

THREE ARTICLES

Changing Generational Values*

***Caviot:** Jean Twenge, Phd, writing for Psychology Today states: Generational differences are stereotyping. That is not a problem with the data on generational differences—it's a problem with people who leap to conclusions, who generalize from an average to an individual. That does not mean we shouldn't understand the average differences.

While there is much evidence for generational differences, it's time to move away from these false narratives. Instead, we should be asking how cultural changes affect us, and how all generations can work together to understand them—and each other.

In 2025, *The Atlantic* published an article titled “Young People Want to Change the World. Non-profits Can Help Them”.

The Atlantic article states, “Young people are passionate about almost every social challenge we're facing. Since the COVID-19 crisis began, nearly 50 percent of Gen Zers have taken action to support a cause they care about. Millennials and Gen Z together represent today's largest population of potential donors and volunteers. When nonprofit leaders say that young people don't seem to care about their cause, what they often mean is that young people aren't as quick to become loyal supporters as older the WWII and Boomer generations have been in the past.

They have a point. Building connections with Gen X'ers, Millennials and Gen Z'ers requires nonprofits to get creative and strategic about engagement, **especially while social distancing has scrapped most in-person event opportunities.**”

On the flip side, *The Atlanta* article goes on to say, “ While a majority of young people **say** they wish they could do more to help, according to a report from DoSomething.org, 42% of them say they don't know how to get started.

If young people want to get involved but don't know how to get started, perhaps we can find a way forward together. IF... we solicit the help of our young women leaders and ask them help AAUW **pivot** in ways that meet **their** needs. Here's

some “food for thought” - are ways **they** may want **US** to pivot **to meet and support their needs**:

Gen Z (b.~ 1997-~2012). Their attention span is shorter than most.

- are strong supporters of social justice causes such as LGBTQ+ rights, equality, environmental issues and...help for victims of crime and abuse
- have time constraints because they are working
- are very interested in gaining work experience thru volunteering

Millennials (b.~ 1981-~1996). They came of age during a period of rapid technological expansion. They are independent, hands-on and impact-driven.

- are very cause-oriented
- are passionate idealistic and hungry to make a positive impact on the world.
- they value well-being and family over work
- their top causes include: children, youth, animals, wildlife, health and wellness
- they are particular about transparency and program impact

Gen X (b.~ 1965-~1980) Born to the Boomers, these are the latchkey kids, raised by single or working parents. They are very philanthropic and want to roll up their sleeves and get to work. But mostly they want...

- to share their wealth of knowledge and experience
- experience that they've gained throughout their lifetime. Some are now retired!
- They want to be mentors, advisors and...on boards!
- They want to socialize and be with like-minded people
- They value creating a sense of community!

A report from the **Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality** found that while Millennials may exhibit a wider range of identities and are more visible in social movements, their attitudes towards racial and gender equality are not markedly more egalitarian than those of Gen Xers and Boomers. Additionally, the report highlights that Millennials are facing unique economic challenges, including a larger earnings gap and homeownership gap compared to previous generations.

Key Findings from the Stanford Report:

- **Egalitarian Attitudes:** While Millennials are more vocal about social justice issues, their underlying attitudes toward racial and gender equality haven't changed significantly compared to Gen X and Boomers.
- **Economic Disparities:** Millennials are earning less without a college degree, are more likely to die prematurely, and face larger racial gaps in homeownership than previous generations.
- **Earnings Gap:** The earnings gap by education is wider among Millennials than in prior generations, particularly for those without college degrees.
- **Financial Security:** Younger generations, including Millennials and Gen X, are lagging behind their retirement savings goals compared to older generations.
- **ESG Investing:** Millennials and Gen Z investors are more concerned about ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) issues and are more willing to prioritize them in their investments.
- **Workplace Values:** While both Gen X and Millennials seek a balance between work and leisure, Millennials are more likely to prefer collaborative and flexible work environments.

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Bridging Communication and Success Between Generations

How to honor and leverage everyone's experiences and insights.

By: Michelle Tennant Nicholson, M.A., an award-winning author and international publicist, peppers public awareness campaigns with insight from her master's degree in human development, B.F.A. from a top-25 drama school, and expertise in seeing PR transition from typewriters to Twitter.

KEY POINTS

- Each generation communicates and handles conflict differently, which can lead to misunderstandings.
- It's possible to acknowledge generational impact on communication and avoid conflicts.

