



Not long ago, managers could look at a group of staff and more or less see similar people who were basically the same age. But things have changed.

Managing Diverse Generations in the Same Workplace

For the first time in history, four generations of workers are working side by side. Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y are now mixing together in the workforce to create a new cocktail of company culture.

This can be a challenge for both coworkers and managers. Each generation has its own style of working and belief systems. Generations also have different rules about work as well as expectations of their employers and each other. These unique attributes can create a jumbled company culture and present some difficulties for managers, but there are several strategies to keep the workplace cohesive.

Consider the motivators of each generation.

Each generation brings a different set of life experiences, and these experiences affect the way each generation is motivated. Studies have shown that older generations are more interested in security, whereas younger generations are more attracted to teamwork, frequent feedback and work-life balance.

Make your work environment more supportive.

Your top concern as a manager should be to provide each employee with the tools and direction they need to perform their work to the best of their ability. Consider implementing initiative programs such as alternative work schedules, family-friendly leave programs, telecommuting, dependent care support programs and employee assistance programs. These diverse benefits could be big incentives for employees to stay motivated, and they will differentiate your company from competitors.

Expand your horizons.

Consider enrolling in a diversity training course. The more you learn and know about your different employees and their belief systems, the more you will be able to work together positively and with minimized conflict. Information is your most powerful resource.

Expand your staff's horizons as well.

Establish a work environment that supports continual learning and career development. Provide training and education such as formal and informal mentoring programs, using interactive training technology, and encouraging employees to take internal and external training courses. This will keep employees involved and with their careers and one another.

Schedule non-work activities to help people get to know one another.

An after-work social activity could help your team to get to know one another outside the workplace, which could help them function better within the workplace. A company picnic at a local park, day-long teambuilding retreat or even meeting for dinner or drinks after work could help your staff mesh.



Try to avoid special allowances.

Avoid focusing on a particular generation, and try to treat everyone by the same rules. Making special allowances for one generation or another will only widen the gap between them—and create new gaps among your staff.

Encourage interaction.

Mentoring programs can be a great way to help your staff integrate and learn from one another. Older generations have a great deal of career experience and wisdom to offer to younger generations, and younger generations could even reverse mentor through technology training or other new skills training.

Recognize and reward.

Develop a standard system that recognizes and rewards excellent work. It is important that workers from each generation be included so no one feels excluded based on age. The more that diverse employees are recognized for great work, the more they will feel that their work is more important to management and the company than their age.

Remember to keep an open mind about different issues and always have a positive attitude. Your management style and techniques will set the tone for your workplace, and if you have a flexible and understanding outlook, your staff is likely to follow. If you make an effort to integrate, communicate, and educate, your workplace should function well no matter what generation groups your staff is made of.