traits:

- Grew up in an era of distrust for the national institutions
- Tend to be cynical and pessimistic
- Comfortable with change
- High degree of self reliance

Experience in the workplace:

- Work can be performed in and out of office
- Witnessed the end of life-long employment
- Moved toward a portable career
- Increased emphasis on work-life balance

Source: *Adapted from Don Tapscott,* Grown Up Digital *(New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 40; Neil Howe and William Strauss,* Millennials Go to College, *(Great Falls, VA: Life Course Associates, 2007).*

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workers and all generations. It is not just an issue for federal employees or of the Millennial generation. Nearly half (48 percent) of all federal employees and 45 percent of private sector employees say their boss does not give them enough recognition or praise. However, it is the Millennial generation which feels the most unappreciated—60 percent say their boss does not give them enough recognition or praise.[12]

According to Howe, "The Millennial hunger for praise-heaped-on praise…has attracted much roasting …'Do I have to give them a gold star just for showing up for work on time?'…Yet the Millennials see it very differently, observing that most Boomers and Gen Xers rarely praise anyone for anything. In their eyes, Boomers and Gen Xers have created unfriendly work attitudes…By contrast, today's young workers will be drawn to—and will gladly help foster—upbeat workplace environments where people articulate positive messages about one another's accomplishments and about the institution's mission…"

In the Leadership IQ survey, a positive response to the statement, "My boss recognizes and praises my accomplishment" is the single best predictor of Millennial workplace satisfaction. Howe says, "Ignore it at your peril."[13]

Managers can most effectively engage Millennials by looking at their desire for praise as a desire to

make sure they are on track, doing what their managers want, and contributing to the organization. Within this context, providing frequent feedback to Millennials makes sense. The firm Clifton Gunderson "cut its turnover in half by instituting a high-touch-guidance policy. Managers there now schedule at least one formal in-person meeting per week with employees to offer guidance, and touch base informally with them daily."[14]

By paying attention to younger employees' need for recognition, managers may create a work environment that encourages productivity and engagement. Managers who know the unique characteristics of each generation can more effectively motivate its members, helping keep all employees fully engaged.

Trend Five: Increased Need to Engage the Entire Workforce

As managers build cross-generational bridges, they will simultaneously stimulate employee engagement, thereby further fostering both of these critical areas.

If employees from all four generations are not engaged, productivity will not meet its maximum potential. Numerous large-scale studies over the last 20 years have shown that engagement impacts an organization's productivity.

In the private sector, high engagement has been linked to increased profitability, higher customer satisfaction, retention of top employees, and productivity.[15] In a Kelly Global Workforce study of 100,000 employees, 42 percent of respondents said that the differences between Gen Y (Millennials), Gen Xers and Boomers actually improved productivity in their workplace. Meanwhile, 75 percent said they had adapted their communication with colleagues from different generations to avoid problems and to better understand the perspective of other generations.[16]

A 2008 study of federal government employees found that 33 percent are fully engaged, 50 percent are partially engaged, and 17 percent are disengaged.[17] This compares to several national studies which indicate that over one-fourth of the U.S. workforce is fully engaged, just over half are partially engaged, and just under one-fifth are disengaged. This demonstrates that federal employees are, broadly speaking, more engaged than their private sector colleagues (33 percent versus 28 percent).

Understanding the Multi-Generation Workforce

Millennials (1981–1990)

Common Traits:

- Grew up in an era of financial boom
- Tend to be technology savvy and active in social networking
- Comfortable with multi-tasking
- Expect instant rewards or gratification

Experience in the workplace:

- Believe that work should be measured by results, not hours
- Actively seeks work-life balance
- Moved toward building parallel careers

Source: Adapted from Don Tapscott, Grown Up Digital *(New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 40; Neil Howe and William Strauss,* Millennials Go to College, *(Great Falls, VA: Life Course Associates, 2007).*

Engaged employees demonstrate behaviors that have a direct relationship to the bottom line and the organization's success. They are emotionally mature with positive dispositions and demonstrate work behaviors or traits[18] which can be easily observed, including:

- High levels of effort

- Persistence at difficult tasks over time

- Desire to help others

- Going beyond the norms or expectation of the workplace

- Voicing recommendations for change and improvement

- Expanding their role or responsibilities in response to a team or organizational need

- Adapting to and even facilitating change to improve the work, the workplace and organizational effectiveness

