

THE POWER OF A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

Having multiple generations in the workplace isn't new—people of different ages have always worked together. A multigenerational workforce simply means having employees from different age groups. However, things are shifting as people live longer and work longer before retiring. For the first time in history, we now have five generations working together. This mix of ages can influence how employees experience their workplace, making it an important factor for teams to consider.

Generations Defined:

In the United States, no single authority defines generations, but organizations like the Pew Research Group have been studying them for years. Generational categories typically span between 15 to 18 years, and the five generations currently at work are Traditionalists, Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z:

GENERATION	BIRTH YEARS	GENERATION AGES IN 2024
TRADITIONALIST	1928 - 1945	79 - 96
BOOMERS	1946 - 1964	60 - 78
GENERATION X	1965 - 1980	44 - 59
MILLENNIALS	1981 - 1996	28 - 43
GENERATION Z	1997 - 2012	12 - 27

Pew Center Research

SELF REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Reflect on how having five different generations in your workplace has shaped your work experience. How do you see the dynamics between different generations? Can you share specific examples of both positive and challenging interactions?
2. Think about the concept of 'gentelligence' and how it can turn workplace challenges into opportunities for intergenerational collaboration. What steps can you take to encourage knowledge



Why Do Generational Differences at Work Matter?

One of the main challenges of managing a multigenerational workforce is that different generations often have varying work styles, which can lead to team tension. A recent study found that only 6% of organizations strongly agree that their leaders know how to effectively manage multigenerational teams. This can hurt overall organizational effectiveness.

On the flip side, generational differences bring out various ways of thinking, which can be a significant asset. This concept is known as “gentelligence”:

Gentelligence

n o u n

a business method and mindset transforming multigenerational challenges into intergenerational collaboration and success.

Adopting this approach and mindset can reveal opportunities and provide actionable tools to help individuals, teams, and leaders strengthen their organizations. Benefits include:

- **Knowledge transfer**
- **Mentoring**
- **Innovation**
- **Reduced turnover**

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

For each category discuss the following questions:

1. Think about the work environments you've been in over the years. How has being part of a multigenerational team positively impacted your development?
2. How can 'gentelligence' be applied to your team to boost multigenerational collaboration and success? Discuss specific actions or initiatives that can be implemented to promote knowledge transfer, mentoring, and innovation across generations.



BUILDING GENERATIONAL INTEGRATION

Generational research involves asking people born in the same time frame about major events in their lives, like:


- War
- Technological Advancements
- Pandemics
- Policy changes

Implications for Belonging

To make the most of generational integration, we can use these insights to better understand our team members from different generations. How we use this information can be used as a tool to drive us apart or bring us together.

A **Belonging Subtractor** is a comment or action that unintentionally shows a biased attitude toward someone from a different generation. These subtle, everyday occurrences include insults, slights, and exclusion. Here are some examples of what it may sound like:

- **"You're one of the good ones, unlike the other people your age."**
- **"I know this contract is longer than a text, but I need you to read it."**
- **"Here, let me help you turn that on; not everyone is good with technology."**

 **SCENARIO:** On a busy morning, the project pursuit team of a renowned construction firm gathered to discuss a critical Request for Proposal (RFP) for a high-profile commercial project. At the helm was Michael, a 55-year-old project executive with extensive experience in winning large contracts. Among the team was Jessica, a 28-year-old project coordinator who, despite being tech-savvy, preferred a hands-on approach to reviewing documents.

During the meeting, the team discussed their strategies for tackling the RFP. When it was Jessica's turn to share her approach, she mentioned that she liked printing out the RFP and highlighting important sections rather than marking the document digitally. Michael, trying to be lighthearted but unintentionally condescending, remarked, "I guess some of us still prefer the old-school methods, even if it means using more paper." Though seemingly harmless, the comment subtly implied that Jessica's approach was outdated and less efficient than digital methods.


