

Primer on Generations and the Workplace

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Generation	Years Born ⁱ	Population ⁱⁱ	Personal Value	Workplace Value	Default Leadership Structure	Preferred Method of Leadership Development	How to ask a Question	Conflict Arises When
Baby Boomers	1945-1964	23.6%	Immortality/ Legacy	Loyalty/ Hierarchy	Hierarchical based on time in existing company/structure; CEO/ Hero leader	Longevity with the organization and learning by watching	Communicate a respect for experience and time/longevity. Draw on previous life experience.	When they are unclear or feel undermined in the hierarchical power structure. Also, Legacy is a strong motivation. Conflict may possible arise when a Boomer feels this is threatened.
Gen Xers	1965-1980	15.4%	Life-Family balance	Competency	Flat and mobile, based on competency in a given area	Formal training through classes, informal training through on-the-job training	Communicate a respect for competency and expertise. Draw on creative, out-of-the box thinking.	When they feel the best idea is not the one being acted upon or when expertise is not recognized. Conflict can also arise when they feel their life balance or work/family balance is threatened.
Gen Y/ Millennials	1981-1996	24.5%	Health, Happiness, Relational, Need validation and approval	Community	We are all leaders; none of us are <i>the</i> leader. We all follow and listen to each other	Cohort and collaborative training with diverse people group (different perspectives); cross-functional collaboration and interdisciplinary training	They are not accustomed to questions outside of friend and close relationships. That means they need to feel like they are in a relationally safe environment to offer opinions or honest thoughts. Honesty and authenticity build rapport.	They feel uncertain in relational dynamics. The degree of friendship is individual and must be earned. Conflict can arise when relationships feel forced or inauthentic. It can also arise when expectations are unclear but they don't feel safe enough to ask for clarification.
Digital Natives /Gen Z	1996-2015	26%	Efficiency ⁱⁱⁱ Sustainability	Efficiency and pragmatism	The one with the most focus, best effort, and greatest understanding of diverse relationships ^{iv}	They can manage and skim through information instantaneously – and move on. Want hands-on and practical training, internship, application focused. They want to co-create real solutions. ^v	Show respect for their thoughts, they likely have more experience and education than you might realize. They are used to be talked to as adults.	Treat them like an adult and explain decision-making process; help them see the choices inherent in the situation and walk them through your thought process ^{vi}

These are generalizations and are not meant to accurately describe any one specific individual, but rather depict the beliefs and behaviors of the generational cohort at large.

ⁱ Howe, Neil; Strauss, William (1991). *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: William Morrow & Company

ⁱⁱ US Census Bureau 2012 (via Mental 2014)

ⁱⁱⁱ Jessie Cruickshank's speculation

^{iv} Speculation based on personal ongoing research

^v Ibid

^{vi} <https://reports.sparksandhoney.com/campaign/generation-z-2025-the-final-generation>