



CORPORATE **LEARNING** INSTITUTE Your Performance Partner

# The Future Ain't What it Used to Be; Understanding the New Multi Generation Workforce

## **White Paper**

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## ABOUT CORPORATE LEARNING INSTITUTE

**The Corporate Learning Institute's** programs teach, inspire, renew, and challenge your people to become powerful performers. Our expert consultation and facilitation ensures that participants learn the skills that are critical to their success back at work. Our bottom line is to help achieve both personal and organizational success.

**The Corporate Learning Institute** offers a continuum of services from short-term training events to full-scale change projects. For maximum return on investment, our services are custom designed for each client we work with. Our services encompass the following five areas:

**Consulting Services:** Our approach is rooted in process consultation, organizational behavior, organizational development and expert facilitation. We provide strategic planning, vision, mission and values development, change management, culture work and executive planning retreats.

**Training and Development Workshops:** These dynamic skill building sessions include leadership, management and supervisory training, performance accountability, change management, customer service, diversity, personality styles, conflict management, train the trainer and communication.

**Performance Coaching:** Our expert coaches provide assistance with team coaching and development, individual performance coaching and executive coaching.

**Adventure Programming:** We provide provocative Team Challenge and High Ropes Courses tangibly designed to target performance improvement.

**Corporate Team Building Events:** Our lively, well-orchestrated, and power packed events create awareness of your organizations goals.

## WHITE PAPER

**For perhaps the first time in history, four generations are working side-by-side.**

That means everyone must make an extra effort to understand other generations and the emerging workplace landscape, so we can avert real or perceived discrimination, and everyone can do their best work.

Everyone is already under pressure in this economy, which Peter Cappelli, author of *Employment Relationships: New Models of White-Collar Work*, claims has forever altered the lives of workers in every age bracket.

The simultaneous collapse of the manufacturing age and rise of the information age has created transparency and sped up knowledge sharing almost beyond comprehension. This paper will help you understand the needs of every generation in your workplace, so you can actually benefit from these changes.

### UNDERSTANDING THE GENERATIONS

The four generations in the workplace can be identified in general as:

- **Traditionalists**, the “silent generation,” were born between 1925-1945. Many are retired, but the recession has forced some back into the workforce. Others, however, have voluntarily returned to work, and are willing to share their expertise. These workers possess important knowledge and skills. But this generation is often mistakenly dismissed as a vital potential source of knowledge. This generation typically prefers direct interaction, and may have some trouble adapting to new technology. But these workers have decades of invaluable knowledge and processes that could help you and your younger workers.
- An estimated 80 million **baby boomers**, born between 1946-1964, represent the majority of our existing workforce. This generation works long hours, sacrifices family or personal needs for the job, and dreams of change that betters the world – consider the activism of the 1960s and 1970s. Boomers place less importance on technology, prefer face-to-face contact, and believe in and expect company loyalty.
- **Generation X** is a nearly hidden generation, existing as it does in the shadow of baby boomers. Nearly 50 million Gen-X workers were born between 1965-1982. They work best with a combination of direct and technical feedback and

interaction. They prefer a balance between their work and family lives, and are best motivated by new challenges. They want their information in shorter meetings or online.

- **The 72 million Generation Y** workers born 1982-2000 are also called Millennials. This generation was raised with technology, so these workers prefer less-direct communication – more text, e-mail, or cell phone calls. This generation is goal-directed, needs a balance between work and family, requires feedback to optimize performance, and older mentors to develop skills and abilities.

### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU, AS AN EMPLOYER

As your baby boomers retire or reduce work hours, you must ramp up your Generation X and Y leadership development. The leadership styles of Generation X and Y will differ from past leadership styles. But Generation X and Y leaders are hesitant to supervise subordinate staff who are their parents' age or older, and who might possess more abilities and skills than they do.

Emerging leaders will have to help subordinates and co-workers feel useful, engaged, and connected, without feeling directed, blamed, or belittled. Seth Godin, author of *Linchpin*, believes new workers must be called to action before they can or will perform at their highest levels. He says newer workers must feel connected with leaders to whom they *want* to be connected. He describes a new workplace, in which employees consider their work “art.” These employees want to experience work in a meaningful way, according to Godin.

If Godin is correct, every workplace must create opportunities for each generation to do its best

### MANAGING TALENT FOR THE FUTURE

Cappelli considers talent management the process through which employers anticipate and meet human-capital requirements, in order to reap the greatest possible benefit from them.

“Getting the right people with the right skills into the right jobs is the basic people management challenge in any organization,” Cappelli says.

So what are the solutions for optimal work our soft economy, with employers lurching forward and back under the weight of the recession and “recovery?” How can you optimize multiple age groups in this environment?

Try these:

### **Managing Multiple Generations: A Blueprint for Optimal Practice**

1. Eliminate generational and talent-utilization assumptions. The assumption that older workers cost more to hire and retain is false, according to Cappelli. He maintains that older workers often are or become an organization's most valuable employees.
2. Many older workers returning to the workforce, according to Cappelli, want to avoid high-pressure jobs, but end up perceiving ageism in younger supervisors. Cappelli said younger supervisors don't necessarily disrespect the older workers – they often actually fear that effectively managing older workers could be perceived as disrespect, so they avoid them entirely. In his book, *Managing the Older Worker: How to Prepare for the New Organization Order*, Bill Novelli calls this inversion of authority the greatest problem we face today in talent management.

