Gen Z in the Workforce: Nuance and Success

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In this session, you will:

○ Acquire an overview of the different generations of Americans currently serving in the workforce, including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.

○ Explore key differences and similarities in these generations across core belief structures, including understandings of society, education, leadership, technology, and more.

○ Identify recommendations and best practices, reinforced with research, to help find success in the multigenerational workplace, including in the first post-educational work experience.

○ Evaluate through deep reflection how participants define student success, while also collaborating with peers to identify ‘one piece of advice’ for trustees and presidents to ensure worthwhile experiences at our universities and to support post-graduation success.
Things to Keep in Mind

- Generational studies are not exact, and have clear limitations. These pieces of information highlight national trends, as shown in sociological and educational research. Not every member of a particular generation of college student will be a cookie-cutter image to their peers.

- While engaging in discussion today, keep statements broad enough so as to respect the privacy and guard the identities of individuals (students, faculty, staff, administrators, etc.) at your respective institutions.

- Participate, but don’t dominate the discussion.

- There are no clear ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers to any of the topics covered today, so receive information and enter discussions with an open mind.

- Recommendations from this workshop will be presented to State System and university leaders, so think critically, collaboratively, and impactfully!
What is a generation? How do we define our generations? What guides generational research? What resources are available?
Baby Boomer Generation: The Post-War Generation

- Approximate date of birth range: 1946 to 1964
- Approximate dates on campus: 1963 to 1981

- G.I.’s and Silent’s rejoiced at surviving World Wars I & II, creating an unprecedented baby boom
- The baby boom was significant, creating a population increase in 1950 by over 2 million people, precipitated by an annual birthrate of over 4 million
- One of the largest global generations, and the largest until the Millennials, accounting for approximately 22% of the global population
- Baby Boomers are 81% Caucasian according to the U.S. Census Bureau, which is very similar to the demographic breakdowns of their parents, G.I.’s and Silent’s
- Major influences include the post-World War II economic boom and the economic privilege it created, the growth and strength of the middle class, and the consumer economy (‘keeping up with the Jones’).
Baby Boomer Generation: The Post-War Generation

- Regarding their views of leadership:
  - Boomers thrive in hierarchical, command-and-control environments; respect authority
  - Leadership should be driven by thinkers, experts, and ‘those in the know’

- Regarding their views of technology:
  - Boomers are digital immigrants, migrating to technology as needed and when personally valuable
  - Are slow to grasp new technologies, and require careful guidance (even though they hate asking for help)

- Regarding their views of society and education:
  - Offer an intriguing mix of defending societal norms while also participating in civil unrest
  - College seen as a pragmatic stepping stone to a high-paying, middle class lifestyle
  - Average tuition cost $550 per year – about 5% of Boomers have student debt
Baby Boomer Generation: The Post-War Generation

Popular culture influences:
- Cold War & the Red Scare
- Vietnam War
- Cuban Missile Crisis
- Assassinations of JFK and MLK
- Civil Rights Movement
- Woodstock
- Watergate and the presidency of Nixon
- Space Race
- Sexual revolution and women’s movement
- Protests, riots, and civil unrest
Baby Boomer Generation: The Post-War Generation

Stereotypes:
- Conservative and practical
- Technologically-illiterate
- Rule followers
- Idealistic and driven
- Diligent and loyal workers
- Values hierarchical organizational power
- Competitive
- Ruthlessly materialistic
- Micro-managers
- Material-centric
Baby Boomer Generation: The Post-War Generation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ed-5ZzdbxOE
Generation X: The MTV Generation

- Approximate date of birth range: 1965 to 1980
- Approximate dates on campus: 1982 to 1997

- Follows the post-World War II baby boom; the children of young Silent’s and old Boomers
- Generation X name comes from Douglas Coupland’s 1991 novel regarding culture, technology, and alienation present in this cohort of individuals
- One of the smallest global generations, compressed by Boomers and Millennials, accounting for approximately 18% of the global population
- Xers are 62% Caucasian, and are much more diverse than their predecessors, and have been the first generation to accept diversity as commonplace
- Major influences include the foundations of personal computing, the coming of age of the sexual revolution / sexual freedom, and the importance of entrepreneurship
Generation X: The MTV Generation

