

<http://www.paychex.com/articles/human-resources/how-to-manage-multiple-generations-in-the-workplace>

## 5 generations in the workplace

There are many benefits of a multigenerational workforce. Each generation can have varied strengths and concerns, and differences in styles and expectations can sometimes create tension. Studying the work habits of each generation and proactively anticipating their needs can help companies devise effective human capital management strategies. Note that [dates used to define each generation](#) are approximate; some of your employees' experiences may be more reflective of a preceding or succeeding generation.

- Generation Z (1997–2012)
- Millennials (1981–1996)
- Generation Xers (1965–1980)
- Baby boomers (1946–1964)
- Silent generation (born between 1928 and 1945)

### 1. Generation Z

Members of Generation Z were born between 1997 and 2012. Raised as digital natives, they may view smartphones and other devices as essential. Compared to previous generations, they can be more focused on the essence of a person — funny, witty, smart — versus issues like race or ethnicity, due in large part to how technology has shaped their relationships. Student debt, which shapes both workplace choices and compensation needs, is a significant concern for Gen Z.

How to attract and retain Gen Z employees

When attracting and [managing Gen Z in the workplace](#), employers should build a strong brand across digital platforms. Employees from this generation often turn to the internet and social media when researching potential employers. Once hired, Gen Zers may be more actively engaged in their jobs when they're provided access to cutting-edge technology. They are eager to start their careers and tend to [prioritize salary over benefits](#).

Gen Z's ideal workplace environment

After watching their parents deal with the effects of the 2007–2008 financial crisis, job security is a priority for Generation Z. They look for somewhat stable opportunities, and they intend to stay with the same company for two to four years before making a move. While at work, they may prefer some flexibility in the way they accomplish tasks and the opportunity to add input on process improvements. They may also prefer flexible work hours and will seek out environments that prioritize social responsibility and diversity.

How a Gen Z employee wants to be managed

Gen Zers want to participate in highly collaborative management relationships. These young employees look to management to establish a strong overall mission and set an example to help them learn and grow. When developing management policies for this generation, companies should focus on attracting the right talent, investing in their development, and creating mentoring, coaching, and learning opportunities with senior staff.

Employee benefits Gen Zers want

Workplace flexibility is the most sought-after benefit for employees in this age group — more than health care or training and development. Other benefits priorities include:

- Assistance with student debt
- Competitive salaries
- Financial incentives (raises after completing a project)
- Tuition reimbursement
- Formal training opportunities

## 2. Millennials

The largest generation in the current workforce, Millennials were born between 1981 and 1996. Many started working during a recession, which has greatly affected how they view their long-term careers. They grew up as the internet revolutionized society, and they're more comfortable communicating digitally than previous generations. More than [9 out of 10 Millennials](#) own smartphones, and they tend to adopt new social media platforms more quickly than older generations. In the workplace, members of this generation may prefer to send instant messages, email, or texts rather than walk across the room to chat with someone, if only for efficiency purposes.

## How to attract and retain Millennials

Millennial job candidates may often expect a technology-driven application process, including mobile-optimized applicant tracking systems, applications that integrate with LinkedIn, and learning about career opportunities through social recruiting. Retention efforts should focus on building a skill-structured training program that addresses their desire for leadership training, skills development, and career progression.

## Millennials' ideal workplace environment

When creating a workplace where Millennials will flourish, companies should lean into the desire for deeper purpose. Help them understand your company's mission and how it helps make people's lives, industries, or the world at large a better place. Allow them to work remotely if their job responsibilities can be completed outside the office.

## How a Millennial employee wants to be managed

Millennials care about performance quality and judge their managers by the content of their work. They, in turn, want to be judged not for their hours in the office, but for their results. When communicating about work with Millennials, it's best for managers to take a transparent and honest approach, making sure to invite questions from employees.

## Employee benefits Millennials want

Millennials value career development opportunities as well as benefits that prioritize a work/life balance. Some examples include:

- Career development programs
- Monetary gifts
- Opportunities to give back
- On-site daycare
- Mortgage services

## 3. Generation X

Squeezed between the baby boomers and Millennials, Gen Xers were shaped by the evolution of personal computers. This generation, born between 1965 and 1980, is generally more educated than previous generations. Viewed as

self-reliant and hardworking, Gen Xers are often viewed as fiscally responsible.

How to attract and retain Gen X employees

Gen Xers are comfortable using technology and online recruitment and hiring tools, but they're also comfortable with face-to-face interactions.

Gen X's ideal workplace environment

While at work, members of this generation may prefer an environment with a more individual emphasis. They may prefer flexibility to manage their workload as well as greater physical and psychological space.

How a Gen X employee wants to be managed

Gen Xers typically prefer less supervision and greater autonomy when it comes to completing job responsibilities. They can be comfortable using various forms of communication, both online and in person. Gen Xers are well into their careers and have experience that should be valued by managers. Members of this generation may have also settled into family life and desire a more flexible schedule that allows them to achieve a healthy work/life balance.