SELF-REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. Think about major events that have happened in your lifetime. Write down how these events have influenced you and shaped your development.
2. Look at the examples of Belonging Subtractors. Can you recall a time when something like this happened to you? How did it make you feel, and how did it affect your experience at work afterward?
3. Look at the examples of Belonging Boosters. Can you recall a time when something like this happened to you? How did it make you feel, and how did it affect your



A **Belonging Booster** is a small gesture of inclusion, caring, or kindness. These include listening, offering support, being an ally, and valuing everyone's contributions. Here are some examples:

- **A tenured employee and a newer employee disagree on a pull-planning approach. After the meeting, the tenured employee follows up, saying, "Walk me through your perspective; I want to understand!"**
- **A younger supervisor acknowledges the expertise of a new employee who spent 20 years as a carpenter before joining the company. They express how valuable it is to have this individual on the project team for a Mass Timber project.**

 **SCENARIO:** On a busy construction site for a complex multifamily residential project, Sarah, a 50-year-old senior project manager, and Mark, a 30-year-old site supervisor, worked together. During a meeting, Mark proposed using advanced project management software he'd used with his previous employer and was used on another project, which Sarah initially doubted. Sarah had managed numerous large-scale projects with traditional methods and was skeptical of fixing something that wasn't broken by using this new software. Instead of dismissing the idea, Sarah approached Mark afterward with genuine curiosity to understand his perspective better, fostering mutual respect. They agreed to trial the software on the excavation scope of work, which he was directly responsible for, and if it went well, they would work to roll it out across later phases of the project.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

For each category discuss the following questions:

1. How can we leverage different generations' strengths and unique perspectives to drive innovation and success in our organization?
2. How can we create intergenerational learning and mentorship opportunities within our organization?

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Only 6% of organizations strongly agree that their leaders know how to effectively manage multi-generational teams.

Deloitte



PURPOSE: A TOOL TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

The 2020 pandemic had a huge impact on how people across all generations think about life and work. It pushed many people to reevaluate their priorities and find more meaning in what they do for a living.

According to a recent study, 70% of employees find their sense of purpose through their work. When people feel purpose at work, they are more productive, healthier, and more likely to stay with their employer.

For construction industry professionals, productivity, health, and retention are crucial. No matter what generation someone belongs to, finding and nurturing a sense of purpose can be a powerful way to bring people across generations together.

Understanding Purpose at Work:

Purpose at work is about having a clear sense of what matters to you and striving toward something significant. While employers can spot common patterns in what people find meaningful, each person's sense of purpose is unique.

Identifying Purpose:

Read the prompts below and write down your thoughts. These questions can help you reflect on your own purpose or guide leaders in helping their team find theirs.

- **What tasks or projects do you find most fulfilling?**
- **When do you feel most engaged and energized at work?**
- **How does your work align with your personal values and long-term goals?**
- **What aspects of your job make you proud?**

Purpose Exercise

1. Write a personal mission statement that captures your professional aspirations and values.
2. Once you've written it, think about how well it matches up with your current work.

SELF-REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. What was it like to think about your purpose? Was it easy or challenging?
2. While drafting your personal mission statement, did you find that your mission aligns well with your current role?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Why do you think it is important for individuals' purposes to vary across an organization?
2. If you are comfortable, share your personal mission statement. How might you align your daily work with that mission?



IMPACTING BELONGING ACROSS GENERATIONS

Generational differences can either divide a team or help unlock the full potential of a team. While some organizational factors are out of your control, how you interact with those around you can make a big difference in your sense of belonging. Here are some intentional actions you can take to build belonging in your team:

- **Be flexible with your management style:** Ask for feedback to find out how your team prefers to be managed. Experiment with different approaches to see what works best for them.
- **Treat disagreements as learning opportunities:** When a coworker disagrees with you, see it as a chance to understand their perspective. Ask them how they reached their opinion; it could lead to a valuable discussion for both of you.
- **Check in with your coworkers:** Research shows that 39% of people feel a sense of belonging when their colleagues check in with them personally and professionally.
- **Ask genuine questions:** Make sure your questions show real interest. There's nothing worse than asking a question and not truly caring about the answer.
- **Understand your biases:** Take some time to reflect on your own biases. This will help you approach check-ins with an open mind and avoid turning them into debates.
- **Be consistent in your interactions:** Consistently modeling inclusive behavior, especially in tough conversations, helps build a stronger sense of belonging.

SELF-REFLECTION PROMPTS

1. How flexible am I at work when it comes to working with others? Am I open to their ideas?
2. How often do I take the time to check in with my coworkers?
3. Think about someone who made you feel included at work. What did they do to contribute to your sense of belonging?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. If you're comfortable, can you share a time when an assumption you made about a coworker turned out to be wrong? (Remember to keep names anonymous.)
2. How can we reframe disagreements as opportunities for learning and growth rather than just conflict?

