YOUR GUIDE TO ENGAGING A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

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What do you do when an older employee applies to work at your company? Take it seriously. Baby boomers and traditionals still have a lot to offer the workforce, and your organization will likely benefit from cross-generational mentorship.

THE KEY TO A MULTIGENERATION-FRIENDLY OFFICE MIGHT JUST BE FLEXTIME

BY CHARLES COY

Flextime is one benefit that meets the need of several types of workers: millennials, working parents and semi-retirees. This infographic shows how the personalized schedule plays out for each generation.

YOU DON’T NEED TO UNDERSTAND MILLENNIALS, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND PEOPLE

BY JEFF MILLER

While it’s important to recognize generational differences and understand what different employees need to thrive, there are core similarities across ages as well. In fact, what younger generations want is central to what every employee wants.
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For the first time in history, organizations are likely to have five different generations working together—each with their own skills, interests, priorities and expectations. Not surprisingly, this generational diversity is forcing employers to take a new approach to talent management, embracing both the unique opportunities and the unique challenges of a multigenerational workforce.

First, there’s Generation Z—the newest members to enter the workforce—who never knew the world before the internet. Then there are millennials, who bring a sense of “purpose” to the workforce and have high expectations for career growth and development. In the middle, there’s Generation X: self-reliant and juggling their jobs, child care and elderly parents. The baby boomers follow, often hesitant toward technology, but strong believers in collaboration and teamwork. And finally, the traditionalists—also known as the “silent generation”—who prioritize financial security at work and are fiercely loyal to employers.

These generational qualities—albeit broad—represent five groups of people raised in different cultures, economies and work landscapes. And while they are far from fixed or completely true for every individual, they do provide a peek into the vast range of values and priorities employers are expected to satisfy today.

So, how do you collectively engage employees spanning more than 60 years in age? In this guidebook, you’ll learn how to both understand and meet the needs of each generation. With six articles on everything from offering cross-generational mentorship to integrating flextime at work, our featured experts will help you create an environment in which people with a variety of perspectives will not only thrive, but collaborate for greater success.
For managers still trying to figure out the millennials, I have some disturbing news.

Generation Z is already knocking on HR's doorstep. With this addition to the workforce, we now have 18-year-olds and 80-somethings and all ages in between seeking employment. This is unprecedented. Is your organization ready?

Apparently not, according to a recent report published by Randstad Workmonitor. When asked if they felt their employer was prepared to meet the demands of Gen Z, just 55 percent of the respondents said yes. Based on my interaction with clients and business audiences, even that number seems wildly optimistic. Employers still seem puzzled about how to manage the simultaneous and often divergent wants and needs of the millennials, baby boomers and Gen X.

Just 55 percent of organizations are prepared to meet the demands of Generation Z.
Generation Who?

Before I introduce Generation Z’s impact and implications, allow me to step back for a moment and introduce its members.

This generation includes those young adults (and children) born between 1996 and 2010. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are an estimated 57 million Gen Zers in the U.S. (roughly 30 percent less than baby boomers and millennials and about 20 percent more than Gen X). School shootings, global terrorism, the Great Recession and climate change are just a few of the events that have indelibly marked and abruptly influenced their young minds.

Generation Z was born into a new family era in which one of seven stay-at-home parents is a father. Compare that to the baby boomers, who largely grew up with one wage-earner per family and a stay-at-home mom, and Gen Xers, who are products of dual-career parents.

This is also the first generation with parents from three generations (boomers, Xers and millennials). Thanks to an epidemic of baby boomer divorces and remarriages, delayed marriages of Generation X and a proliferation of unmarried couples and single parents, this is a generation whose familiarity with the traditional nuclear family is ensconced almost exclusively in history.

The families of Generation Z come in all colors and sizes. This is the first generation growing up in a time when alternative lifestyles are not admonished or tolerated, but widely accepted.

Born at or close to the birth of the modern-day internet, Gen Z does not know a world without technology embedded into all aspects of life. They are technologically astute and comfortable communicating at lightning speed.

