


The Age Advantage: Maximizing Multi-Generational Talent in Today's Workplace



Raeann Burgo
Partner, Pittsburgh
rburgo@fisherphillips.com
412.822.6630

Generational Humor



champagnecruz  • [Follow](#)

Original audio



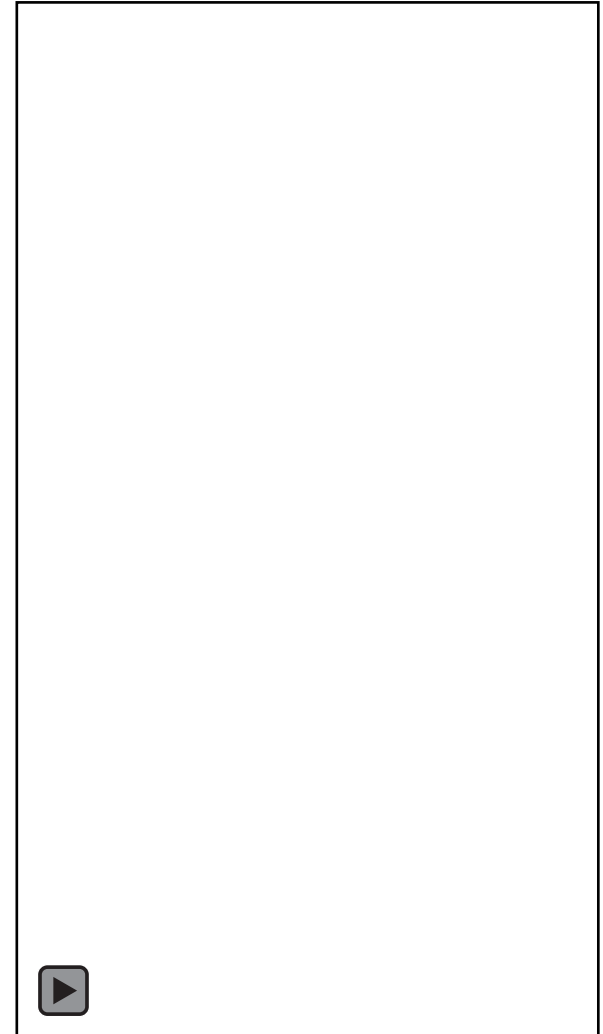
champagnecruz  2024 Out: Staying
past 5pm 🤔

•

[#work](#) [#generations](#)

[#corporatemillennial](#) [#corporatehumor](#)

64w



Goals for Today

Understand generational differences



Maintain legal compliance



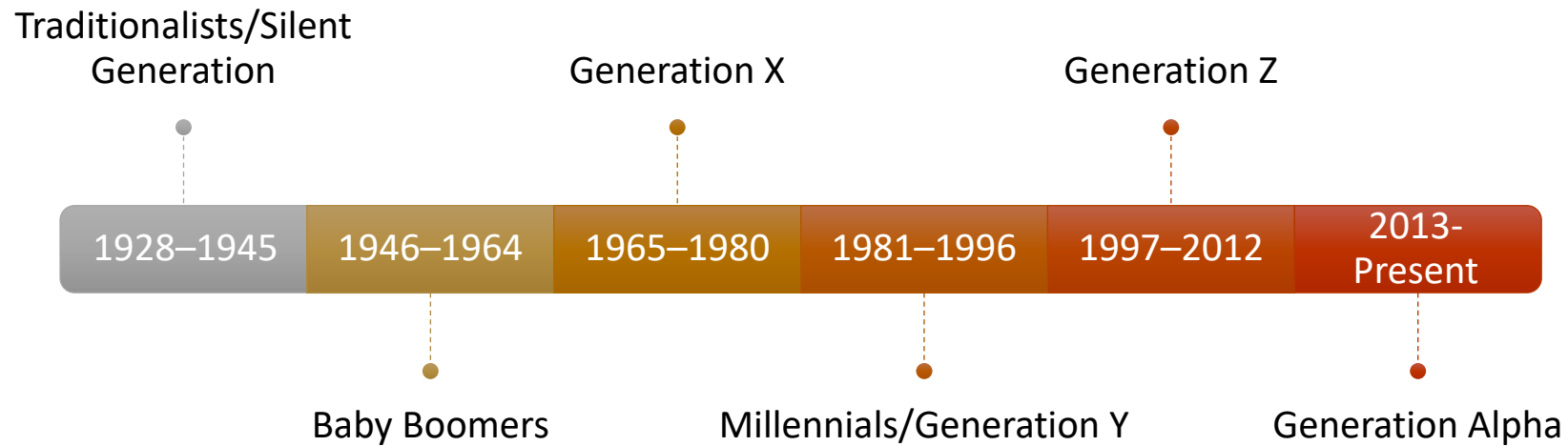
Transform generational differences from a challenge into a strategic advantage





