

I used to think sending an email indicated an immediate response is needed. Now I know: a text message or IM means I need the answer NOW.

Managing Partner

A team that includes multiple generations has the benefits of experienced wisdom and work ethic, the motivation to make a difference, loyalty to the team, and utilization of the latest technology – once they learn to appreciate their differences.

Senior Instructional Designer

Leading Multigenerational Teams

Tips and Tricks

Remember: we're not that different

Many qualities of a group are not due to their generation, but their current life status: just out of school, starting a family, juggling work and life responsibilities, nearing retirement. Focus on similarities and shared experiences, and keep in mind we're all working toward the same goal.

Just because it's different doesn't mean it's wrong

Boomers may be more used to learning a new process solely by studying a book or manual. Blended learning approaches work well with Gen Y because of their short attention span. Is that so bad? As we learn ways to engage a new generation, those methods can be used to enhance the learning of other generations as well.

Communication and education for all generations

Millennials are entering the workforce so organizations need to adjust, right? That is part of it. Millennials also need education to assimilate into an established work environment and to understand the differences in generational qualities. They need to understand (for instance) that not everyone is as technically savvy as they are, which leads us to the next point...

Agreed upon communication standards

One team member is annoyed that his colleague walks over to his work area every 20 minutes. Another team member doesn't understand why her colleague keeps sending her instant messages. Why can't he just walk over – he's 10 feet away! And what does "OMG, ROTFL" mean anyway? * Is that a new product code? There is no one right way to communicate; the best communication method is one that is agreed upon by the team. Work together to establish communication standards, and utilize the various media available in ways that work best for the team as a whole.

Patience is a virtue

It is difficult for a Millennial to accept that they might not find the answer to a question. For those of us who did not experience the internet until adulthood, we can live with the fact that it might take a while to look up the answer in some reference material, or we may not find the answer at all! On the other hand, the best compliment some of us can receive is "you know what you're doing, I'll leave you alone." Millennials require frequent and immediate feedback. If they don't get it, they'll ask for it – a lot. If we all have patience with each other, we'll see that each generation's qualities can be used to achieve the goals.

* In instant message or texting language, OMG, ROTFL means, "Oh my goodness, I'm rolling on the floor, laughing!" See? We didn't assume, either!



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