Many of Gen Zers’ parents have lived through multiple recessions, acquired a lifetime of debt, experienced career disruptions and sustained periods of high unemployment. In response, Generation Z is becoming the realistic generation. If nothing else, Gen Zers are learning coping skills and the power of resourcefulness. They have been taught and coached to be practical and pursue their specific strengths (unlike millennials, who were led to believe that anything and everything was possible).

Gen Z does not know a world without technology embedded into all aspects of life.
What Does This Mean for Business?

Here's how managers can build relationships with and prepare their workforce for the youngest generation approaching employment:

1. **Think globally.** Gen Z is the most socially connected, globally minded generation ever to live on this planet. They will use their connectedness to change the world. Businesses need to provide ways for Gen Z to get involved in the community (local and global).

2. **Do not underestimate their power.** Just because their faces and fingers are often glued to screens does not mean they are not networking. Given the opportunity, they will tap their networks to influence brands and events to their liking. What took decades for the baby boomers to do and undo, Gen Z can revolutionize in weeks, if not days or hours.

3. **Be ready to teach and train them.** Traditionally, young adults gained work experience through after-school and summer jobs. But due to automation, high unemployment and baby boomers' reluctance to retire, Gen Z is being shut out of these early life experiences. Employers will need to teach Gen Zers basic work ethic—not because they lack it, but they simply have little to no actual experience.

4. **Accept their technology.** To Gen Z, technology is not just a tool; it’s part of their identity. Their devices, gadgets and social profiles are extensions of themselves. Try to shut them down and your business may be shut out, too.

Most importantly, remember that we are just beginning to understand Generation Z. Stay tuned.

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What took decades for the baby boomers to do and undo, Gen Z can revolutionize in weeks, if not days or hours.
To Reach Millennials, Think About More Than Money

By Charles Coy

Who better embodies the old mantra "change is the only constant in life" in today's workplace than millennials? The twenty-something demographic—now the largest segment of the workforce—tends to baffle their older counterparts: how to talk to them, how to work with them and how they are transforming everything the workplace has held sacred.

The resounding message surrounding millennials is clear: Money means less, culture means more. But that's not to say money doesn't matter at all. As the generation with the highest rates of unemployment, lowest earnings and record student loan debt, millennials certainly care about their financial health. A recent study from Gallup found that 48 percent of millennials find overall compensation “extremely important” when seeking new job opportunities, and one in two would consider taking a new job for a raise of 20 percent or less.

So, compensation is important—it’s just not the most important. When considering what companies and jobs to apply for, Gallup found Gen Y places other attributes ahead of income, such as opportunities for growth, quality of management and the type of work.

Money means less, culture means more to millennials.
For employers, this means you need to consider how compensation is balanced by other cultural attributes at the workplace—and based on retention numbers, it’s not an easy balance to strike. Forty-four percent of millennials say they would like to leave their current employers in the next two years, according to Deloitte’s recent Millennial Survey. Here, three ways employers can turn this trend around.

Put Mentorship First

According to a 2013 study from Millennial Branding and Beyond.com, many companies (40 percent) are investing in mentorship programs as a Gen Y engagement tool. As Jim Clifton, CEO and chairman of Gallup, writes in the report introduction, opportunities for growth and learning are important to millennials: “Most millennials don’t care about the bells and whistles found in many workplaces today—the ping pong tables, fancy latte machines and free food that companies offer to try to create job satisfaction... Purpose and development drive this generation.”

A mentorship program can be as simple as setting up regular check-ins with managers or other senior employees in the company. Gallup found that 44 percent of millennial workers who meet with their manager regularly are engaged, while only 20 percent of millennials who meet infrequently with managers are engaged. The problem? Regular meetings are pretty rare: Only 21 percent of millennials meet with their managers on a weekly basis, and 56 percent meet less than once a month. If the latter statistic sounds all too familiar, it’s time to shift your organization’s thinking.

Meet Their Values

If it isn’t clear by now, make sure this assumption is hard-wired into your HR organization: millennials are seeking purpose at work. According to a survey from Net Impact at Rutgers University, nearly three-fourths of millennials—as opposed to roughly half of all workers—report that having a job where they can make an impact is essential to their overall happiness.

