

Partner in Mental Health Leadership



Money working for people

# Managing to Manage Across Generations at Work



THE PSYCHOLOGY  
FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA

LA FONDATION  
DE PSYCHOLOGIE  
DU CANADA



# The New Workplace Phenomenon

There is a new phenomenon occurring in Canadian workplaces today. For the first time, there are five different generations working side by side. Why? Now, more people are living longer, staying in the workforce for longer periods of time before retiring, and re-entering the workforce after some time away.

Why should employers and managers care about generation gaps in their workforce? Research has shown that bridging significant differences between the generations with effective workplace strategies creates more successful organizations; employees are happier, healthier and more productive, and organizations are more competitive and improve their bottom lines.

In addition, Canada has a labour shortage – a result of low birth rates, an aging population, more years of schooling and a greater international competition for labour – making recruitment and retention significant issues. Effective management of human resources is now, more than ever, a critical success factor for employers.

## Table of Contents

The New Workplace Phenomenon	1
Generational Snapshots: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generations X, Y and Z	2
Generation Specific Strategies for the Workplace	4
Ten <i>Universal</i> Strategies for the Workplace	8
Some Suggested Resources	11

*"Little of today's technology is proprietary. Technology is easily obtained and replicated and only levels the playing field. An organization's valued human assets cannot be copied."*

– Bill Gates



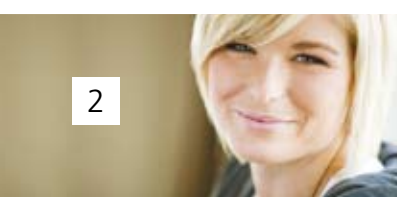
# Generational Snapshots

A “generation” is defined by significant shared events and conditions to which people were exposed as they grew up. These common experiences shape the attitudes and motivations of a generation’s members. On this basis, there are five generations in the Canadian workforce today which have been identified by a variety of experts; they are the *Veterans*, *Baby Boomers*, *Generation X*, *Generation Y* and *Generation Z*. Depending on the source, you may see different names for each generation, and birth date ranges may vary slightly, but the key points provided below will provide you with the basics so that workplace strategies can be better understood.



*[The current]...generational divergence creates a communication challenge for many of today’s managers. The promise of slowly climbing the company ladder no longer has the motivational force it once did, and the traditional management structure is quickly slipping into obsolescence. Younger workers are less loyal to their organizations, quicker to adapt to cultural and technological changes, and more possessive of their free time.*

– Cam Marston; *Motivating the What’s In It For Me? Workforce: Manage Across the Generational Divide and Increase Profits* (2007).



## Veterans

**(Born 1930-1945)... Radio Babies, Silent Generation, Traditionalists**

- Watched parents struggle to make ends meet during Great Depression of 1930s
- Very careful with money, conservative, have great respect for authority
- Fought in World War II or Korean War
- Grew up without television
- Very loyal to their employers
- Job security very important, switching jobs not easily embraced

## Baby Boomers

**(Born 1946-1964)... Sandwich Generation**

- Represent largest group in workforce
- Will inflict largest “brain drain” when they retire
- Often involved in both child care and elder care
- Fought in wars abroad such as the Vietnam War
- Used typewriters rather than computers
- Important changes such as “The Pill”, the civil rights movement and “Trudeau-mania” era
- Highly educated; desiring of better lifestyle than their parents

## Generation X

**(Born 1965-1976)... Baby Busters**

- Witnessed many dramatic changes in economy and technology
- First generation to be entertained by video games like Atari
- Saw first Quebec Referendum in Canada
- High number of divorced parents, dual-income families and “latch key” kids
- Accustomed to recurring economic recessions; familiar with oil shortages, terrorist attacks, soaring inflation
- Skeptical, independent and entrepreneurial
- Most well educated generation so far; great candidates for leadership positions

## Generation Y

**(Born 1977-1991)... Generation Why?, Echo Boomers, Nexus Generation, Net Generation, Millennials**

- Grew up with technology such as the Internet, computers, voice mail, video games
- More globally minded than previous generations
- Population three times bigger than Gen Xer population
- Dual-income parents, divorces, daycare
- Very protective parents (often termed ‘helicopter parents’)
- Accepting of others’ differences in race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity
- Inquisitive, socially and environmentally conscious, concerned about the future, highly entrepreneurial
- Have lived through one of the biggest economic booms in North American history
- Often described as the generation with a sense of ‘entitlement’