- Regarding their views of leadership:
  - Xers question authority, and often don’t work well with strict “organizational chart” relationships
  - Leadership should be practical and pragmatic; those who “pull themselves up by the bootstraps”

- Regarding their views of technology:
  - Xers are digital adaptives, noting that new technology is scary, also endless in uses and possibilities
  - Will criticize the overreliance on technology, and will revert to “back in my day” mentalities

- Regarding their views of society and education:
  - Individualism, libertarianism, and entrepreneurship – more start-ups / business owners
  - The ‘college generation’ saw a huge influx in accessibility to higher education
  - Average tuition cost $3,500 per year – 25% of Xers have student debt
Generation X: The MTV Generation

Popular culture influences:
- MTV
- Grunge / hip hop
- Birth control
- Latchkey parenting
- AIDS
- Slacker stereotype
- “Breakfast Club”
- “Wall Street”
- Apple
- Challenger explosion
Generation X: The MTV Generation

Stereotypes:
- Cynical, alienated, depressed
- Pessimistic and individualistic
- Comfortable with change and diversity, but relatively conservative and white
- Independent and self-sufficient
- Disloyal to employer – leave for better work and pay
- Rule-bender
- Skeptical of authority
- Ultra-workaholics
Generation X: The MTV Generation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtGB011vp6Y
Millennial Generation: The Me Generation

- Approximate date of birth range: 1980 to 1998
- On campus: 1997 to 2015

- Currently the largest generation, representing over 23% of the global population
- 57% of Millennials are Caucasian, and are much more diverse than their Boomer parents
- Millennials are criticized more than any other generation in history, especially by their parents, the Baby Boomers, for a variety of reasons, such as self-centeredness, economic instability, and moral fluidity
- Greatly impacted by the Great Recession of the late 2000s, causing an unprecedented level of unemployment / underemployment, especially for those with college degrees
- Millennial children witnessed firsthand the harm humans can do to each other with the Oklahoma City bombing, the September 11th attacks, and the Columbine Massacre
Regarding their views of leadership:
- Millennials prefer flat corporate structures, and strive to find a work-life balance, given the pressures of high expectations and helicopter parenting from the Boomer generation
- Millennials are self-inventive, and thrive in mentor / mentee relationships; value consensus and collaboration
- They “prefer meaningful work, creative outlets, and immediate feedback”

Regarding their views of technology:
- Millennials are digital natives, the first great technological generation – grew up using Macs and PCs to work and play
- Cell phone technology greatly impacted this generation’s ability to connect with itself

Regarding their views of society and education:
- Millennials are service-oriented, more liberal than prior generations, and fiscal centrists
- *No Child Left Behind* greatly impacted students, and increased their skepticism of politics in education
- Average tuition cost $13,200 per year – 39% of Millennials have student debt
Millennial Generation: The Me Generation

Popular culture influences:
- September 11, 2001
- Y2K
- Political correctness
- Great Recession
- Marijuana legalization
- Same-sex marriage
- Social media
- Apple iPhone
- *Oregon Trail* and other computer games
- Occupy Wall Street
Millennial Generation: The Me Generation

Stereotypes:
- Disloyal to companies since companies are disloyal to them
- Self-centered and narcissistic
- Self-serving and individualistic
- Social
- Values collaboration and giving input
- High expectations, need for praise, and difficulty with criticism
- Absent morals
- Technology-literate
- Participation trophies
- Tradition-killers
Millennial Generation: The Me Generation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4IjTUxZORE
Generation Z: The iGeneration

- Approximate date of birth range: 1999 to 2015
- Approximate dates on campus: 2016 to 2032