More than half of millennials have ruled out working for a particular organization because of its values.
But not only do millennials prioritize making an impact over making another buck—they expect their employers to adhere to the same standard. The previously mentioned Deloitte report found that globally, 56 percent of millennials have “ruled out ever working for a particular organization because of its values or standard of conduct” and almost nine in 10 (87 percent) millennials believe that “the success of a business should be measured in terms of more than just its financial performance.”

What other metrics determine success? According to Deloitte, more than six in 10 millennials listed the quality of products and services (63 percent) or levels of employee satisfaction (62 percent), while more than half (55 percent) focused on customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Embrace Technology, or Else

Millennials don’t view the “work-life balance” debate the same way as Gen X or boomers (not exactly a shocker there). Why? As “digital natives,” they are immersed in modern technology—and rely on it both inside and outside of work. As Gallup found, while the majority of Americans surf the web from a desktop or laptop computer at home or work, 85 percent of millennials access the internet from their phones. Employers who can find ways to embrace and leverage the latest technologies—from mobile to social media—will hold a significant competitive advantage at attracting, engaging and retaining Gen Y employees.

“For millennials, a job is no longer just a job—it’s their life as well.”

Why is it so important to meet this generation’s needs? Millennials may seem to have more expectations than ever for their place of work—but, in many ways, they are also a lot more invested in their place of work. As Clifton writes, “More so than ever in the history of corporate culture, employees are asking, ‘Does this organization value my strengths and my contribution? Does this organization give me the chance to do what I do best every day?’ Because for millennials, a job is no longer just a job—it’s their life as well.”
The apocalyptic silver tsunami that many economists predicted has rained on the workforce more like a sunshower. Thanks to a combination of delayed retirements, improving-but-still-slow job growth and increasing life expectancy, older workers are waiting longer to exit the workforce—meaning millennials and Generation X employees who were poised to take the field have hit an unforeseen obstacle: “the gray ceiling.”

In fact, the labor force participation rate for people 55 and older is up by approximately one-third since 1990 (near its highest in decades). Similarly, a recent report by AARP finds that 33 percent of older workers are delaying the age at which they expect to retire, and nearly half are now planning to work part-time after they reach retirement age.

Economist Matthew Rutledge calls this delayed exodus of retirees “the lump of labor”: “There’s only a certain amount of jobs out there, and if an old person’s holding that job, that means a young person isn’t.”

The labor force participation rate for Americans 55 and older is near its highest level in several decades.
This isn’t necessarily a bad thing. Older workers from the baby boomer and traditionalist generations often bring a vital depth of experience to an organization. But the gray ceiling does present some specific problems for employers, especially in the competition to attract and retain younger talent for future growth and sustainability. So, how can you respond without alienating the older generation? Here are four ways to address the gray ceiling.

Think Multigenerationally

It’s not out of the realm of possibility that your company has five generations working side by side: traditionalists, baby boomers, Generation X, millennials and Generation Z. Each of these groups has different needs and wants, from attitudes about career paths to vacation schedules to training and development.

While the mere thought of that may be enough to turn your own hair gray, planning for the dreaded multigenerational workforce is a necessity. A good place to start is asking yourself these vital questions: How prepared is my organization to recruit, manage, motivate and retain a multigenerational workforce?

What infrastructure do we have in place that will become obsolete? What will need to be created or tweaked?

Get Ready for Boomers to Act Their Age

As they mature, boomers may require more time to travel, replace a hip, treat cancer, deal with an ailing parent or spouse or spend time with their grandchildren—make sure your organization has policies in place to address these needs. And eventually, boomers will leave the workforce, so don’t delay discussions about the best way to replace older workers. You may just have to wait to implement those plans.

Generation X workers may be the much-needed link in your multigenerational plan.
Remember: Turnover Isn’t Just About Older Workers

While boomers enjoyed 30- and 40-year careers at the same company, millennials will seek multiple careers over the course of their working life. For some young workers, even five years doing the same job feels like a lifetime. Succession planning, then, isn’t just about finding high-potential talent, but also about dealing with high rates of turnover within the younger generations.

Don’t Forget About Generation X

In the race to replace boomers and attract millennials, Generation X is often forgotten in the shuffle. Don’t do that. These workers are often next in line for management and leadership roles after the older generation ages out, and if they sense a gray ceiling in place or are consistently passed over in favor of millennials, they’ll leave to follow their dreams and career aspirations elsewhere.