Employee benefits Gen Xers want

Gen Xers raising their families may be particularly concerned with healthcare coverage, flexible workforce arrangements, on-site day care, and other perks that support a work/life balance. Additionally, this generation appreciates monetary benefits such as:

- Monetary gifts
- Stock options
- Gift cards
- Tuition reimbursement
- Mortgage services

#### 4. Baby boomers

Born after World War II, through 1964, baby boomers have long been known for their strong work ethic and goal-centric tendencies. They tend to be

hardworking and value face-to-face interaction. They didn't grow up using computers, although they will use technology for job-related functions.

#### How to attract and retain baby boomers

Older employees may be more comfortable with traditional recruiting processes that include creating formal resumes and holding face-to-face interviews. They may be more likely to find jobs through advertisements, word of mouth, and referrals. Retention strategies that work well for this generation focus on recognizing them for achievements through public ceremonies or other awards they can share with family, friends, and coworkers.

#### Baby boomers' ideal workplace environment

Baby boomers aren't usually looking to job-hop, so job security is appealing to them. They may appreciate a more formalized, structured environment than younger generations would. Growing up without digital communication means they're more amenable to interaction in group meetings.

#### How a baby boomer employee wants to be managed

Baby boomers are often hardworking and want to be recognized for their skills. They are often a great source of knowledge about their industry and appreciate the chance to share their expertise. Managers should look to leverage their skills and encourage them to mentor younger employees.

#### Employee benefits baby boomers want

As many members of this generation are nearing retirement, they appreciate flexible work policies. Many experienced staff members will consider staying on the job longer if they're offered reduced schedules, the option of working from home, or alternate hours. Health care and retirement benefits, including a 401(k) match, are also highly desired.

### 5. Silent generation

The oldest generation currently in the workforce is the silent generation, born between 1928 and 1945. They grew up without today's technology and many other modern conveniences younger generations take for granted. Many members of this generation have overcome adverse economic conditions in

their lifetimes and thus have established diligent financial habits. They're hard workers with strong core values.

#### How to attract and retain the silent generation

Stressing fundamentals can help companies attract and retain employees from this generation. They want to feel as though they're paid fairly for a job well done.

#### The silent generation's ideal workplace environment

Although members of this generation appreciate the advanced technology used today, they may not be as familiar with it or comfortable using it. Providing offline options to complete tasks can help create a positive work environment for older employees. Like the baby-boom generation, they value personal interactions and can be effective when given the opportunity to meet face-to-face.

#### How a silent generation employee wants to be managed

In-person discussions with these employees can help clarify goals and allow managers to provide feedback. Encouraging them to share their knowledge and expertise can benefit the entire workforce.

#### Employee benefits the silent generation wants

As tenured employees, silent generation employees may be focused on healthcare and retirement benefits. They may be working to build up a pension from long-term employment. They may also appreciate flexible work policies, including paid time off, as they transition to full retirement.

## How to bridge generational gaps in your workplace

Today's multigenerational workforce offers significant benefits to employers in terms of a range of experience and creative problem-solving skills. Tailoring an office space to accommodate the characteristics of different generations in the workplace can help ensure that everyone is able to reach their potential. When dealing with a multigenerational workforce, it's important to be sensitive to the various work styles and communicate through a variety of channels. Younger employees may prefer to receive information digitally, while

employees from earlier generations may be accustomed to printed materials and having more immediate access to management to answer their questions. Recruitment and retention strategies should be established across a variety of channels, and employees should be offered a range of benefits choices.

#### Incorporate senior staff's knowledge into training

Aim to leverage the knowledge of senior staff members and older generations to help train and lead younger generations in the workforce. This can be accomplished by developing mentoring and coaching programs to pass down information and best practices. Encouraging informal mentoring while on the job can also be rewarding for both experienced and less-experienced employees.

#### Understand which employee benefits to offer different generations

Employees in different phases of their lives may be focused on different areas of their compensation and benefits packages. Younger employees may be focused on salary, tuition reimbursement, and formal training opportunities. Employees with young families may be particularly concerned with healthcare coverage, flexible workforce arrangements, and work/life balance. Tenured employees may be focused on healthcare and retirement benefits. These are generalizations, but they underscore the reality that different issues may be priorities at different stages of life.

Companies can respond in three ways. The first is being aware of the need for a range of different benefits to accommodate employees' changing and evolving priorities. The second is understanding the need to potentially highlight benefits to prospective employees at different stages. And the final step is to think about whether branded communications may be appropriate around certain benefits. For example, some retirement plans have specific communications collateral aimed at recent graduates and college hires that highlights the benefits of starting to save for retirement early. Other vendors may provide helpful guidance to employees approaching retirement on how to handle withdrawals from their accounts.

#### Use employee demographics to guide benefits investments

One strategy for managing multiple generations in the workplace is customizing benefits offerings to core demographics. As previously noted, there can be generational differences in employee benefits. For example, would an on-site daycare facility offer value to your staff? Is tuition assistance or access to mortgage services relevant for your employees? Think about who

your employees are and which benefits are most likely to support their success. By focusing on communication, the benefits mix, and understanding the priorities of each generation, your company may well be well on its way to a sustainable benefits strategy.

Successfully managing a multiple-generation workforce and attracting younger employees requires an awareness of changing needs, a willingness to embrace new ways of managing staff, and attracting the best talent. Now is the time to make these investments to lay the foundation for long-term success. For more information about maximizing the benefits of a multigenerational workforce, download our [white paper](#).