These are desirable behaviors of engaged employees regardless of their generation. However, each generation responds to different motivations.
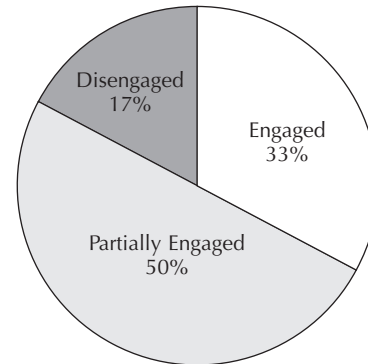
Trend Six: Increased Emphasis on Innovation

Innovation will likely be crucial to organizational success in the future. There are strong linkages

Understanding Employee Engagement
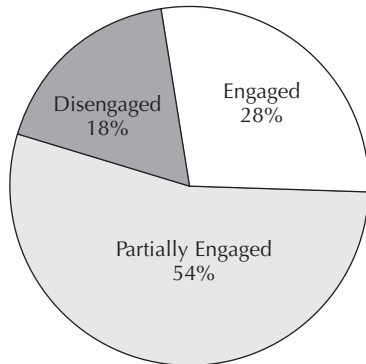
Workforce at Large (2010)
Employee Engagement, Gallup Management Journal,
Podcast by Jennifer Robison, Jan. 4, 2010*

Disengaged 18%
Engaged 28%
Partially Engaged 54%

Federal Government Workforce (2008)
U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, The
Power of Federal Employee Engagement,
(Washington, DC, 2008), ii.

Disengaged 17%
Engaged 33%
Partially Engaged 50%

Definitions
Engaged employees are committed to the success of their organization, and bring their discretionary energy and passion to their work; go above and beyond what is expected; drive innovation and move the organization forward.

Partially engaged employees do their job, but don't necessarily go above and beyond what is expected of them—or do so on an inconsistent basis.

Disengaged employees include both the passively disengaged, who show up but do only the bare minimum to keep their job (effectively retired on the job), and the actively disengaged, who sow seeds of discontent, thereby undermining their peers, supervisors and the organization.

* Gallup maintains the world's most comprehensive historical and comparative employee engagement databases. The historical database contains data collected in 67 languages from more than 17 million respondents in 175 countries worldwide.

between engagement, innovation, and attracting and retaining a multi-generational workforce. The 2010 OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint study indicated that innovation is one of the top areas the federal government needs to focus on. Only 60 percent of federal employees believe they are "encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things"—compared to 73 percent of employees in the private sector. This is one of largest discrepancies between the government and the private sector.[19]

Many of the same factors that contribute to engagement also contribute to innovation. Studies indicate that generationally-diverse teams enhance creativity. "Generational diversity is important to stimulate innovation in a multifunctional workplace…diverse

teams deliver better results by bringing different perspectives to problem solving.[20] Gallup's extensive research indicates that "engaged employees are far more likely to suggest or develop creative ways to improve management or business processes. Managers who want…innovation should first create an environment that welcomes new ideas—and should make engaging employees a key component of that strategy."[21]

In federal agencies, as in most private sector organizations, Traditionalists or Boomers today hold the senior positions. For the most part, these managers use the top-down management styles they experienced earlier in their careers.

But cutting-edge organizations are implementing management techniques that encourage innovation. John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems, says: "When you're a command-and-control CEO, individuals impacted by your decisions can choose not to buy in and either slow, or even stop, the process. The days of being vertically integrated and having every-thing within your control will never return. The entire leadership team, including me, had to invent a different way to operate."[22]

With the increased emphasis on innovation, manag-ers will need a collaborative leadership style that supports innovation. Traditionalists and Boomers bring a vast amount of knowledge and wisdom, while Xers and Millennials bring technological savvy. In addition, the Millennials have grown up working in teams, and have the collaboration skills that are essential to innovation. By forming teams that combine members from multiple generations and ethnicities, organizations can benefit from the strengths that each brings to the table.

"The employer-employee relationship that is largely defined by the organization, with the assumption that the employee's best efforts will be delivered in exchange for a paycheck, is a paradigm that is becoming outmoded. It is being replaced by the concept of relationship; today, employees want more of a partnership. They want recognition of what each brings to the table, and in return, they provide personal investment. The relationship between employer and employee is dynamic and, in the new model, the success of one is dependent on the success of the other."[23]

The effective managers of today are adopting new leadership styles that promote innovation and col-laboration throughout the organization. By engaging a multi-generational workforce, innovation can be increased.