Furthermore, Generation X workers may be the much-needed link in your multigenerational plan, acting as a conduit between the workers who represent your company’s past and those who represent its future.

The bottom line? Without a talent management plan to ensure a smooth transition as your workforce experiences a shift in generations, your company’s productivity and competitiveness is vulnerable. With a plan, the multigenerational aspect of your organization will not only be anticipated, it will actually be an advantage.
Last fall, I went to see the new Nancy Meyers film, *The Intern*. And while I thoroughly enjoyed it, I was also struck by how amusing it ought not to have been.

The movie follows a 70-year-old retiree, Ben, who—out of sheer boredom—joins a program matching senior citizens with companies needing interns. Ben is assigned to a startup founder named Jules, who begrudgingly agrees to go along with the program. Surrounded by millennial and Generation Z colleagues, Ben quickly overcomes his technical illiteracy (“I had to call my 9-year-old grandson to find out what a USB port was”), and becomes a confidant to Jules, mentor to the Gen Zers and touchstone of business acumen for the entire company.

Ben stands about as much of a chance at getting hired at 70—even as an unpaid intern—as he does at winning the lottery.

Fade to reality. Ben stands about as much of a chance at getting hired at 70—even as an unpaid intern—as he does at winning the lottery. From an employer’s perspective, the
objections to hiring older workers simply overrule the benefits, despite the best efforts of the AARP and SHRM. And even if Ben did get hired, there is the undeniable friction between young employees and boomers, whose views aren’t always harmonious.

But does that mean HR leaders should laugh The Intern off as an unrealistic Nancy Meyers flick, or is there something more to be gleaned from the film?

Why Baby Boomers Make Great Hires

While 65 is still the widely accepted age for retirement in the U.S., older workers increasingly want to remain in the workforce and, like Ben, they still have valuable insights to contribute.

The Intern carries an important message for HR leaders: It’s time to get ahead of the curve in your recruiting strategy. Bring in some older workers and pair them with younger team members. While the synergies created by this multigenerational mix caused some hilarity in Meyers’ movie, senior citizens with leadership experience really do have something to offer younger talent.

Five Reasons to Hire Older Workers

In fact, for nearly every perceived disadvantage to hiring a baby boomer, there is actually an upside. Let’s explore a few baby boomer generalizations, and why they don’t hold water:

1. They aren’t tech savvy! When technology goes down temporarily, they probably know other ways to get things done. And besides, if the boomers learned Boolean search methods, they can learn newer technologies, too. Experience at learning is as valuable as the skill learned.
2. They’re too old to put in the long hours we keep here! But they’re also more experienced at working more efficiently, and may be able to meet deliverables within realistic timeframes.

3. Their age means they won’t be with us long! This provided a chuckle in The Intern, when an interviewer asks Ben, “Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?” Ben smiles, and the young interviewer opts to skip the question. But in all seriousness, you’ll likely retain boomers longer than millennials, who typically job hop every two years.

Smart employees understand that just because you’ve worked for 50 years doesn’t mean you know everything, and just because you were recently promoted to ‘manager’ doesn’t either.

4. They’ll be taking time off for all those doctor appointments! Statistically, older workers don’t miss any more work than younger workers, many of whom have child-care issues that require them to take time off.

5. They don’t want to listen to a younger boss! Many employers claim that young managers are uncomfortable with having considerably older people reporting to them (as my own millennial son put it, “It’s embarrassing telling your mom what to do”) and older employees resent having a younger, less experienced person calling the shots. While these concerns have some merit, it has more to do with people skills than age. Smart employees understand that just because you’ve worked for 50 years doesn’t mean you know everything, and just because you were recently promoted to “manager” doesn’t either.

While there is an abundance of articles and statistics relaying the benefits of hiring older workers, the actual number of boomers getting hired doesn’t sync. Corporate America is losing out on a valuable asset. So, HR leaders, schedule a movie night at home and sit down with your talent strategy—you’ll likely find that there’s a greater need for soon-to-be retirees than you thought.
We email before breakfast and after dinner. We hold meetings from cars, bedrooms and street corners. And anything from a coffee shop to an airport lounge can be an office—as long as it’s got speedy Wi-Fi and a free outlet.

