

The Talent Advantage: How to Avoid Generation Clashes in the Workplace

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Adapted from the book: The Talent Advantage by Dr. Alan Weiss and Dr. Nancy MacKay, published by Wiley.

There are three main generations in the workplace with different attitudes and behaviours:

- Boomers – (1946-1964; 45+ years old)
- Generation X – (1965-1978: 32-44 years old)
- Generation Y – (1979-1994: 16-31 years old)

CEOs and executives need to recognize the shifting values and preferences of all generations in the workplace in order to: (1) avoid generation clashes and (2) attract, retain and develop top talent.

Generation Preferences:

HBR research results: (July 2009 HBR, How Gen Y & Boomers Will Reshape Your Agenda)

Boomers and Generation Y are the two biggest cohorts. They are each twice the size of Generation X.

1. Boomer trends: delaying retirement; want to volunteer; value flexibility; have elder care responsibilities; share common attitudes with Generation Y
2. Generation X: will be taking over from boomers; not in step with generation Y; careers are stuck; value parenting and life balance
3. Generation Y trends: ambitious; multicultural ease; environmentally conscious; value a network of friends at work; talk to their parents daily; share common attitudes with Boomers

The following ten strategies will help you avoid generation clashes and enhance your ability to attract, retain and develop top talent.

1. Minimize ego-talk and build awareness to avoid generation clashes.
2. Listen and learn from your top talent to understand attitudes, preferences and behaviours.
3. Let go of the past. Develop tailored approaches to meet the needs of your workforce.
4. Develop a strategy to attract, retain and develop the 10% of your workforce that adds the most strategic value (Strategy Maps by Kaplan and Norton).
5. Develop a strategy to attract, retain and develop top talent on your succession plan to accelerate strategy execution.
6. Assess your talent pool and people strategies relative to your competition.
7. Develop new approaches to retirement and career transitions.
8. Offer flexibility -hold people accountable for results versus putting in time.
9. Support opportunities to give back.
10. Build progressive work environments.

