



# SHARING THE WORKSPACE ACROSS GENERATIONS

**Historically, the workplace consisted of two groups: the old-timers and the know-it-alls, young hotshots ready to take on the world.**

**Here is an interesting breakdown of the generational and gender diversity:**

GENERATION	FEMALE	MALE
Baby Boomers	20%	80%
Generation X	30%	70%
Millennials	41%	59%

Notice how the gender breakdown changes from generation to generation. Women in the workplace, at least in the sample from our survey, are increasing to almost equitable numbers.

\*Less than 1% of the respondents were traditionalists, so their survey results were omitted in this analysis.

YEAR	AGE EXPECTANCY
1900	47.3 Years
1945	65.8 Years
1965	70.3 Years
1985	74.7 Years
2000	77 Years
2010	78.7 Years

Today people are more likely to live well into their 80s versus in 1900 when most individuals were fortunate if they made it into the 40s. Now the workplace mix is a lot more complicated. For the first time in history, there are four generations working side by side: the traditional generation (born pre-1945), Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980) and the Millennials (born after 1981).

Paranet has found it important to understand the mixture in the workplace and studied generational diversity for several years through roundtable discussions and online surveys. Recently, Paranet leaders met with a group of Boomers, Gen X and Millennials to discuss the results of our recent generational survey. What we found will help understand what works and what doesn't when generations mix.

## SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Over 200 people participated in the generational survey. The respondents were almost equally split between Boomers, Gen X and Millennials. Even though our survey concentrated on generational diversity, it is interesting to note that 30% of the participants were female and 70% were male.

Another interesting survey trend is in job responsibility level as it relates to age. There is a clear path, at least when it comes to age:

LEVEL	AGE RANGE	AVG. AGE	NOTE
C-Suite	43-64	53	64% are Boomers
VPs	37-74	53	70% are Boomers
Directors	29-68	50	57% are Gen X
Managers	24-66	44	38% each Boomers & Gen X 24% Millennial
Supervisors	23-63	42	Fairly evenly distributed among 30-40-50s
Team Leaders	21-54	28	82% Millennial
Other	21-27	24	100% Millennial

## SURVEY RESULTS

### How long will you stay in your current job?

One of the most distinctive differences between the generations is how they view the time they will spend in their current organization. Boomers and Gen X were by far more inclined to stay with their organization for more than five years. Millennials, on the other hand, were inclined to move on much more quickly.

Our round table participants explored this. Millennials felt they were more likely to change jobs quickly because they were new to the workforce and unsure where they really wanted to be in terms of their career. Gen X stated they were still building their resumes, but desired to stay with their current employer if certain conditions were met (more on this later). Boomers were fairly established in their career and, unforeseen circumstances not withholding, felt they would like to stay and retire in their current organizations.

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION X	BABY BOOMERS
Job Boards	LinkedIn	Network Contacts
University	Personal	Professional Organizations
LinkedIn	Network Recruiters	LinkedIn
Facebook		

### How would you go about a job search for yourself?

Here is an area where age and experience mattered. Because Millennials are not experienced in the workplace, their job searching skills were limited compared to other generations. Millennials relied on social media, university assistance and other job boards. Gen X show their experience in this area by citing recruiters and leveraging their personal network, something Millennials are unable to do. Boomers came across as the most experienced when searching for a job, using their substantial contact lists to network, including professional organizations like Paragnet, social media such as LinkedIn and personally known recruiters.

### What is the biggest fallacy of your generation?

There are many books and other sources which label the generations with certain negative descriptors. We wanted to know how each generation felt they were misunderstood in the workplace.