- Currently make up 21% of the population of the United States
- 55% of Generation Z is Caucasian, and is much more diverse than X or Y
- Generation Z is more obese than any other generation, and has higher diagnoses of ADHD than its predecessors, with attention spans falling from 12 seconds to 6 seconds
- 41% of Generation Z spends 3 or more hours in front of screens between the end of the school day and bedtime -- overall 27% of their time is spent on some screen
- Abandoning Facebook and Twitter, while preferring Snapchat, Secret, and Whisper, so as to limit their public self, observing the trouble Millennials and other older generations caused for themselves
Generation Z: The iGeneration

- Regarding their views of leadership:
  - Z’s are driven by the motivation to not let someone else down, and prefer visionaries and macro-managers
  - Will be passionate helpers, and will advocate for social justice to make a difference for others

- Regarding their views of technology:
  - Z’s are digital integrators, noting that life and technology are one, and can’t imagine one without the other
  - See technology as a reality, but also note its ability to harm – violent images in the media, trolling and bullying commonplace on social media, etc.

- Regarding their views of society and education:
  - Affected by threats of terrorism in a scary, uncertain world – somewhat more conservative
  - Z’s biggest fear is not finding a career that successfully matches their personality
  - Average tuition cost $22,600 per year -- 68% of Z’s have student debt
Generation Z: The iGeneration

Popular culture influences:
- All-in-one devices
- *Family Guy*
- Wikipedia
- Barack Obama
- Post-9/11 terror
- Amazon.com
- Spotify
- Anonymous social media culture
- Uber and Lyft
- Globalization
Generation Z: The iGeneration

Stereotypes:
- Snowflakes
- Checks social media 100 times per day
- Social media equates to news rather than engagement
- Gender-neutral
- Five+ screens at once
- YouTube versus Hollywood
- Likes-per-photo
- Lacks basic skills
Generation Z: The iGeneration

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoOKjdDJr1c
Generation Alpha: The Generation of Change

- Approximate date of birth range: 2010 to 2030
- Approximate dates on campus: 2027 to 2047
- Projected to be the largest generation in global history, with 2.5 million born each week
- First generation in which Caucasians DO NOT represent the ‘Western’ majority
- Compared to its predecessors, Generation Alpha will be wealthier, have older parents, have fewer children, and live longer.
- Will witness vast leaps in human evolution due to incredible technological advances
- Many scientists believe that Generation Alpha is the last of the homo sapiens evolutionary line, and the first of homo evolutis, denoting the power future humans will have on their own fate
Generation Alpha: The Generation of Change

- Regarding their views of leadership:
  - Alphas shy away from strict command and control relationships, and prefer true collaboration
  - Student affairs educators will need to coach success, rather than impart advice

- Regarding their views of technology:
  - Alphas were born with technology at their fingertips, and will have difficulty coping with so-called conventional tasks / “soft skills”
  - Shopping is something done online, and phones will be the new normal for access (not laptops)

- Regarding their views of society and education:
  - Alphas will be the most diverse, educated generation – will be more socially liberal than X, Y, or Z
  - Education is a stepping stone to a reinvented entrepreneurial spirit that will drive career decisions
  - Projected average tuition will cost $89,500 per year – likely 90%+ of Alphas will have student debt
Generación Alpha: The Generation of Change

Popular culture influences:
- Mobile technology
- Donald Trump
- Bacteria engineering
- Nanotechnology
- Cloning
- Artificial intelligence
- Alt-right & hate groups
- Demand for diversity
- Global warming & climate change
- Overpopulation & scarcity
Generation Alpha: The Generation of Change

Stereotypes:
- Unable to function without technology
- Cyborgs
- Robot / AI wars
- No brand loyalty
- Inventive, new entrepreneurs
- Won’t be able to interact socially, personally
- WALL-E generation
Generation Alpha: The Generation of Change

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iZpt6t700A
Nuances Across Generations in the Workplace
Historical Influences

<table>
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<th>Generation</th>
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Demographics
Leadership
Technology
Societal Influences