Practical Advice for Managing a Multi-Generational Workforce

This section gives tips and practical advice for managers to engage employees across all generations in the key areas that affect innovation.

Communication Tips

1. Build Awareness that the Four Generations Bring Different Ideas, Challenges, and Opportunities to the Workplace
There is strength in diversity. The goal is not to make everyone fit into one mold, but to effectively communicate differences in a way that promotes creativity and innovation. Offering generational training

and facilitating open dialogue about how to leverage the unique skills and abilities of each generation can unlock hidden potentials.

2. Speak and Communicate in Ways that Motivate Each Generation
Effective communication is essential for motivating multiple generations in the workplace. Misunderstood comments could have long-lasting repercussions, especially among less experienced employees. Table 3 provides insight into the communication preferences of the generations.

Table 3: Communication in the Multi-Generational Workplace

Generation	Preferred Methods of Communication	Suggested Ways to Communicate
Traditionalists	Memos Letters Personal Notes Individual Interactions	Words and tone of voice should be respectful, with good grammar, clear diction, no slang or profanity. Language should be formal and professional, and the message should relate to organization history and long-term goals.
Boomers	Face-to-Face Phone Calls Personal Interaction Structured Networking	Conversations should be more informal, perhaps over coffee or lunch. Boomers tend to see relationship and business results as intertwined. Ask about mutual interests (e.g. "How is your son doing in college?"). Make the conversation participative by getting the other's input, and link the message to the team or individual vision, mission, and values.
Gen Xers	Voice Mail E-mail Casual Direct and Immediate	Don't waste the person's time. Be direct and straightforward. Avoid corporate-speak. Send an e-mail or leave a voice mail that states clearly what you want, how it will serve the Gen Xer, and when you want it.
Millennials	Digital (Instant Messages, Blogs, Text Messages) Collaborative Interaction	Be positive. Send a text message or meet face-to-face. Tie the message to the Millennial's personal goals or to the goals the whole team is working toward. Don't be condescending. Avoid cynicism and sarcasm.

Source: *Adapted from AARP,* Leading a Multigenerational Workforce *(Washington, DC: AARP, 2007); and Human Capital Institute,* The Silent Generation Meets Generation Y; *and Greg Hammill, "Mixing and Managing Four Generations of Employees,"* FDU Magazine Online, *Winter/Spring 2005, http://fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/osws/ generations.htm (accessed July 2, 2010).*

Work-Life Balance Tips

Work-life balance is one of the major differentiators between merely good and truly great organizations. To retain top employees, progressive organizations offer lifestyle benefits. The following ideas will assist managers in creating flexible options with new measures of accountability and productivity.

1. Rethink What Work Is and Where it is Done

Based on the six trends presented in this report, there is now a need to rethink how work is defined and where it should be done. Managers should rethink how they interact with employees regarding flexibility in the workplace.

2. Define and Offer More Flexible Work Arrangements

The federal government completed this important first step when it launched OPM's *Career Patterns* as a major push to offer more flexible work arrangements to federal employees of all ages. It defined and authorized four flexible schedules:

- Flexible Work Schedules

- Compressed Work Schedules

- Flexitour

- Credit Hours

A federal government website, www.telework.gov, addresses how to set up a telework program and provides training for both managers and employees on how to make the program work effectively.

3. Determine Which Jobs Can Have Flexible Arrangements

Not all jobs can have flexibility in hours worked and/or location. Some organizations find that some jobs must be performed during certain pre-defined hours. However, many more jobs than might be expected can be performed on a flexible basis if organizations make use of technological advances and think outside of the box. "It is important to maintain a drumbeat within government that constantly repeats the message: when it comes to federal human capital issues, the status quo is not acceptable. Perhaps the biggest value of *Career Patterns* is that it sends a clear message to federal agencies that a new way of thinking is required."[24]

The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010

The recent passage of "The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010" substantially changes the status of telework throughout federal government. Instead of each agency developing its own telework policies and procedures, the legislation sets forth a government-wide framework which both endorses and encourages the use of telework throughout the government.

Telework has been touted as a winning strategy for government. A study by the Telework Research Network claims potential savings for the federal government of nearly $3.8 billion as a result of reduced real estate costs, electricity savings, reduced absenteeism, and reduced employee turnover.