As the borders between work and life continue to erode, the Industrial Age concept of a traditional 9-to-5 workday suddenly seems almost quaint.

Constant connectivity has a dark side, of course (see: overwhelmed employees), but it also paves the way for something overwhelmingly positive: more customizable, human-focused schedules. Flextime policies, which reinforce a company’s commitment to work-life balance, are powerful recruitment and retention incentives—and not just for millennials. When implemented effectively, a study from the University of Minnesota found, they help employees of all ages feel more in control and supported by their managers.
But what, exactly, does a workday on flextime look like? As our latest infographic shows, flextime policies are particularly attractive for three types of workers: millennials, the working parents of Generation X and semi-retired boomers and traditionalists. What’s more, for each demographic, a personalized schedule might play out in very different ways.

WHICH FLEXTIMER ARE YOU?

Thanks to flextime policies and telecommuting, three major demographics in the workforce are managing work-life balance in very different ways. Here’s how a single day might play out for all three...

1. **The Millennial**
   - **Exercise:** 8:30 AM to 9:30 AM
   - **Work:** 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM
   - **Networking Event:** 5:30 PM to 7:00 PM
   - **Dinner with Friends:** 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM
   - **Work:** 9:30 PM to 10:30 PM

2. **The Working Parent of Generation X**
   - **Exercise:** 6:00 AM
   - **Work:** 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM
   - **Dinner with Family:** 5:30 PM
   - **Work:** 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM

3. **The Semi-Retired Boomer**
   - **Exercise:** 7:00 AM
   - **Work:** 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
   - **Dinner with Friends:** 5:30 PM
   - **Work:** 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM
the working parent ——— THE JUGGLING ACT

FAMILY BREAKFAST  SCHOOL DROP-OFF
6:00AM TO 7:00AM
7:00AM TO 8:00AM

WORK
9:00AM TO 3:00PM

PEDIATRICIAN
3:00PM TO 4:30PM

WORK
4:30PM TO 5:30PM

FAMILY DINNER & BEDTIME
5:30PM TO 8:00PM

WORK
8:30PM TO 9:30PM

6AM 7AM 8AM 9AM 10AM 11AM 12PM 1PM 2PM 3PM 4PM 5PM 6PM 7PM 8PM 9PM 10PM

the semi-retiree ——— THE GRADUAL DOWNSHIFT

BREAKFAST & COMMUTE
6:30AM TO 7:30AM

WORK
8:30AM TO 1:00PM

MENTORSHIP
1:00PM TO 3:00PM

ELDERLY PARENT CARE
4:00PM TO 6:00PM

FAMILY DINNER
7:00PM TO 8:00PM

WORK
8:00PM TO 9:00PM

6AM 7AM 8AM 9AM 10AM 11AM 12PM 1PM 2PM 3PM 4PM 5PM 6PM 7PM 8PM 9PM 10PM

SOURCES:
"The Murky Boundaries of the Modern Workday," The Atlantic
"The Post-Bedtime Ritual of Successful Working Parents," Fast Company
"The Beginning of the end of the 9-to-5 Workday," Time.com
Millennials

For millennials (and, soon, Generation Z), flexible schedules are less a perk, more a requirement—reflecting a general disillusionment with the concept of the 9-to-5 grind. A PricewaterhouseCoopers report recently found that millennials, as a whole, are "unwilling to commit to making their work lives an exclusive priority." They expect to be evaluated on performance, not hours logged. They value the opportunity to start their work later in the day, or work later in the night, as they see fit.

Working Parents

Without flextime, the average working mom with a full-time job and young children works 33.8 hours a week, according the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ American Time Use Survey. For many working parents—some millennials, but mostly Generation X—a flexible schedule is the only way to "have it all." Given the freedom to organize their own workdays, parents can tag-team child-rearing responsibilities and log full-time hours while still managing to be home in time for dinner or present at a soccer game. The key, many find, is leaving work earlier than co-workers and finishing up the workday after children's bedtimes.