MILLENNIALS	GENERATION X	BABY BOOMERS
Lazy	Lazy	Old fashioned
Want it now	Job jumpers	Tech challenged
No loyalty	Non-caring	Not willing to change
Tech dependent	No loyalty	Greedy

## What are your real world issues with generational diversity?

A round table discussion regarding challenges is a great way to get some of those sticky issues on the table. Once they are communicated, they can be worked on. Our round table group collaborated on these issues:

REAL WORLD GENERATIONAL ISSUES IN THE WORKPLACE:		
MILLENNIALS	GENERATION X	BABY BOOMERS
Ideas aren't worthy	Elders speak to younger generations like children	We don't get the attitude
Education not respected	Poor communication	Abuse of electronics at work
Cannot relate personally	Technology gap	Don't want to pay their dues
No common ground	Millennials – over-dependence on technology	Absenteeism, tardiness, clock watchers
No trust	Don't want to work hard	Unreal expectation of advancement
Treat us like their children	Inappropriate cell phone usage	
No respect for their ideas		

The chart below listed the ideas from our survey on how to deal with these real world issues. In addition to these, the round table came up with a few of their own.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE GENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS:		
MILLENNIALS	GENERATION X	BABY BOOMERS
Company social events to get to know each other	Eliminate department silos	Work events that offer connection opportunities
Team building with mixed generations	Hold people accountable	Respect
Mentorships	Clear corporate vision and strategic goals	Limit tech devices in some areas
Lunch & Learns – open dialogue	Develop generational coaches and mentors	Open dialogue
Leadership willing to have open communication	Adapt to more mobile communication platforms	Listen
Generational diversity training	Be open minded	Slow down
Give more challenge to younger people and allow them to learn if they fail	Be respectful	Generational diversity training
Treat with respect	Try walking in another's shoes	Make this a priority
Ask WHY we think something instead of closing down	More opportunities to mingle casually	Mentoring/Coaching
Allow more flexibility	Listen	
	Management should build more bridges	
	Lunch & Learns – open dialogue	
	Improve trust	

Millennials would like more on-the-job training. Support from older generations would be welcome especially in the form of coaching or mentoring. Gen X would like more external networking and development opportunities, as well as getting involved in projects on a higher level. Boomers suggested mentorships and a Millennial took this a step further and said, “reverse mentorship”— a Millennial mentoring a Boomer on technology, for example.



The round table group had a lively debate around why these labels were associated with certain generations, and why that specific generation felt it was an unfair label.

Millennials believed most people viewed them as though they had a sense of entitlement and no work ethic. Their take was that they simply wanted to move ahead as soon as possible in their careers and would do whatever it takes to make it happen. Millennials also saw their ability to take advantage of their technology skills as a plus, while other generations thought Millennials were too dependent on their phones.

Gen X stated they were at the age where they needed to build their resumes to advance to their ultimate career position. This may come across as job hopping to Boomers who were at their career pinnacle.

Other generations perceive that Boomers were adverse to change. Boomers felt that their experience made them more business savvy and their decision-making ability was solid.

### What are the top three things that will attract you to a new company?

It's interesting to note that all generations list "pay" in the top category, but for different reasons. The younger generations need to purchase a lot of things ... cars, homes, child care, etc. The Boomer generation associates pay level with success. Boomers also emphasized benefits as very important. We suspect age and the changes in healthcare coverage are adding weight to this item for Boomers.

ATTRACT GENERATIONS TO YOUR ORGANIZATION:		
MILLENNIALS	GENERATION X	BABY BOOMERS
Pay & Benefits	Pay & Benefits	Pay & Benefits
Growth Potential	Advancement	High Integrity
Team-Based	Fast-Paced	Growth
Fast-Paced	Challenging Work	Diverse/Challenging Work
Fun/Casual Environment	Engagement	Work/Life Balance
Flexibility	Flexibility	
	Culture of Respect	

The younger generations also listed flexibility whereas the Boomer generation wanted work/life balance. Flexibility was defined as being able to work from home, time to pick up kids from school or go to an activity. Boomers said they wanted more vacation time and more weekends to be with family.



Millennials are looking for a casual and fun place to work. Gen X is looking for respect, engagement and more challenging work. Boomers need a culture of integrity, a company in growth mode and diverse/challenging work. We found that Boomers who have been highly successful will get bored once they reach a certain point in their career.

