

# Generational Inclusion – the Key to Reduced Workplace Conflict and Increased Retention



By Jeffrey Vargas, President/CEO Generationology LLC

Remember what it was like to be on the playground when it came time to choose teams? How it felt when the team leader picked “the new kid” before you? Maybe you had anxiety thinking about the teammates you would be playing alongside. Or maybe, when you got on the field, someone gave you encouragement and you started to enjoy yourself. What eased your fears and unleashed your potential? My suspicion: it was a feeling that you belonged, you were included, you were valued.

Even in the workplace, I suspect that being picked, being valued, and being included is still important to you. It’s important to all of us. So, what can workplaces do to make sure every person on the team feels valued? One way is to recognize and address generational differences.

## The Multi-Generational Workplace



There are now five different generations in the workplace ([Pew Research Center](#)), ranging from teens to those in their 80s and 90s. It's the first time in the history of our country that we have five generations all working together, on the same issues, expected to achieve the same outcomes. But individuals from each of these different generations bring different preferences and perspectives on how to feel valued at work.

When organizations don't take those differences into account, it can cause workplace conflict and lead to retention problems—and that costs organizations money. The [2019 Work Institute Retention Report](#) tells us that in 2018, U.S. companies lost approximately \$617B due to employee turnover. And a [global study](#) by the Tanner Group suggests that 79% of workers leave a job because they are not appreciated.

Intergenerational Inclusion is a way to ensure that the voice of every generation in a workplace is heard, and that an organization's recruitment, retention, and other practices honor generational preferences.

## Practicing Intergenerational Inclusion



Here are ways to start practicing intergenerational inclusion to reduce conflict and encourage retention in your organization.

### **Review Your Recruitment Program Through a Generational Lens**

Recognize that different generations have different expectations for the recruitment process. For example, Millennials and Gen Z applicants prefer more use of technology for communication, while older generations tend to be more relationship focused.

### **Provide Intergenerational Communications Training**

Rome wasn't built in a day and neither is intergenerational knowledge. Providing your leadership and recruitment team with intergenerational communication training will ensure that staff, from all generations, will be better able to modify and focus their management and communication efforts.

### **Praise and Acknowledge Employees Through a Generational Lens**

- The Traditionalist (age 74-91) and Baby Boomer (age 55-73) generations want praise and acknowledgment delivered in a formal way. Emails are nice. Calls work better, and handwritten notes are at the top of the food chain.

- Millennials (age 23-38) and Gen Z (age 7-22) want quick two-line emails (acknowledgement) and welcome a ton of hallway “thank you” (praise).
- Gen X (age 39 – 54) won’t lose sleep if they don’t get a lot of praise and acknowledgement, but they appreciate it in a written form – short, sweet and concise.

### **Consider Revamping Your Awards Program**

Employees from all generations want a variety of award programs to be deployed. Baby Boomers love the formal award program with pictures, plaques and poses. Traditionalists want the programs to be formal and the format should be about the same each year. Generation X is indifferent, what they want most is money and time off, and Millennials and Generation Z want programs that are less formal and are focused on allowing for virtual participation. Programs should be available live on Facebook and YouTube.

### **Create and Deploy Intergenerational Retention Teams**

If you want to practice intergenerational inclusion retention strategies, formulate an intergenerational retention team and ask them what programs, practices, and policies encourage them to stay in your organization. Then, when possible, implement their ideas across your enterprise.

### **Create and Deploy an “Alumni Network”**

Cutting-edge organizations, particularly those in technology, can see wide swings in terms of the workforce they have employed at any given time. To enhance retention before any workforce restructuring or downsizing takes place seek to establish an alumni network. Once someone leaves the organization, give them the option to join your “Alumni Network”. Keep them engaged with your organization and keep them updated on new and emerging programs and initiatives, including those that will positively impact their employment status.

### **Final Thought...**

If you focus on applying intergenerational inclusion practices, you will be better able to find the right people, you will experience an increase in retention, and you will have a more effective workplace. People of all generations will want to give you their best effort because you both acknowledge and honor their generational preferences.



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