

# How can different generations motivate each other in the modern workplace?

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Each and every working environment is different and this can be challenging to navigate - particularly when different generations have to work together. This is because each generation has its own way of working and typically believes that their way of working is better. This creates tension that can quickly become counterproductive, so organisations need to find new and clever ways of getting different groups to work together towards a common goal.



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Each generation has valuable and unique skills to bring to the table, so it is important to foster an environment of flexibility and openness in order to unlock the full potential of these skills.

Younger generations, for example, may feel that the older generation is not listening to their fresh ideas, while the older generation feels that the younger generation disregards the advice they give them, advice that stems from years of experience. Greater flexibility has the power to make sure that each member feels needed and wanted by illustrating that their input is being heard and taken into consideration.

By focusing on the strength of each generation and passing these on to each other, it is possible to create a workplace that values diversity and different points of view, as well as a combination of experience and innovative thinking. Older generations are known for valuing stability and proven results, while younger generations are thought of as flighty because of their willingness to test new ways of working and even fail in order to find the best and most effective solution as rapidly as possible.

## Playing to each generation's strengths

While these traits may seem incompatible at first glance, it indicates that these generations have the ability to balance each other out and allow each to play to their strengths for the common good of the company. Baby boomers and Generation X, for instance, can teach millennials and Generation Z the need for patience and hard work to reach their goals. They can ground millennials in constructive ways and mentor them on their career journeys.

Millennials and Generation Z, on the other hand, can teach Baby boomers and Gen X how to be more spontaneous and find newer and more innovative ways of working. They can pass on the value of making decisions more rapidly and prioritising innovative thinking. Very often, I find myself impressed at the entrepreneurial spirit of the youth and their drive to find more efficient ways of doing things. This is particularly important in our current volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world commonly known as VUCA.

## The changing working environment



As more millennials and even younger generations continue to leave the workplace in greater numbers, this will change the very face of the workplace as we know it. The number of millennials taking permanent jobs has decreased in the past few years. According to the [Deloitte Global Millennial Survey 2019](#), today more millennials than ever (49%) would, if they had a choice, quit their current jobs in the next two years.

The ability to call on certain skillsets when needed suits businesses, and the freedom that comes with flexible working arrangements suits Millennials. That is why it's going to require significantly higher collaboration levels of the business and across multiple generations, in order to achieve collective goals.

## The best managing style could be a new style altogether

Maybe it's time to try a different management style? This way everyone would be starting on a new slate and no-one will say "We've been doing it this way for years." For example, millennials would most probably fit in well with a transformational leadership style which is more focused on team-building, motivating and collaborating with employees at different levels of an organisation to accomplish change for the better.

Ultimately, what these generations are going to have to do is to meet each other half-way in order to make the most of the skills that they will need to stay relevant in the workplace of the future. Accommodating different ways of working enables a more diverse workplace that is better equipped to handle ever-changing demands and needs.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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