**SOCIETY**

**Boomer:**
Economic boom, civil unrest

**Gen X:**
Entrepreneurship, individualism

**Millennial:**
Service-oriented, recession

**Gen Z:**
Social justice, tech over-reliance

**Alpha:**
Diversity, scarcity
Education

EDUCATION

Boomer:
Structured, classroom-style

Gen X:
Interactive, round table-style

Millennial:
Multi-sensory, cafe-style

Gen Z:
Multi-modal, lounge-style

Alpha:
Career-driven, web-based
Financial Pressures

ANNUAL TUITION & STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Boomer:
$550/yr, 5%

Gen X:
$3,500/yr, 25%

Millennial:
$13,200/yr, 39%

Gen Z:
$22,600/yr, 68%

Alpha:
$89,500/yr, 90%+
America’s Workforce: Now and Beyond
America’s Workforce:
By the Numbers
## America’s Workforce: Employers

### What Do Employers Expect from Gen Z Employees?

#### Skills Expected
- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Leadership (selling and influencing)
- Technical skills and knowledge
- Agility and adaptability – plan, organize, and prioritize work
- Initiative, entrepreneurialism, work ethic, professionalism
- Effective communication skills
- Computer literacy
- Finding, accessing, and analyzing information
- Curiosity and imagination

#### Perceptions Realized
- Lack of qualified applicants
- Lack of hard skills and technical competencies
- Lack of experience
- Wanting higher pay than what is realistic
- Lack of soft skills and workplace competencies, including:
  - Communication and listening skills
  - Collaboration and teamwork / teamthink skills
  - Decision-making strategies
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Conflict management and resolution skills
America’s Workforce: Employees

What Do Gen Z Employees Expect from Employers?

- Multimodal communication & seamless integration of technology
- Supervisors as mentors and coaches; collaboration and having a voice at the table
- Flexibility and adaptability; work-life balance
- Instant feedback & recognition for a job-well-done (not participation trophies)
## Navigating Uncertain Waters: Working in a Multigenerational Workforce

### What Can Gen Z Employees Do?

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<th>Understand differences</th>
<th>Find common ground</th>
<th>Improve communication skills</th>
<th>Truly collaborate</th>
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<td>• Demonstrate empathy</td>
<td>• Listen to understand, not to respond</td>
<td>• If assigned team-based work, complete tasks on time and in full</td>
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<td>• Compromise when able</td>
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<td>• Understand expectations</td>
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<td>• Press pause and breathe</td>
<td>• Practice conflict resolution skills</td>
<td>• Improve vocabulary</td>
<td>• Brainstorm possible solutions to problems</td>
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<td>• Understand the culture of the workplace</td>
<td>• Ask for feedback</td>
<td>• Practice proofreading, revising, and editing</td>
<td>• Highlight issues without complaining</td>
<td>• Identify possible improvements</td>
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Understand differences:
- Be aware of biases and stereotypes
- View the world from another lens
- Press pause and breathe
- Understand the culture of the workplace
- Self-care is critical

Find common ground:
- Demonstrate empathy
- Compromise when able
- Practice conflict resolution skills
- Ask for feedback
- Be authentic, genuine

Improve communication skills:
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Understand verbal, non-verbal, and para-verbal cues
- Improve vocabulary
- Practice proofreading, revising, and editing

Truly collaborate:
- If assigned team-based work, complete tasks on time and in full
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions
- Brainstorm possible solutions to problems
- Highlight issues without complaining

Engage:
- Refrain from zoning out or checking your phone during meetings or conversations
- Understand expectations
- Voice opinions respectfully
- Identify possible improvements
Navigating Uncertain Waters:
Working in a Multigenerational Workforce

Collaborating Across Generations: Shared Work Experiences

- Connection
- Competence
- Respect
- Autonomy
Group Discussion

- How do you define student success?

- What is the one piece of advice you would offer to your university stewards to more effectively meet the needs of upcoming generations of students?
Group Discussion

- How do you define student success?
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What is the one piece of advice you would offer to your university stewards to more effectively meet the needs of upcoming generations of students?
Final Thoughts

Sources • Limitations • Implications
Sources