## Generation Z

**(Born 1991 and Later)... New Millennials, Generation Next, Cuspers, Generation 9-11, Zoomers**

- Youngest group in the workforce now
- Extremely techno-savvy; instant messaging preferred mode of communication (i.e., email is for ‘old folks’)
- Protective parents; monitoring by adults is often seen as positive means of protection
- Confident, happy and secure
- Team players, like to engage in community service activities
- More activities available to them than previous generations, team activities often co-ed

# Generation Specific Strategies for the Workplace

Now, more than ever, the key to a competitive and successful organization is properly understanding and managing diversity in the workforce. Every generation wants work-life balance, interesting work, a good salary with benefits and flexible hours of work. However, research shows that these aspects of work need to be designed *differently* for each generation in order to be effective. Some key strategies are outlined in the chart below, and in the references and resources listed at the last page of this booklet.

		Recruitment	Salary	Benefits	Type of Work	Work Environment	Other Key Points
Veterans		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a combination of high-tech &amp; traditional methods (i.e., newspaper classifieds, trade journals, executive search firms, face-to-face networking).</li> <li>Communicate message that "We want, need and value your knowledge and years of experience."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a competitive salary, but remember that being productive and staying active in the workforce is often even more important to this group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize benefit tiers to allow choices suited to this group (e.g., long-term care insurance, grief counseling services, etc.).</li> <li>Consider reduction in work hours or short layoffs (instead of firing) during tough economic times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer new challenges and opportunities that capitalize on their vast experience (e.g., task forces, focus groups, problem solving teams, mentoring of other employees).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate work flexibility (e.g., options that allow for telecommuting or working part-time).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a group that can adapt well to change.</li> <li>Many Veterans may not really want to retire if provided with the right opportunities.</li> </ul>
Baby Boomers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a very competitive salary to this group, especially since Boomers often have extra child/elder care expenses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize benefit tiers to allow choices suited to this group (e.g., child/elder care referral services, provision of paid days off work to care for sick children and/or elderly dependents).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer work that allows them to advance in their careers and keep work interesting (e.g., promotions, mentoring to more senior roles, job rotation opportunities, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer policies to help this group better manage work-life balance and stress levels (e.g., job sharing options, voluntary demotions, telecommuting).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many Boomers may be thinking of retiring soon, so organizations would do well to look at ways to keep them on board for as long as possible.</li> </ul>
Generation X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use multiple technological and online methods (e.g., Web sites like Workopolis, Monster, social media sites; online job applications, etc.).</li> <li>Keep your Web information current and allow for regular online feedback if necessary.</li> <li>Keep job descriptions short and concise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a competitive salary to this group, but note they are inclined to look more at the salary and benefits package as a whole, since family happiness and work-life balance are top priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize benefit tiers to allow choices suited to this group (e.g., time off, on-site child care and/or sick child care, flexibility in core work hours).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help Gen Xers to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities at work.</li> <li>Also see "Type of Work" in the Baby Boomers section above.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Try not to micro-manage Gen Xers; they respond best to managers who are more like mentors.</li> <li>Provide regular feedback on performance beyond the annual review.</li> <li>Create a fun and "family like" work environment.</li> <li>Make sure that your organization uses current technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gen Xers may also be "sandwiched" employees.</li> </ul>
Generation Y		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to Gen X.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand that expectations for good salaries and signing bonuses will be high for this group (and explain why expectations may not be met right away).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer choice and flexibility in salary/benefit options for this group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create work that is more meaningful by providing frequent and constructive feedback on performance and outline how they contribute to organizational success.</li> <li>Offer a variety of highly interactive/creative learning opportunities.</li> <li>Start with small projects they can take ownership of, and build from there, provided performance expectations are met.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide opportunities for Gen Yers to be social, make friends and make a difference through work (e.g., sports teams, volunteer programs).</li> <li>Demonstrate serious measures to protect personal safety of employees.</li> <li>Provide state-of-the-art technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gen Yers are very compelled to stay with an organization if they feel their ideas are valued and respected by others in the workplace – especially by older generations.</li> </ul>
Generation Z		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to Gen Y.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to Gen Y.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to Gen Y.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to Gen Y.</li> <li>Put a special training focus on teambuilding, negotiating and conflict-resolution skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Similar to Gen Y.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gen Zers have been very protected growing up, and are often not used to dealing with conflict (compared to other generations).</li> </ul>