So, we need a new model to help the generations co-exist and create “art” together.

A good model of younger leaders optimizing management skills with help from more experienced workers exists in the Marines, where junior officers team with older subordinates. Cappelli believes young leaders should acknowledge the depth of experience and skills of the older worker, and ask key questions to improve the outcome of any project, such as:

- What problems are we likely to face?
  - How do you recommend we proceed?
  - How would you do it?
- The older worker becomes the teacher, feels appreciated, and all workers and the company score across-the board wins.
3. Hire for talent, not age. Employers should consider hiring across all age groups for talent, ability, or attitude. British author and London Business School co-founder

Charles Handy describes a “donut organization.” A donut organization hires as-needed capabilities and expertise, with many workers empowered to sustain the organization. Consider hiring experts as needed to become a donut organization.

4. Nurture knowledge transfer and sustainability. As traditionalists and baby boomers retire, employers must plan ahead to access and transfer knowledge and skills to the incoming workforce. Generation X and Y workers can become effective leaders with baby-boomer mentoring. Mentoring, shared leadership, and understanding generational differences will help you develop the best possible talent pipeline.
5. Develop leadership now, to ensure a sustainable pipeline. There are differences among generations, but the attributes of an effective leader really don't change. Here is the top ten list of desired traits for effective leaders:

#### **Top 10 Desired Leadership Traits**

1. Credibility, 69%
2. Trustworthiness, 59%
3. Good listener, 55%
4. Farsightedness, 52%
5. Encouraging, 50%
6. Dependability, 48%
7. Focus, 44%
8. Good coach, 40%
9. Dedication, 38%
10. Experience, 38%

But even great leaders can optimize their role with each generation:

#### **Leading Baby Boomers**

- Show these workers how important they are to your organization.
- Deliver critical feedback *behind closed doors*.

#### **Leading Generation X**

- Upgrade your hardware and software regularly.
- Demonstrate appreciation for their ability to adapt and work creatively.



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### **Leading Generation Y**

- Show these workers that they are critical to your ability to succeed.
- Appreciate optimism and good ideas.
- Direct and structure members of this group during development.

*List source: Martson, C (2007) Motivating the "What's in it for me?" Workforce. Managing across the generational divide and increasing profits.*

### **BOTTOM LINE:**

We're all adapting to new workforce and workplace trends and realities.

Recruit and develop talent from all age groups, to optimize your workforce talent pipelines.

More information is available in our enclosed reading list, and from **Dr. Susan Cain**, at the **Corporate Learning Institute**.

## REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL READING

### References

Cappelli, Peter, and William D. Novelli. *Managing the Older Worker: How to Prepare for the New Organizational Order*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review, 2010. Print.

Godin, Seth. *Linchpin: Are You Indispensable?* New York: Portfolio, 2010. Print.

Martson, C (2007) Motivating the “What’s in it for me?” Workforce. *Managing Across the generational divide and increasing profits*.

### Reading list

[Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace](#) by Ron Zemke

Never before has there been such diversity in the workforce. This is particularly true of the range of ages that co-exist on the job. In *Generations At Work*, the authors identify the four generations, the particular problems you may encounter managing them, and potential solutions. As the employee pool matures, this is knowledge every manager of a cross-generational workforce will need.

[Fuse: Making Sense of the New Cogenerational Workplace\(TM\)](#) by Jim Finkelstein

Jim Finkelstein helps you find the fusions--the places of fertile cooperation--that lead to an exhilarating, respectful, and fun work experience. Backed by extensive research and written by a cogenerational team, *Fuse* offers realworld solutions to common concerns and friction points: How can an older company draw in the hottest new talent? How can a recent grad thrive in an environment she perceives as steeped in cronyism?

As he answers these questions and more, Finkelstein colors his message with plenty of tips, anecdotes, and quotes, delivering a compelling vision of how workers can capture the energy wasted by generational divisiveness to cogenerate more productivity and satisfaction in the workplace than ever before.

[Retiring the Generation Gap: How Employees Young and Old Can Find Common Ground \(J-B CCL \(Center for Creative Leadership\)\)](#) by Jennifer J. Deal

*Retiring the Generation Gap* is an empirically based research study. Jennifer Deal (Center for Creative Leadership) analyzed the workplace perspectives of over 3,200 employees of varying ages. Research-based books are not always enjoyable to read but Jennifer Deal does a good job of making the quantitative analysis bearable and meaningful with practical advice for how employees of all ages can find common

ground. Each chapter contains a description of the issue, a description of the research conducted, the principal conclusion of the research expressed as a principle, and the author's take on how to apply the principle to make cross-generational work life easier. [Generations, Inc.: From Boomers to Linksters--Managing the Friction Between Generations at Work](#) by Meagan Johnson

Members of each generation share special signposts: collective experiences that influence our expectations, actions, and mind-sets. They also mold our ideas about company loyalty, work ethic, and the definition of a job well done. And now that five different generations are working together simultaneously from Traditionals to Generation Y and beyond it's even more important to understand where every one's coming from. Written by two generational experts who happen to be father and daughter, "Generations, Inc." offers the perspectives of people of different eras, eliciting practical insights on wrestling with generational issues in the workplace. The book provides Baby Boomers and Linksters alike with practical techniques. "Generations, Inc." provides realistic strategies for all those managers, executives, and employees seeking to coexist, flourish, and thrive together at the same time.