The Generations

The Generations



Baby Boomers

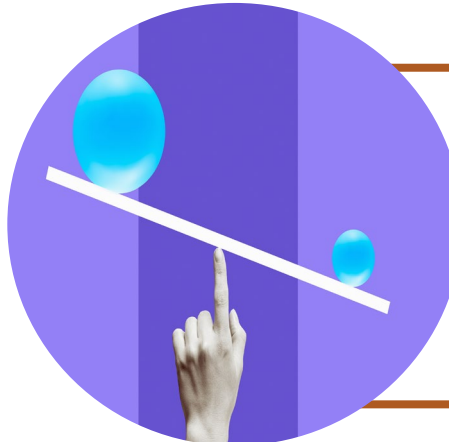
Defining characteristic –

Grew up in post-war prosperity; defined by social change movements; value competition and achievement



Strengths

- Strong work ethic and career focus
- Extensive professional networks and industry knowledge
- Willingness to put in extra hours to achieve goals



Challenges:

- May struggle with work-life balance
- Can be resistant to newer workplace methodologies
- Sometimes less adaptable to rapid technological changes

Baby Boomers

Communication Style

Appreciate in-person meetings and discussions

Value relationship-building conversations

Comfortable with phone calls and emails

Prefer some context and detail in communications

Feedback Preferences

Respond to achievement-focused feedback

Appreciate public recognition of accomplishments

May be sensitive to criticism but value detailed performance reviews



Generation X

Defining characteristic – The “latchkey generation;” independent and pragmatic; value work-life balance and self-reliance



Strengths

- Self-reliant problem solvers
- Adaptable to both traditional and digital approaches
- Strong critical thinking and pragmatism



Challenges:

- Can be skeptical of authority and institutional systems
- May be less inclined toward company loyalty
- Sometimes perceived as cynical in workplace settings

Generation X

Communication Style

Prefer direct, honest, efficient communication without unnecessary meetings

Value honesty and authenticity in messaging

Comfortable with both digital and traditional communication methods

Appreciate having information to make independent decisions

Feedback Preferences

Prefer straightforward, candid feedback

Appreciate being trusted to self-correct

Value specific, actionable recommendations

Prefer private conversations about performance issues



Millennials (Generation Y)

Defining characteristic –

First digital natives; came of age during economic uncertainty; value purpose, development, and work-life integration.



Strengths

- Technological fluency and digital adaptability
- Collaboration and team orientation
- Desire for meaningful work and social impact



Challenges:

- May struggle with ambiguity and lack of structure
- Sometimes perceived as requiring more feedback and guidance
- Can have high expectations for advancement and recognition

Millennials (Generation Y)

Communication Style

Comfortable with digital-first communication (text, chat, email)

Value transparency and authentic messaging

Prefer frequent, informal check-ins over formal meetings

Appreciate visual and multimedia communication

Feedback Preferences

Desire regular, ongoing feedback rather than annual reviews

Appreciate coaching-style guidance

Value personal development aspects of feedback

Respond well to recognition of their contributions and impact



Generation Z

Defining characteristic –

True digital natives; grew up during economic recession and heightened global awareness; value security, diversity, and authenticity.



Strengths

- Digital intuition and technological adaptability
- Value diversity and inclusion naturally
- Practical approach to career development and security



Challenges

- May struggle with in-person communication and conflict
- Sometimes experience higher levels of anxiety in workplace settings
- Can have difficulty with ambiguity and unstructured work environments

Generation Z

Communication Style

Prefer brief, visual, and immediate communication

Comfortable with multiple digital platforms simultaneously

Value authenticity and transparency in messaging

Appreciate concise, to-the-point information

Feedback Preferences

Desire immediate, frequent feedback

Appreciate digital feedback tools and platforms

Value constructive guidance for skill development

Respond well to visual examples and demonstrations



Generation Alpha

Defining characteristic –

Born entirely in the 21st century; growing up with AI, voice assistants, and highly personalized technology; most diverse generation.



Projected Strengths

- Intuitive understanding of AI and advanced technologies
- Highly adaptable to rapid technological change
- Global perspective and comfort with diversity



Potential Challenges

- May struggle with sustained attention on single tasks
- Potential difficulties with in-person social dynamics
- Could have high expectations for personalization and customization

Note: As the oldest members of this generation are only about 12 years old in 2025, their workplace characteristics are still emerging. The qualities below are preliminary observations and projections.

Generation Alpha

Emerging Communication Preferences

Likely to favor highly visual, interactive communication

Comfortable with voice interfaces and AI-mediated communication

May prefer asynchronous, on-demand information exchange

Likely to value authenticity and personalization

Potential Feedback Preferences

May expect immediate, personalized feedback

Likely to value gamified achievement recognition

Could prefer coaching via digital tools and AI systems

May respond well to immersive feedback (AR/VR)





Understanding Generational Differences

Understanding Generational Differences

1

**Acknowledge without
stereotyping**

2

Identify shared values

3

**Map communication
preferences**

Differences Show Up In:



