

UNDERSTANDING THE PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH

“Leaders from any generation will need to be ‘multilingual’ to understand, engage, coach and inspire generationally diverse workgroups that represent different work ethics, communication styles, and career aspirations and that seek different forms of recognition, expect different relationships, and balance their work and leisure in new ways.”
- Michael E. Pepe, Chief Human Resource Office at Virtua in Marlton, N.J.

Understanding generational differences helps clarify communication; understanding someone’s perspective can improve collaborating efforts.

Here are some general experiences and work views commonly held by people of different generations.

Please keep in mind that individual differences exist in every category, just as you do not think or feel exactly the same as all of the people born near the year you were.

Born 1981-2001: Millennials

They Are:	Full of confidence Internet-connected Socially conscious	Optimistic Career-minded Collaborative/open-minded	Resilient Non-conformists Very capable of multitasking
They Value:	Fast-paced lives full of activities with family and friends Jobs that require creativity and make a difference		Hard work and goal setting Flexible hours and work-life balance

- Combine the “can-do” ethic of the Traditionalists, teamwork of the Boomers, and technological savvy of Gen. X.
- Were shaped by a childhood filled with enrichment experiences.
- Grew up amid global conflict, but with stronger family ties than Gen. X.

Born 1965-1980: Generation X

They Are:	Self-reliant Skeptical of authority	Unimpressed by leaders Skilled at reacting to change
They Value:	Balance in their lives, work is “just a job” Close friends as surrogate families	Prefer informality in workplace Give trust or loyalty only cautiously

- Often characterized as independent self-starters with entrepreneurial traits.
- Can be loyal employees, but are not as attached to their employers as previous generations.
- Were shaped as first latch key kids, watched their parents “live to work” only to be repaid in stress, health problems, divorce, substance abuse, and downsizings.

Born 1945-1964: Baby Boomers

They Are:	Optimistic Results-oriented	Collaborative Question authority
They Value:	Higher priority for work over personal life	Work is adventurous and heroic

- Profess a “softer” management style, believing that work should be linked to spirituality and fulfillment
- Seek personal gratification and pride themselves on their individuality and unpredictability
- Were shaped by a rise in civil rights activism, Vietnam, and inflation.
- See the world as holding infinite possibilities.
- Many will work past traditional retirement age because they enjoy working, or because of health advancements or economic fallout of retirement plans.

Born prior to 1945: This generation called Traditionalists, Matures, or Silents

They Are:	Considered among the most loyal workers Grateful for the job	Highly dedicated and the most risk averse Consider working an honor
They Value:	Obedience Uniformity and conformity Acknowledgement for experience and work	Consistency Law and order Face to face interpersonal communication

- May prefer a top-down chain of command
- Believe in “brighter futures,” and when making hard decisions, they look to history to find precedents that worked.
- Were shaped by the Great Depression, World War II, and the postwar boom years.