- Adapt communication styles across generations: Boomers prefer meetings, while younger workers like messages.
- Feedback between generations fosters collaboration, as Millennials and Gen Zers seek regular input.

Have you ever been in a meeting only to feel like everyone's speaking a different language, even though you're all technically speaking English? You say one thing, and your colleague interprets it in a way you didn't intend. Misunderstandings spiral, and conflict brews where there doesn't need to be any. Such a clash isn't inevitable.

My advice is simple. Recognize what you may perceive as conflict as simple misalignment in values rooted in how each generation experiences the world.

The Face-to-Face Boomer (born 1946-1964)

The Boomers were raised in a post-WWII era of economic growth and social change, valuing stability and hierarchy in both family life and work. They often prefer face-to-face communication and a level of formality. Having faced hard-earned life lessons, they carry resilience as their badge of honor, which sometimes makes them wary of open emotional dialogue.

The Independent Gen X (born 1965-1980)

Known as the "latchkey" generation, Gen Xers grew up during a time of economic upheaval and shifting family dynamics. They value independence and work-life balance, often maintaining skepticism towards authority. Resourceful and adaptable, they bridge the analog and digital worlds but are cautious and prefer trust to be earned.

The Mindful Millennial (born 1981-1996)

Millennials were shaped by technology, 9/11, and the Great Recession. They value collaboration, feedback, and purpose-driven work. Open communication and transparency from leadership are key. Millennials often seek mental health acknowledgment and want to improve the broken systems they feel they've inherited.

The Authentic Gen Z (born 1997-2012)

As digital natives, Gen Z grew up in a hyperconnected world with social media and constant access to information. They seek authenticity, prefer direct

communication, and emphasize mental health. Gen Z is passionate about social justice, and success for them isn't just about climbing a corporate ladder; it's about making a meaningful impact.

Generational Perceptions

Each generation has experienced cultural, societal, and personal experiences that shape their worldviews. Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials, and Gen Zers are shaped by different experiences and attitudes—ranging from the optimism of the postwar era for Boomers to the skepticism of Gen X and the anxieties fueled by the digital and social media age for Millennials and Gen Zers.

For example, a Gen Xer might feel frustrated when a Millennial seeks constant feedback, because it feels like a lack of self-sufficiency. Meanwhile, the Millennial could see the Gen Xer's independence as aloofness or disinterest.

In a multigenerational workplace, such generational perceptions can pile up, often without anyone realizing it. A Boomer may interpret a Gen Z colleague's brevity in emails as disrespect, while the Gen Zer might see it as just efficient communication. Neither is wrong—they're just operating from different frameworks shaped by their generational experiences.

Validate Differences

We all come to the table with unique lenses, influenced by the time and culture in which we grew up. Don't dismiss someone's perspective just because it doesn't align with your own. Baby Boomers may feel they've earned their place in the hierarchy, while Millennials and Gen Zers value flat organizational structures. Acknowledge differences without judgment.

Effectively Empathize

Try to understand why someone from another generation reacts differently than you might. For example, a Gen Zer may speak openly about mental health, while a Boomer might reflect the era when such discussions were stigmatized.

Adapt Communication

Boomers may prefer phone calls or in-person meetings, while Millennials and Gen Zers are comfortable with texts, asynchronous work apps, or emails. Alternating communication styles—combining brief texts with face-to-face meetings—can help bridge such differences.

Favor Feedback

Millennials and Gen Zers thrive on feedback, both giving and receiving. They want to know they're contributing meaningfully and that their input is valued. On the other hand, Gen Xers and Boomers might see feedback as something given only during formal reviews. Create space for regular, constructive feedback whereby everyone can share their experiences.

Mirror and Mentor

Rather than viewing generational differences as obstacles, see them as opportunities for mentorship. Boomers and Gen Xers have decades of wisdom and institutional knowledge, while Millennials and Gen Zers bring fresh ideas and tech savvy. A mentorship program in which the learning goes both ways can foster respect, understanding, and collaboration.

Share Success

Success means different things to each generation. Boomers might focus on retirement and legacy, Gen Xers on balancing work and life, Millennials on meaningful work, and Gen Zers on social impact. Creating a shared vision of success that honors each generation's values is key. What does a win look like? How can each individual contribute? Write this down. Repeat it to remember you are working toward the same thing.

Build Bridges, Not Walls

By understanding and respecting the different experiences that have shaped Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials, and Gen Zers, we can build bridges rather than walls. In doing so, we create healthier, more empathetic workplaces where everyone can thrive—no matter when they were born.