

GENERATION Y'S GUIDE TO WORKING WITH OLDER GENERATIONS

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The vast majority of student job seekers are members of "Generation Y," also known as "Millennials." If you are part of this group, you should be aware of some positive and negative stereotypes about your generation.

Stereotypes associated with Generation Y include the preference to work smarter, not harder and the desire for immediate feedback and rewards. Millennials are also seen as confident, curious, entrepreneurial, goal-oriented, tech-savvy, multi-taskers who can have a false sense of entitlement.

Even though some younger Millennials' attitudes have adjusted with the recession, many managers still perceive the same characteristics for the entire generation.

Anne Cleary, Human Resources Director at Wilbur-Ellis and a member of the "Baby Boomer" generation suggests, "New graduates would do well to have patience in regards to moving up within an organization."

Recent graduates aren't entitled to a management role just because they hold a degree, although some skills can help you become more involved in the organization from



open to learning new skills and accepting criticism. "Sometimes Generation Y has a difficult time accepting feedback that isn't 100% positive; understanding that criticism is meant to be constructive is crucial," adds Cleary.

Smither has been very impressed with the Generation Y members they've hired, "They seem to be independent, but know how to work in groups, know what they want and have a plan to get there."

Danielle Heeren, Land O'Lakes College Talent Specialist, recent college graduate and member of Generation Y suggests that you adjust your communication style based on the generation with whom you're communicating. "When I'm e-mailing older generations, I use more formalized, complete and thorough sentences. When I'm communicating with the younger generation or students via e-mail or text messaging, the messages are shorter, to-the-point and might even use emoticons. It is not necessarily how I communicate, but I adapt to how the recipient communicates," shares Heeren.

Matt Dertinger, Marketing Communications Specialist for Bayer CropScience and member of Generation Y says the workplace has a different rule book than university life. "You can't leave your work till the last minute, stay up all night to finish a project or share notes with a classmate," shares Dertinger.

You will typically be working on set days with specific hours and need to accomplish your goals within those timelines. "In school, you go to someone for the answer, such as a professor, and they will

"Generation Y needs to understand that the agricultural industry is enhanced by technology, but technology can never take the place of human interaction and relationships."

— Anne Cleary, Wilbur-Ellis Human Resources Director

the start. **Mark Smither**, VP, Strategic Director for Paulsen Marketing and Baby Boomer shares, "Generation Y's experience with technology can put them in a position to be involved in decision making right away."

Attitude is extremely important for success in the work world. Be

MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

It might be second nature for you to text message, tweet and share news with your Facebook friends.

However, different generations (many of which will be interviewing you or be your boss) may not prefer these communication methods.

give it to you. In the workplace, you may go to your boss, but they most likely may point you in the right direction rather than giving you the answer," adds Dertinger.

Heeren indicates another area of adjustment is that you aren't typically receiving as much immediate feedback in the workplace because you aren't getting graded on every project like college.

This doesn't mean that you aren't being evaluated, just that you don't automatically receive a standardized score for everything you accomplish. Stereotypically Generation Y prefers immediate feedback, so ask your boss, "How am I doing?"

Understand that there are varying motivations for everyone in an organization regardless of their generation, but taking generational differences into account can help guide your workplace interactions.

WORKING WITH THE OLDER GENERATIONS

Traditionalists: 65-plus years young
Traditionalists are the oldest members of the workforce. Their extended work careers gives them applied knowledge and often times authority. If you are working with someone over age 65, recognize their experience and the value they bring to the organization.

Traditionalists believe you need to work hard in order to achieve and prefer a more formal working environment and communication style, such as written memos.

The Boomers: 47-65 years of age
Baby Boomers are oftentimes seen as "workaholics" and it is not all that uncommon for them to put in a 50 or 60 hour work week.

If you are willing to do so, emphasize your readiness to work longer hours or overtime in an interview with a Baby Boomer. When working with Boomers communicate in person and give them your full attention.

Boomers are comfortable with phone calls and emails, but the value of hand-written notes aren't lost on this generation. "I can't speak enough to the impact of a handwritten card; those are the

TRADITIONALISTS

1922-1945

BABY BOOMERS

1946-1964

GENERATION X

1965-1980

GENERATION Y OR MILLENNIALS

1981-2000

people that I remember," shares Smither.

He adds, "I was most impressed with a young person who took the time to write a thank you note, but also included a business card with a QR code and URL to show their experience with technology."



Xers: 31-46 years of age

"Generation X" tends to have the same value of work-life balance as Generation Y. Xers don't place as much value on long work hours and prefer to find ways to accomplish things within a 40 hour work week.

As author of this article and member of Generation X, I find that I have many demands on my time balancing work and young children at home, so finding efficient ways to do things is essential.

Look for ways to highlight how you've determined methods to save time or found a better way to accomplish a task when you are interviewing with an Xer.

You will find that your relationship with a Xer boss is more informal than it would be with a Baby Boomer or Traditionalist.

Generation X likes clear goals and objectives, but will often give people the freedom to determine the most effective ways to achieve them.

Generation X tends to prefer using e-mail and phone calls for communication. Remember to still use good grammar, include punctuation and don't abbreviate in professional e-mail communication with older generations.

IT ISN'T CUT AND DRY

It is vital to note that not everyone fits all the characteristics of their generation, especially "cuspers" who are right on the edge between the generations.

Heeren and Smither both shared that it's not so much when you were born, but how you were raised that affects your work style. You don't need to try to fit into the box for your generation, but realize there are generational factors that are widely observed.

From the Generation Y employee perspective, Dertinger suggests, "Recognize generational differences, but don't focus on them. It is more important that you understand what is expected and how to get it done."

When preparing for an interview, do your research just like you would for class. "You spend an entire semester studying for a class, just to get a grade at the end. You need to spend time really preparing for an interview in which 30 minutes can possibly help land your dream job and can determine your future career," adds Heeren.

Being prepared can help you overcome any negative stereotypes of Generation Y.

"The generations have so much to teach each other, such as younger generations sharing their technology skills and older generations teaching the value of building relationships," Cleary explains.

Start with a positive attitude, try to understand the needs of the organization, share your creative ideas and be willing to learn new things. "Multiple generations working together makes for a better work environment and better end product to customers," adds Smither.

Understanding the characteristics of generations can help ease your transition from student to employee. Working with different generations is sure to broaden your knowledge and be a positive influence as you start your career.