**What are the top three items you need to keep you in your current place of employment?**

Once you have attracted someone to your organization, will you have the environment to keep them?

<b>DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO KEEP YOUR EMPLOYEE?:</b>		
<b>MILLENNIALS</b>	<b>GENERATION X</b>	<b>BABY BOOMERS</b>
Frequent Feedback	Advancement	Respect/Trust
Open Door	Competitive Salary/Raises	Feel Important
Opinions Respected	Development	Included in Strategy Meetings
Fast-Paced	Culture of Trust	Competitive Salary/Benefits
Career Plan	Challenging Work	Work/Life Balance
Flexibility	Empowerment	Growth
Performance Rewards	Recognition	Positive Culture
Fun/Casual Workplace Development		

In broadbrush strokes, the generations have different, but clear needs to keep them. Millennials are natural collaborators. They are looking for an open door policy to communicate with their peers, bosses and above. They believe older generations do not listen or respect them for the education they bring to the table. Flexibility and a casual work environment are high on their list. They are also looking for a career plan, development opportunities and performance rewards. They want an organization that will let them be a part of the organization's success. Millennials want to be heard and respected for their education. They also seek a high-paying salary to purchase items that Gen X and Boomers may already have.





Gen X have built experience into their resume. They seek empowerment, recognition and advancement. At this stage, a culture of trust becomes more important. A development plan that includes inside and outside resources is expected. They are also looking for a competitive salary with performance raises and bonuses. Gen X needs an organization that openly recognizes their accomplishments and rewards them with advancement and development opportunities.

Boomers desire trust and respect. They need to feel important and acknowledged for their change agent/entrepreneurial attitude. Vacation time and weekends to spend with family are more important than the flexibility noted by Millennials and Gen X. They see themselves as positive and want to work in a growth-oriented organization. They need to be a part of strategy and decision-making sessions. Organizations should recognize that this is a tricky time of life for Boomers. They are at a high point in their career and boredom is common. Boomers require an organization where they are part of strategic-direction decisions and are given diverse and increasingly challenging work. They believe they have earned this and need to be valued by their organization, maybe now more than at any time in their career.





## What should be in your development plan?

As you probably noticed, every generation wants development. We were curious to know what they believed should be part of their own development. Here is what the generations had to say:

MY DEVELOPMENT PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE:		
MILLENNIALS	GENERATION X	BABY BOOMERS
Clear goals	External/internal development opportunities	Technology training
Continuing education in relatable fields	Continuing education	Mentorship
Build strong resume	Growth plan	On-going feedback
Mentor	Mentorship	Finance education
Include on new projects	Clear and constructive feedback	Diversity in work/role
Development training	Training on new trends, e.g. social media and technology	External training/networking opportunities
Frequent feedback	Improve personal communication skills	Understanding of company vision/mission
Career path		Time management
Opportunities to stretch		Succession planning
Coaching		Diverse challenges
Team opportunities		New opportunities

In addition to the survey responses, the round table participants added change management, work on soft skills/communication skills and open dialogue on respect.

## Where is the Common Ground?

While the survey uncovered several areas of common ground, it was exciting to watch all the generations work together during the round table. We suspect the safe environment of a Paranet round table helped people share their thoughts, challenges and desires. It was fun to see Millennials and Boomers challenge each other respectfully. It was really interesting to see the Gen X participants acting as mediators.

Areas of common ground included values, which were similar. Everyone wants respect and loyalty. Trust matters more and more as age increases. All generations desire credible leaders who do the right things. All generations want to continue learning ... more than any other aspiration.

Remember where our next rising stars will come from, where they always have ... the next GREAT generation!

**THE PARANET GROUP**  
10000 Innovation Drive  
Suite 105  
Milwaukee, WI 53226  
262-796-2560  
[paranetgroup.com](http://paranetgroup.com)