Semi-Retirees

The concept of an all-or-nothing retirement is becoming as irrelevant as the 9-to-5. Nearly two-thirds of workers ages 16 to 64 say they prefer a gradual transition to retirement, according to a survey by the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies. Flextime arrangements allow baby boomers and traditionalists to make a more gradual downshift: reducing hours over time and taking a more project-based approach to work and accommodating caregiving needs for ailing parents.
For employers trying to understand the modern workforce, there’s no shortage of musings on (or critiques of) millennials. They want to make an impact on the world, but they’re also self-obsessed. They want opportunities to learn and grow at a company, yet they’re quick to job hop every few years. They seek mentorship and community at work, but crave autonomy at the same time.

Any effort to clarify and distill the millennial mindset only leads organizations further down the rabbit hole. A simple Google query for “What do millennials want at work?” alone churns up nearly 14 million results. For employers, appeasing all of these millennial expectations on top of the rest of their workforce’s needs is a strain at best, and impossible at worst—especially when you have five different generations working side by side.

What millennials want out of work is actually not so different from what people have always wanted out of life.
It’s enough to make employers throw their hands up. But here’s the catch: While every generation has its distinctions, what millennials want out of work is actually not so different from what people have always wanted out of life.

The Search for Purpose is Nothing New

The field of psychology is ripe with theories on human behavior that echo the millennial musings we so often hear today. A look back reveals that certain behaviors often attributed to millennials, such as a search for purpose in work, are no strangers to the generations that came before. Consider Viktor Frankl’s 1946 psychological memoir, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, which proposed that finding meaning in life helped Auschwitz prisoners survive. In his book, he identified three possible sources for meaning—one of them being purposeful work.

Other “millennial-isms” can be found in more recent psychology work. In 2000, psychology professors Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan published a breakthrough study on motivation called “self-determination theory.” SDT suggests that people (not just millennials) are driven by a need to grow and gain fulfillment, typically through three channels: autonomy, connectedness and learning.

The Breadth of Opportunity Makes “Purpose” Possible

Perhaps it’s not that millennials are inherently different from earlier generations, but that our culture has enabled a mental shift around work. If you take a step back and evaluate our current world of work, we are surrounded by professional options and opportunities.

Technology has enabled us to work whenever and wherever we want, which means work-life balance is thinning. On top of the integration of work with our personal lives, we are presented with a grand variety of types of work. And if you can’t find work you want to do, the cost of innovation to create your own workplace is lower than it’s ever been—a company can be built in a college dorm room; an idea can be funded by strangers through crowdfunding; a team can be assembled across borders and time zones.

It’s no surprise, then, that millennials want to find work that is purposeful—when there are so many options, why would you settle? It makes sense that they want to learn and experience several different careers—who knows what new jobs will exist in a decade? And it’s strangely logical to desire both autonomy and community at work—even if you end up as your own boss, your network is your lifeline.
Focus on People, Not Millennials

When I examine my own expectations about the workplace and my career, I admittedly share many of the desires typically assigned to my younger counterparts. I was born on the cusp between Generation X and the baby boomers, but as an active participant in this new world of work—and particularly in the technology sector—my expectations align with the opportunities I see around me. I certainly want to create impact where I work. And as director of talent management, I am equally fascinated by finding growth opportunities for myself and creating growth opportunities for those around me.

When I look at other Gen Xers and boomers, their behavior in our current world of work is, surprisingly, similar. It’s not just millennials striking out on their own or following a passion. In fact, the Kauffman Foundation found that baby boomers are twice as likely to launch a new business this year as millennials. And across generations, employees are ditching the idea of a complete retirement. According to recent studies, nearly two-thirds of workers ages 16 to 64 prefer a gradual transition to retirement.

As the world of work continues to transform, the expectations, dreams and behavior of workers of all ages will transform. Yes, millennials are front and center, but if you take a step back, you’ll likely realize that the factors attracting young top talent to a company are the same factors attracting all top talent to a company.

If organizations want to succeed in recruiting, retaining and growing their talent, it is not millennial behavior they need to grasp, but fundamental human behavior. In our attempt to understand young workers, we are missing the bigger picture: to understand people.