# Making It Work

Marvin, a “Veteran”, recently returned to work. With the recent economic downturn, retirement didn’t quite work out as planned, but he was able to get a job working for his previous employer. Senior management valued Marvin’s knowledge and work experience, but this time, he was reporting to Sophie – a “Gen Yer”. Because Sophie was new to management, she wasn’t used to providing instruction to employees. She also spent two days per week working “virtually” outside the office. Marvin knew there were many different ways to get a job done, but he expected his manager to give him direction to avoid any repercussions if things went wrong. The relationship between Sophie and Marvin became strained, leading to productivity problems. Senior management called in a human resources specialist who focused on teaching Sophie how to be more specific with Marvin in outlining project outcomes and expectations. Because Sophie worked out of the office frequently, regular face-to-face meetings were also scheduled with Marvin. Saving the relationship ended up in some big wins for the company—not to mention a big improvement in staff morale.



You are a “Veteran”, and your “Gen Xer” employee hardly sets foot in your office for a face-to-face conversation—something you are used to doing frequently. He seems to prefer connecting via email, but he sure does deliver, and then some! Of course, you do schedule face-to-face meetings when necessary, but have also learned that this employee works well independently and that he will come to you when he needs to ask questions. You’re even considering his request to work one day a week from home, which would also free up some office space for use by a summer intern. In your many years of work experience, you’ve learned that work-life balance is important to all employees, but that the definition of this term can vary from one employee to the next. By focusing less on where and how work is performed, and more on work objectives being met successfully, you feel you’ve created a more flexible, happier work environment—a workplace where employees really want to work.



*“They keep telling me, ‘Here’s what you get in five years, ten years, twenty years...’ But they expect me to come back to work tomorrow. What do I get tomorrow?”*

– Quote from a Gen Yer; *Not Everyone Gets a Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y* by Bruce Tulgan (2009).

Mary noticed tension between Dan (a “Baby Boomer” manager) and Raul (a “Gen Zer” employee) and had heard them arguing in the office next door. As Supervisor, she knew she needed to intervene.

*Dan:* Mary, the minute Raul walked in the door he wanted to take responsibility for projects that others have taken years to really understand. I have socks older than this guy and he thinks he can just take over. He has no respect for authority or others’ experiences.

*Raul:* I’ve worked and studied hard to get to this point and I didn’t spend thousands of dollars on my education to photocopy Dan’s notes. I need more of a challenge, or I will go somewhere else. I have a lot to offer if someone will just give me a chance!

Mary recognized the situation immediately. She encouraged Dan to talk with Raul about Raul’s strengths and interests and to assign Raul smaller projects that he could take ownership of. She also encouraged Dan to explain *why* he asks Raul to perform certain tasks and *how* it relates to organizational objectives. With Mary’s help, Dan also set up a mentorship program for Raul that involved him “shadowing” another employee one day per week to learn more about the projects he was especially interested in. Mary then encouraged Dan and Raul to focus more on what they could each learn from each other, since everyone brings something different and valuable to the table. Within a month of implementing these strategies, Mary noticed Dan and Raul working better together and an increase in the level of respect for each other. Also, as a result, staff harmony and creativity within the entire team improved.



# Ten Universal Strategies for the Workplace

*“The real challenge for organizations is identifying a set of workplace motivating circumstances that apply to workers across the generational divides.”*

– Steven J. Stein; *Make Your Workplace Great: The 7 Keys to an Emotionally Intelligent Organization* (2007).

Examining key characteristics of generational cohorts and then tailoring workplace strategies towards each can be very effective. In fact, organizations that don't do this will be at a disadvantage in this competitive marketplace.

**Yet, understanding generational differences doesn't provide a complete picture of the Canadian workforce today. Managers and employees must keep open minds and be very careful not to stereotype. We are seeing more and more cultural diversity in the workplace too – people from other countries with generational descriptors and experiences very different from that of North Americans and for whom the broad descriptions above do not apply.**

It is therefore very important to highlight some *universal* strategies that can be integrated to achieve a more productive and healthy workplace. Regardless of generational or cultural diversity, successfully implementing these strategies will help organizations to thrive when it comes to managing, supporting and communicating with employees. For more information on how to implement the strategies suggested in this booklet, please see the resources listed at the back of this booklet.

