



AGE: JUST A NUMBER?

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21, 43, 65, whatever the age, it shouldn't matter, nor be a barrier in the workplace. However, it's necessary we recognize that everyone carries unconscious bias regarding different age groups. Your generation may influence your work style and habits. Ageism, or prejudice based on age, is typically associated with the elderly, but if you are a student or new professional you may already know that it can impact younger generations too.

AgCareers.com surveyed unemployed candidates in the agricultural industry about hindrances to finding a job. Beyond the pre-listed

barriers, the most frequently cited other hindrance was age. Age discrimination may be overt, but oftentimes we are affected by casual biases or conversation based on stages of life.

As a student or young professional entering the workforce, it is particularly important for you to recognize stereotypes associated with your generation, your own personal biases about older generations, how to approach more "seasoned" workers, and how to navigate your interactions with all age groups, from students to those nearing retirement.

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Age is often directly associated with experience, so you may first be confronted with this reality when you look at job descriptions that request multiple years of experience. We often hear students complain, "All of the jobs require years of experience; how do I get experience when I can't get a job?"

The good news is many organizations are flexible with their required experience qualifications. In fact, more than 70% of jobs posted on AgCareers.com do not specify a number in the "Minimum Years of Experience Required" category field; less than 3% of

MINIMUM YEARS OF EXPERIENCE REQUIRED



Based on Jobs Posted on AgCareers.com in 2016

GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE TODAY



Baby Boomers
Generally Accepted Birth Range:
1946-1964



Gen X
Generally Accepted Birth Range:
1965-1980



Millennials
Generally Accepted Birth Range:
1981-2000



Gen Z
Generally Accepted Birth Range:
2001 -

*Precise dates vary by source

jobs specify 5-plus years' experience.

When employers do list experience qualifications, don't feel that this request is based on judgment of your generation — this dilemma has been impacting young professionals for generations. Experience definitely adds value and enriches your knowledge base for an employer's benefit, so that is why internships, summer work experiences, work study, and related jobs are vital to building up your resume. Many companies also offer training programs for new grads to gain more experience and learn all aspects of the organization.

HOW OLDER GENERATIONS VIEW YOUNGER GENERATIONS

For nearly twenty years, employers have been hiring new graduates from Gen Y, also known as "Millennials." Stereotypes commonly associated with millennials are that they are confident, tech-savvy, multi-tasking, goal-oriented, seekers of constant feedback, expect participation trophies for everything, and are parented by helicopter mothers and fathers. Millennials in the workplace have become a subject of comedy routines, YouTube video series, and TV shows. Chances are you've seen some of this or have been schooled on this topic from professors or advisors. Have you thought, "NO that's not me?!" Negative or positive, these stereotypes will be hard to shake for a few years, even as the next generation starts in the work world.

That new generation is just beginning to enter the workforce now. Generation Z might include you! There is no precise age range for Gen Z since researchers disagree on the exact birth years. Depending on the source, Generation Z begins with birth dates

anywhere from 1995 to the mid-2000s. As the first completely digitized generation, Z'ers are predicted to also be proficient in technology, but also more financially conservative, diverse, independent thinkers and doers. If you are a Gen Z, understand that employers have been programmed to work with Generation Y, and are just learning the new traits of your generation and how this working relationship might differ.

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Expect some typical comments like, "Oh you're too young to remember when it used to work this way," or "You probably aren't old enough to know this." Although this may be annoying if heard repeatedly, take it as an opportunity to share your knowledge and demonstrate through your work projects. The older generations may be surprised to find out you know more than they expect!

Older generations often assume (and rightfully so) that Gen Y & Z are technologically proficient. They may ask younger generations for suggestions on social media or a computer program, so be ready to share if you are tech-savvy.

However, don't make the mistake of assuming older generations are totally out-of-touch with computers, as they too have been using them daily for most of their work years. They may even know some tricks and tips for effective technology use in the workplace that you haven't utilized before.

STICKY SITUATIONS

Coworkers are talking about a movie that came out in 1980 or their graduation from high school in 1992. Refrain from commenting, "Oh, I wasn't even born then!" A simple "I've never seen that flick," or remaining silent might be better received.

Abstain from mentioning your age or commenting on anyone else's age. If you discover a coworker is turning 50 at your workplace, don't make the mistake of commenting, "You're the same age as my mom!"

Seasoned workers may also have the feeling that younger generations are pushing them out of their positions, trying to take over, or forcing retirement. Think of it from their perspective as well; AgCareers.com has heard many times from older job seekers that it can be extremely difficult to find a new job at 50+ years old and make that transition after they're displaced.

In many cases, these older workers have invested twenty or more years into an organization. Older generations can serve as valuable mentors to those starting their first job out of college. No matter the age, it is certainly true that you "learn something new every day." You may also discover you have more in common than you anticipate, leading to the cultivation of a positive working relationship and possibly a true friendship!