

LESSON 7-5: Multi-Generational Leadership Communication, Feedback, Decision-Making, Training

“Every generation brings something new to the workplace... millennials tend to be highly educated, love to learn, and grew up with the internet and digital tools in a way that can be highly useful when leveraged properly.” – Kathryn Minshew

WELCOME & PRAYER

PREVIOUS LESSON FOLLOW UP

- What did you learn when you went to multiple generations in your workplace and asked them the first two questions on the exercise form? What did they believe about the issue? Why did they believe it?

KICK OFF QUESTION

- Which one of the generations in the workplace (Traditionalists, Boomers, Gen Xers or Millennials) do you struggle with the most? What is it about **your** background and upbringing that causes this roadblock?

PRIMARY SCRIPTURES

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.” 1 Timothy 4:12 (NLT)

Discussion Question:

- If you are older, do you look down on the younger generations? If you are younger, do you look down on the older generations? Why?

BIG PICTURE

Generational differences manifest themselves in the workplace in many ways. In this lesson, we will focus on four specific areas: communication, feedback, decision-making, and training.

CONCEPTS TO UNDERSTAND

As we examine how different generations view an issue, we will focus not just on what they believe, but why they believe it.

Communication

Traditionalists:

- What: Memo-writing, hand-written letters, and calling a “meeting”.
- Why: This generation was taught proper penmanship and writing skills, but also place high value in face-to-face communication.

Boomers:

- What: Might write a memo but more apt to pick up the phone or set up a meeting.
- Why: Boomers were taught writing skills, but growing up with television they also saw the value of presentations to share information.

Gen Xers:

- What: Xers are comfortable with e-mail, instant messaging, and virtual meetings.
- Why: They grew up in a world made smaller due to technology and they embrace technology to communicate.

Millennials:

- What: Heavy users of texts and instant message apps, make connections via social media, and barely tolerate voicemail and face-to-face meetings.
- Why: They are comfortable with constant and instant communication in their personal relationships; work is no different.

Feedback

Traditionalists:

- What: The boss will let you know if you do anything wrong.
- Why: On the farm and in the military, obedience (not praise) was expected. No news was good news.

Boomers:

- What: Annual performance appraisals were used by bosses to let their people know how they were doing.
- Why: Standardized testing and grading on a curve in their schooling led to an expectation for standardized performance appraisals versus others in the office.

Gen Xers:

- What: A formal evaluation form or performance meeting isn’t needed, just tell it like it is.
- Why: Standard evaluations are seen as unnecessarily complicated and not particularly useful. Real-time feedback is preferred.

Millennials:

- What: Just like in the rest of their life, they expect constant and immediate feedback.
- Why: This generation has grown up with constant feedback from social media and from parents who fed their self-esteem.

Decision-Making

Traditionalists:

- What: Quite simply, the boss is the boss.
- Why: Questioning the boss or the boss's orders is insubordination.

Boomers:

- What: We have a process to make decisions, but the boss ultimately decides.
- Why: Data, surveys, and research shaped the decision-making process.

Gen Xers:

- What: Decision-making should be given to the person with the most knowledge of the topic.
- Why: Technology and nontraditional family upbringing blew up traditional hierarchical decision-making.

Millennials:

- What: The group works through options and decides together.
- Why: Millennials learned, completed projects, and made decisions in teams as part of their education.

Training

Traditionalists:

- What: Experiencing the Great Depression, growing up in rural America, and surviving WWII taught real-life skills.
- Why: They learned by doing. They had to just figure it out.

Boomers:

- What: Training opportunities are seen as a reward for performance.
- Why: Training was a natural extension of their education.

Gen Xers:

- What: Training is seen as a form of security to be prepared for the future.
- Why: If a company does not provide training, Gen Xers feel like they are falling behind.

Millennials:

- What: Millennials expect to be part of an organization that has a continuous learning culture.
- Why: The speed of global change requires continual learning to stay competitive.

EXERCISE

In the table at the end of this lesson, identify one practical issue in your workplace that could be improved from the list of topics covered in this lesson. Write down the initials of individuals (including yourself) along with their generation, and answer the following questions:

- What do they believe?
- Why do they believe it?
- How can I/we be flexible?
- How might we leverage this issue for the benefit of the organization?

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these four issues is a recurring issue for you in your personal or professional relationships? How do you move beyond these differences to leverage each generation's strengths?
2. Regarding communication, how is information shared in your workplace? How could you change communication to make it more effective for you personally, and for other generations? Is more than one communication method needed?
3. Think of a recent decision made in your workplace that caused some tension between generations. Was the tension caused by the actual decision that was made or the process in which the decision was made and communicated?
4. Imagine a scenario in which you have to give feedback to co-workers across multiple generations. How would your approach be different with each generation?

TAKE ACTION

- We will all make decisions over the next two weeks. Write down the names of the people who will be impacted by a future decision. Given what you learned in this lesson, how might your approach change in making this decision?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Sticking Points* by Haydn
- *Generational Differences Chart* by Midland Family Center (<http://www.wmfc.org/uploads/GenerationalDifferencesChart.pdf>)
- *Navigating the Multigenerational Workplace* by Leah Georges at TEDxCreightonU (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzfAOc4L6vQ>)

Issue: _____

Initials/ Generation	What do they believe?	Why do they believe it?"	How can we be flexible?	How might we leverage this issue for the benefit of the organization?