However, the adoption of telework by the federal government has been slow in recent years. According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, only 102,900 federal employees were teleworking in 2008. That figure represented only a fraction of the 1.2 million who were estimated to be eligible to do so.

In his new report to the IBM Center for the Business of Government, *Implementing Telework: Lessons Learned from Four Federal Agencies*, Scott Overmyer describes the technological, social, operational, and management risks that face managers in implementing a telework strategy. He presents case studies of how four cutting-edge federal agencies addressed these issues and successfully implemented telework in their organizations.
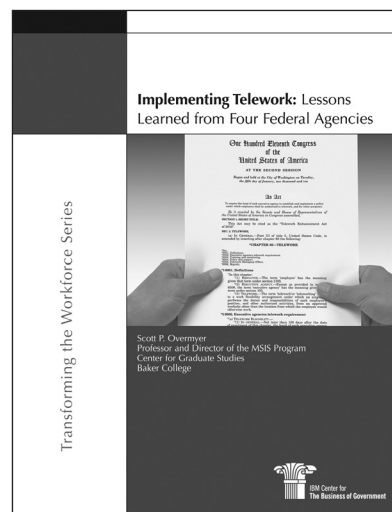
Available at businessofgovernment.org

4. Develop New Measures of Accountability and Productivity

A key to the successful implementation of flexible work-life programs is to have clearly defined goals and performance outcomes for each job. This is essential in order to avoid misunderstandings which can lead to the demise of flexible work programs because neither managers nor employees find it works. On the one hand, traditional managers may overlook high performers who do not fit the old paradigm of work performance. On the other hand, if employees find they are penalized for not having face time in the office, for example, they may well leave the organization for a more flexible working environment. The example below illustrates this:

> Generation Xer Dylan is a fifth-year associate in the patent department of a large law firm. He meets all of his deadlines, works until late at night and stays in close touch with clients. Yet, at his most recent review, Dylan was informed he was no longer on a partnership track. It seems his Traditionalist boss didn't think he was "working" hard enough. You see, Dylan operates out of his home office two days a week.[25]

We recommend forming teams with members from all four generations to develop new accountability and productivity measures. The Traditionalists/Boomers can contribute a deep knowledge of traditional measures, while the Gen Xers/Millennials can infuse these with fresh approaches. This cross-generational sharing can lead to robust new measures of performance where everyone knows exactly what is expected—regardless of where or when the job is performed.

Growth And Development Tips

Each generation has a preferred method for taking in and processing information. Millennials and Gen Xers are less likely to be engaged by lectures or reading thick manuals, such as the Traditionalists or Boomers might. We therefore offer some advice for how managers can maximize growth and development by taking into account each generation's information consumption preferences.

1. Engage Younger Employees in Meaningful Projects that Validate their Desire to be Involved in Important Work

Most Millennials want to make a difference, and will simply leave if they don't feel valued. "Most Millennials are supremely confident about the value of what they can offer…. Employers who recognize the importance of teaching and mentoring this group will be the ones that succeed…These employers understand that most Millennials are just trying to be helpful and contribute—an urge that should not be thwarted, but encouraged."[26]

The NASA Experience describes a successful initiative recently undertaken at NASA to engage members of all generations.

2. Reexamine Workplace Policies to Embrace Social Networking

While the press has reported that some employers have banned social media in the workplace, the most successful organizations in the future will be those that embrace the use of technology by their younger workers. "Companies are starting to take note of this transformation in how we live, work, and communicate with one another by providing similar tools inside the enterprise. Our predictions for the 2020 workplace: usage of the social Web will become the premier way to attract, engage, and retain the best talent."[27]

3. Mentoring and Developing Employees

Employees can improve their performance, learn new skills and advance other skills through mentoring. Top employers have formal mentoring programs that match leaders and managers with top employees. They also give new hires some face time with the leaders and managers of their choice. There are several approaches to mentoring.

Soft-skill Development

Millennials often need soft-skills mentoring: What are the appropriate ways to dress, speak, and act in the professional world? What does professional writing entail? Management should take advantage of the Millennials' optimism and strong social and technology skills and provide customized, on-the-job training.

Millennials also need mentoring on how to accept feedback. Many grew up without much exposure to criticism and need help in understanding the importance of feedback to their professional development.

