



Ideas for Enhancing Engagement and Teamwork Among All Four Generations

For Millennials:

- Trust new hires with challenge and responsibility, including special assignments.
- Create an internship program that focuses on giving them meaningful work.
- Let interns come up with their own training topics and invite senior staff to attend and take part in discussions.
- Appoint on-boarding sponsors to make contact with new hires prior to their first day on the job.
- During on-boarding process make expectations perfectly clear with regard to work effort needed to serve the client, and emphasize that sacrifices of personal time, evening/weekend work may be required. In return, make every effort to reward and recognize those who do make the sacrifices.
- Consider involving parents in on-boarding of new hires or invite them to a company open house.
- Give frequent feedback during their first 30 days.
- Require younger staff to give frequent presentations to get them out of their dependence on electronic communication and so they gain practice and more comfort with spoken communication.
- Ask senior staff to initiate more face-to-face communication with them.
- Train all managers in performance coaching, feedback, and recognition best practices.
- Appoint buddies or mentors during the critical first 90 days.
- Create group mentoring, where one senior leader meets periodically with multiple Millennial proteges.
- Allow some time to talk and socialize with coworkers, understanding that it makes them more engaged, not less.
- Allow them to request a performance review at any time during their first 90 days on the job.
- Use strength and personality assessment instruments to increase self-awareness.
- Provide ample opportunities for learning in a variety of media--on-line, via pod-casts/thumb-drives, over lunch-and-learns, in classes, and from varied work experiences.
- Involve them in more direct contact with internal and external customers so they better understand why their jobs are important.
- Set up office spaces to facilitate social interaction and exchange of ideas.
- Consider assigning work stations in closer proximity to more senior employees.
- Consider awarding quarterly bonuses instead of, or in addition to, annual bonuses.
- Change long-term compensation incentive plans so that pay-offs take effect after shorter time periods.
- Provide longer vacations after shorter lengths of service.

For Gen-Xers:

- Create opportunities to move cross-functionally and provide rotational and other special assignments, especially when the path to promotion is blocked.
- Assign them new challenges at least once every three years.
- Expand their job scope and responsibility.
- Provide tuition reimbursement.
- Conduct assessment and training seminars for emerging leaders among them.
- Involve them in succession management discussions.
- Allow flexible hours whenever possible as long as the work gets done.
- Consider offering paid time off as an alternative to pay-based incentives.
- Reward those who make personal and family sacrifices to achieve organizational goals.
- Meet frequently to discuss their career development and learning needs.
- Assist them in creating individual career development plans.
- Challenge them to create a new job for themselves by identifying unmet needs or problems that their skills and strengths can help solve.

For Boomers:

- Train them in more a "hands-on" coaching style of management, including a focus on setting shorter-term goals for younger staff and rewarding small successes along the way to sustain their interest and engagement.
- Have them mentor technically competent Gen-Xers who need to develop better interpersonal skills and political subtleties.
- Assign every Boomer manager to take on a Gen-Xer or Millennial to mentor and help them develop a career plan.
- Identify Boomer "early adopters" of newer technologies (who can usually relate better to their Boomer peers) and teach them more effectively than younger staff may be able to do
- Re-energize them by challenging them to learn new subjects, take on new projects that tap hidden strengths they have not previously used.
- Re-engage Boomers on the cusp of retirement by challenging them to pass on their knowledge and leave a legacy through mentorship.

For Traditionalists:

- Re-hire and retain them as part-time consultants, subject matter experts, mentors, and coaches as an alternative to full retirement.
- Tap their experience by assigning them to mentoring roles.
- Encourage other employees to communicate face to face and in a more personal way.
- Provide opportunities for them to learn new technologies from younger "reverse mentors" or from the more technologically literate Traditionalist peers.
- Re-engage those approaching retirement by challenging them to pass on their knowledge and leave a legacy through mentorship.

To promote overall Inter-Generational Understanding and Teamwork:

- Conduct multi-generational training where generational groups discuss how they would respond to specific conflict or miscommunication scenarios.
- Pair up staff from older and younger generations for monthly one-on-one meetings over coffee where they discuss questions such as "In what ways are you different than the stereotype of your generation?"
- Train all employees in the fundamentals of customer service, quality, communication, teamwork, and leadership so that all generations speak a common language.
- Using blogs and wiki's to create social repositories of information, collective knowledge, and ways to help employees collaborate and share what they know about customers and competitors.
- Teach principles of change management and how to overcome resistance to change to help all employees understand why logic does not always convince the minds of those who resist change. Teach listening skills as key aspect of change management.
- Staff teams with members of different generations whenever possible, to capitalize on complementary strengths.
- Emphasize the importance of teams working with teams, and promoting virtual communication regionally, nationally, and internationally. Train employees in the cultural differences that often negate generational considerations. Stress the importance of collaboration and teamwork to all staff regardless of their generation.
- Ask younger employees to provide "reverse mentoring" to older staff and encourage older staff to seek such mentoring.
- Promote job-sharing between members of different generations.
- Document the ROI of all the above initiatives where possible-using metrics such as customer satisfaction, internal responsiveness, errors/defects, safety, timeliness, employee engagement, etc.



**To contact Leigh Branham
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"Engaging & Retaining All Four Generations"...**

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