Communication



Decision Making



Knowledge Transfer





Legal Department Examples

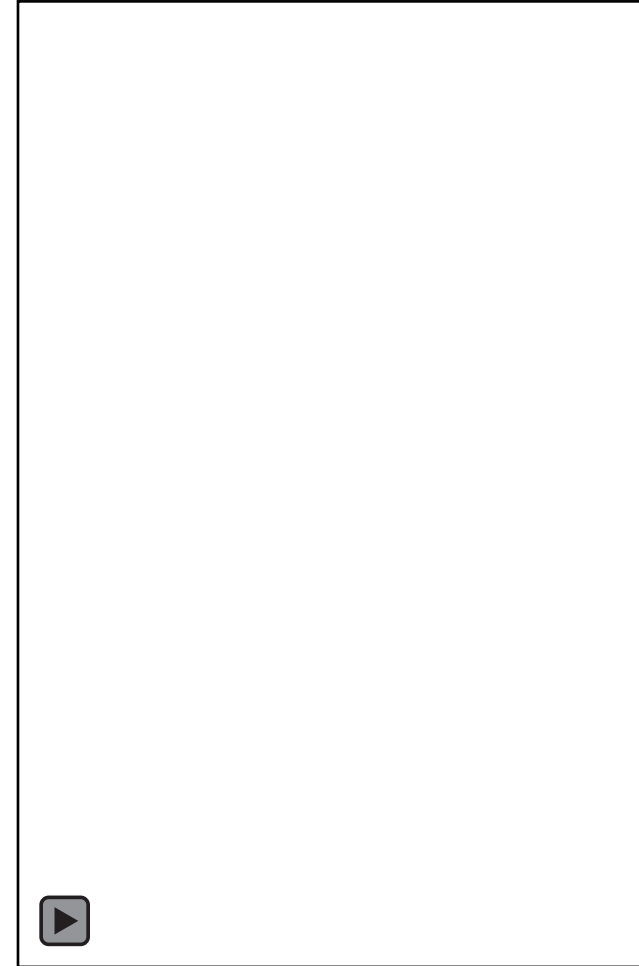
Legal Risk Tolerance

Boomers might favor more conservative, precedent drive approach

Gen X might like balancing precedent with practical business needs

Millennials/Gen Z might be more comfortable with innovative legal frameworks and new areas of law (cybersecurity, data privacy, AI).

Communication Style Differences



Workplace Communication Styles

Generational preferences in document drafting, review and management

Balance formal documentation with real-time communications

Structured v. Informal



Workplace Communication Styles

- Attached please find
- Attached is
- I've attached
- Here's the doc you asked for

Creating Inclusive Workplace Communication



Documentation and Knowledge Transfer

- Formal manuals and collaborative knowledge bases
- Capturing expertise from senior staff and understanding the why
- Organization and access preferences



Fostering Cross-Generational Knowledge Transfer



Create structured mentoring programs:
Pair team members from different generations



Implement reverse mentoring: Allow younger staff to share technological expertise with senior colleagues



Document institutional knowledge: Create systems to preserve valuable experience from senior team members



Generational Work Conflict

Communication Style

Expectation of Responsiveness

Work Arrangements

Technology Adoption

Authority and Decision Making

Work Life Balance

Managing Conflict Effectively

- Address issues directly: Don't allow generational friction to fester or be dismissed as "just how they are"
- Use neutral mediators: Bring in unbiased facilitators for significant conflicts
- Celebrate different perspectives: Acknowledge how different generational viewpoints strengthen analysis





Legal Compliance Considerations

Legal Compliance Considerations

Age
discrimination
prevention
strategies

Compensation
equity issues

Harassment
prevention with
generational
context



Compensation Equity Issues

- Younger workers may receive higher starting salaries
- Older workers may experience slower or less frequent raises
- Older workers may be placed in lower-paying positions



Age Discrimination in Employment Act

ADEA Prohibits:

- Discrimination against persons over 40 years of age
- Policies or practices that have a disproportionate negative impact on older workers
- Mandatory retirement ages (with limited exceptions)
- Age-based harassment that creates a hostile work environment



Age Discrimination Prevention Strategies

- Focus on skills, qualifications, and experience
- Mentorship programs across generations
- Ensure access to professional development, advancement, and training
- Consider disparate impact of Reductions in Force



Age Discrimination Prevention Strategies

- Age-neutral language in company communications
- Blind resume screening to focus on qualifications over graduation dates
- Regular compensation equity audits across generations
- Diverse interview panels representing multiple generations





Harassment Prevention with Generational Context

- Generational experiences shape perspectives on humor, formality, and professional boundaries
- What may seem like harmless joking to one generation can feel like harassment to another
- Identify who might be a "generational translator" within the organization
- Offer training on generational patterns in harassment reporting



Multi-Generational Workforce Takeaways

- Each generation brings unique perspectives and experience
- Conflicts often mean complimentary approaches
- Manage and pass down knowledge with a structured base while layering on innovation
- Create multi-generational teams and mentorship relationships

Age Appropriate: How to Leverage a Multigenerational Workforce and Win the Market by Rick Grimaldi



A decorative graphic in the top left corner consisting of a grid of squares in various colors including yellow, orange, red, and blue. The squares are arranged in a pattern that tapers off towards the right.

Thank You!

Raeann Burgo
Fisher & Phillips, LLP
rburgo@fisherphillips.com