The NASA Experience

NASA Assistant Administrator for Human Capital Management Toni Dawsey devised an effective way to engage younger workers in the agency in responding to an agency problem. Older workers had been saying that they wished they had the opportunity to be engaged in leadership programs earlier in their careers. Dawsey responded to this perceived agency need by rolling out an entry-level leadership program for grade GS-11 and GS-12 employees that had been developed two years prior but had not been approved for implementation.

This program is one of several designed to prepare NASA staff for future leadership positions. One requirement of the leadership program is for the participants to come up with a practical issue to work on. The pilot group of Next Generation (Millennial) employees worked on the question: "Is NASA prepared to be a recruiter and retainer of next generation workers?" Their hypothesis was that it was not.

The pilot group engaged people from across NASA to gather data to test their hypothesis. They compared NASA's HR policy and record to the aerospace industry as well as the private sector as a whole. The group's results so impressed some of NASA's center directors that the directors passed the results on to the NASA Administrator, recommending he take a look. The pilot group was then asked to present their findings to the Administrator and his Strategic Management Council. The Administrator was impressed and instructed the center directors to implement many of the recommendations made by the pilot group. These recommendations included:

- NASA should focus on the hiring process for all new employees.
- NASA should provide leadership training for Millennials. Members of this generation are more likely to stay at NASA if they can see developmental paths forward.
- NASA should provide the innovative opportunities that they thought were needed to bring in change and to accept them early on in their careers without having to be there five to eight years as seasoned NASA employees.
- NASA should provide opportunities to take the latest they are learning in technology and science and apply it right away.
- NASA should encourage multiple channels of communication throughout the agency.

The pilot group's recommendations were in fact similar to what many have tried to do for years: create a "single NASA," as opposed to an organization of silos. Eighteen months after their meeting with the Strategic Management Council, NASA rolled out new hiring targets. Fifty percent of new hires would be Millennials.

Source: Interview by Hannam with Dawsey, Fall 2010

The following is an example of successfully mentoring Millennials:

Toni Dawsey, Assistant Administrator for Human Capital Management at NASA, has observed that Millennials want hands-on work, want to be assured of responsible positions, and are more vocal about advancing in their careers than previous generations. NASA encourages and in some cases mandates mentoring and rotation programs across the agency. Agency leadership teams both at the centers and at the agency support mentoring practices, such as shadowing or rotations.

According to Dawsey, Millennials need substantive experiences like these in order to find direction. "Without that substance they don't have confidence; they can't stand toe-to-toe in a negotiation or build a business case. [This mentoring lets them] know they have to learn to do these things."(Taken from an interview by Hannam with Dawsey, Fall 2010)

Cross-Generational Mentoring
All generations have strengths, and members of any given generation can productively mentor members of other generations. Boomers have a lot to offer younger workers, given their deep understanding of their organizations. Interestingly, Traditionalists and Millennials tend to particularly value teamwork. This could create synergies that would benefit the whole organization. Gen Xers, for their part, are good at finding opportunities and working independently. These skills could be helpful to Millennials and to Boomers who want to continue working.

Reverse Mentoring

Mentoring does not only have to mean older workers coaching their younger counterparts; younger employees have a lot to offer older workers, too. Specifically, Millennials' cutting-edge technology skill set can help transform organizations—if the organization seeks their input. Organizations that don't take advantage of this risk falling far behind. Managers should encourage Millennials to share their expertise with older workers. Millennials are naturally predisposed to helping others, and like to feel they are contributing and making a difference. "How well senior public servants attract, train, mentor, and energize the best and the brightest of today's rising generation may determine how effectively America governs itself over the next half-century."[28]

Tips for Providing Recognition and Rewards

The best recognition programs require managers to dedicate time. This paper does not treat incentive-based awards such as bonuses, profit sharing, etc.

1. Reevaluate Your Rewards and Recognition System

Many organizations take rewards and recognition seriously, but have outdated systems that no longer meet employees' needs. As a result, organizations waste resources. The only way to know what employees value is to ask them.

2. Offer a "Menu" of Rewards and Recognition

With multiple generations and diverse ethnic groups in the workforce, reward programs need to diversify to reflect the different priorities and motivating factors of top employees from different backgrounds.

