



Overview

Generations at Work

With Baby Boomers, GenXers, and Millennials working together as professional colleagues, the 21st century has ushered in a new, generation-bending era in the U.S. workplace.

As with all generations, their differing experiences have influenced their identities and expectations. “But while these differences may cause misunderstandings in some cases,” says Ginny Baxter, Applied Knowledge Network Lead at Herman Miller, “they also provide opportunities for mutual growth and shared understanding.”

Because generational differences are often just variations of style, they shouldn't be the only influence in addressing people's needs and expectations in the workplace. “Each person has a unique set of experiences that form their expectations and help to define them,” says Baxter. “Some of these may be generational, but the more specific picture of a person is formed by including other factors such as education, interests, aspirations, and beliefs.”

In a world where change is the norm, even as the fundamentals remain constant, many organizations today are seeking ways to adapt in a flatter, faster, more complex business environment. They're rethinking how they're allocating space and reconsidering the advantages of flexible workspaces, virtual offices, and telecommuting. They're striving to attract new talent, retain their top performers, and engage everyone so that as change continues, they have the means and intelligence to address it.

Forward-looking leaders are engaging the members of their organizations—be they Baby Boomers, GenXers, or Millennials—by encouraging debate, speaking openly, and communicating regularly in ways that tap the full power and potential of their collective strength. A workplace setting can be designed to meet their varying needs, including those that may be generational, and not preclude anyone in the process. Since the financial performance of any organization is strongly related to the degree to which its employees are engaged, the stakes are high, the rewards substantial.