Managers may also try giving employees a long list of rewards (ranging from flowers to food to sporting

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Providing Recognition

One of the authors, Yordi, worked with a network of hospitals, clinics and other health related organizations to evaluate and rework their rewards system. The organization had an extensive system of traditional approaches ranging from annual formal awards dinners to awards for length of service and performance (e.g., plaques, certificates, clocks, gold watches, merchandise with the organization's logo on it, etc.). Yordi designed a survey to find out what employees value. All generations favored recognition from their boss in the form of:

- **A sincere verbal "thank you"**
- **A handwritten thank-you note:** Surprisingly, the younger the generation, the more they valued a handwritten note over an e-mail.
- **A gift certificate offering choice:** All generations valued being able to choose a gift that mattered to them. Employees wanted gift cards with a wide range of choices (e.g. restaurants, music/movie downloads; tickets to sporting or cultural events, movie passes; electronics; bookstores, department stores; discount stores, gas cards, grocery stores, etc.).

The healthcare organization saved significant money by rewarding employees this way, rather than with merchandise and events.

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events to spas), and ask them to check their preferences. That way, when it is time for an award or recognition, the organization knows exactly what each employee wants.

3. Offer On-the-Spot Awards

Many organizations think it is important to recognize small things employees do to go above and beyond, rather than just recognizing major accomplishments. This is especially important for Millennials who do

Table 4: Generational Reward Preferences

Generation	Reward Preferences
Traditionalists	Tangible symbols of loyalty, commitment, and service including plaques and certificates
Boomers	Personal attention, promotion, and recognition
Gen Xers	Free time, upgraded resources, opportunities for development, certifications to add to their resumes
Millennials	Awards, certificates, monetary rewards

Source: *Adapted from AARP,* Leading a Multigenerational Workforce*; Mixing and Managing Four Generations of Employees, Greg Hammill, FDUMagazineOnline, http://www.fdu.edu/newpubs/magainze/05ws/generations.htm, accessed 7/2/2010, and Chief Information Officers Council,* NetGeneration: Preparing for Change in the Federal Information Technology Workforce *(Washington D.C., 2010.*

not want to wait for six months or a year to be rec-ognized in a performance review or award ceremony. Each organization can decide for itself what type of on-the-spot awards fit the culture of the organization and generational employee preferences.[29]

4. Make Recognizing Employees an Important Part of Every Manager's Job and Include This as Part of Their Performance Review
Making this a performance expectation helps busy managers dedicate the time this takes. A verbal "thank you" or written note is of great value. Some organizations require managers to write a given number of thank-you notes per year. The best notes are not generic, but are specific about what was done well. Though it takes more of the manager's time, it pays off in terms of employee retention and engagement.

Employee Engagement Tips[30]

1. Retain Engaged Employees
Because engaged employees are already performing well, some managers think they should leave them alone. However, "Great managers do just the oppo-site…they spend most of their time with their most productive and talented employees because they have the most potential…A manager who coaxes an average performance from a below-average employee still has an average performer. But a manager who coaches a good employee to greatness gains a great performer."[31] Engaged employees can inspire other employees, furthering positive change within the organization.

2. Transform Average Employees into Engaged Employees
Because about one-half of the workforce is "partially engaged," it is crucial for managers to fully engage as many of these employees as possible. This can have a huge payoff for the organization.

3. Focus on the Disengaged Last
These employees are the most resistant to engage-ment. Sometimes, as the pool of engaged employees grows, the disengaged will follow the positive mod-els. If not, their bosses need to be trained and sup-ported to effectively terminate the disengaged.

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A B O U T   T H E   A U T H O R S

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Dr. Hannam's research interests include program assessment, learning style differences and ways to improve critical thinking. She is a certified athletic trainer, is Myers-Briggs Type Indicator trained, and is a graduate of Leadership Pittsburgh XXVI. She received a doctorate in Health and Safety from Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

Dr. Bonni Yordi is the Director of Surveys and Business Research at MRA–The Management Association. For 15 years she led the development of five innovative academic programs and served as a university department chairperson. She then moved into the business world where she spent eight years developing and managing several national award-winning business-community partnerships for a major corporation. For the past 14 years she has used her research and assessment skills at MRA–The Management Association, a non-profit employers' association that serves 4,000 companies covering close to a half million employees. Her department designs, conducts, and analyzes employee engagement surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, and best-places-to-work-surveys, and assists companies in applying the results to become employers of choice.

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