1. Before implementing any new workplace strategies, evaluate where you are, and plan where you want to go.
2. Obtain *regular* employee feedback and demonstrate your ability to act on their suggestions.
3. Encourage communication, understanding and respect for differences.
4. Tailor your workplace strategies because one size does *not* fit all.
5. Focus on *results*, rather than *process*.
6. Understand what it means to have “engaged” employees, and strive for this goal, since high employee engagement is tied directly to high organizational performance, profitability and employee retention.
7. Make it easier for all employees to leave the organization (to take a leave of absence or go on sabbatical, for example) and make it easier for them to come back.
8. Encourage formal mentorship programs within your organization, and remember that we all learn from each other, regardless of how old we are, or where we are from.
9. Learn to recognize when someone may need extra support. At work, if you notice sudden changes in someone's behaviour, performance or appearance, or an increase in customer complaints, that person may need extra support. Education and training opportunities that provide tools and resources for managers and employees on how to have effective conversations with colleagues to help them get the support they need (and prevent further distress) are highly beneficial.
10. Regularly give thanks and celebrate when an employee gets it right. In these tough financial times, this is one strategy that will go a long way towards helping employees feel valued, and it doesn't need to cost you a thing to implement!

*“It is very difficult (if not impossible) to increase perceived flexibility in organizations where the focus is on hours rather than output, and presence rather than performance. To do this, employers need to reward output, not the number of hours worked, and reward what is done, not where it is done.”*

– Dr. Linda Duxbury and Dr. Chris Higgins; *Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium: Report Six – Key Findings and Recommendations from the 2001 National Work-Life Conflict Study* (2009).





## Some Suggested Resources

### Additional Booklets in this Series:

*Managing to Manage Workplace Stress* (2008) and *The Struggle to Juggle: Stress Management Strategies for You and Your Family* (2008); The Psychology Foundation of Canada, in partnership with Desjardins Financial Security.

### Other Publications:

*4 Elements for Reducing Stress in the Workplace* (2009), by William A. Howatt, Howatt HR Consulting Incorporated.

*Bridging the Generation Gap: How to Get Radio Babies, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers to Work Together and Achieve More* (2007), by Linda Gravett, PhD, SPHR and Robin Throckmorton, MA, SPHR.

*Energizing Organizations: A New Method for Measuring Employee Engagement to Boost Profits and Corporate Success* (2007), by Michael Koscec.

*Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World* (2009), by Don Tapscott.

*Make Your Workplace Great: The 7 Keys to an Emotionally Intelligent Organization* (2007), by Dr. Steven J. Stein.

*Motivating The "What's In It For Me?" Workforce: Manage Across the Generational Divide and Increase Profits* (2007), by Cam Marston.

*Not Everyone Gets A Trophy: How to Manage Generation Y*, by Bruce Tulgan (2009). (Author of, *It's Okay To Be The Boss* and *Managing Generation X*).

*Parenting Your Parents: Support Strategies for Meeting the Challenge of Aging in the Family* (2nd Edition) (2005), by Bart J. Mindszenty and Michael Gordon, MD.

*Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium: Report Six – Key Findings and Recommendations from the 2001 National Work-Life Conflict Study* (2009), by Dr. Linda Duxbury and Dr. Chris Higgins.

*Workplace Psychological Health: Current Research and Practice* (2009), by Paula Brough, Michael O'Driscoll, Thomas Kalliath, Cary L. Cooper, and Steven A.Y. Poelmans.

### Web Sites:

**The American Society for Training and Development**  
[www.astd.org](http://www.astd.org)

**Canadian HR Reporter**  
[www.hrreporter.com](http://www.hrreporter.com)

**Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN)**  
[www.cprn.com](http://www.cprn.com)

**The Canadian Society for Training and Development**  
[www.cstd.ca](http://www.cstd.ca)

**Families and Work Institute**  
[www.familiesandwork.org](http://www.familiesandwork.org)

**Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) – Canada**  
[www.irpp.org](http://www.irpp.org)

**Passport to Prosperity**  
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/job/passport/index.html>

**The Psychology Foundation of Canada**  
[www.psychologyfoundation.org](http://www.psychologyfoundation.org) and [www.kidshavestresstoo.org](http://www.kidshavestresstoo.org)

**Rainmaker Thinking, Inc. (The eXperts on Young talent)**  
(Founder and Chairman, Bruce Tulgan)  
[www.rainmakerthinking.com](http://www.rainmakerthinking.com)

**Strategic Capability Network**  
[www.scnetwork.ca](http://www.scnetwork.ca)

**Written By:**  
Krista L. Saleh

**Design:**  
Desjardins Financial Security

**Special Thanks To:**  
Sue Bochner, Dr. Louise Hartley,  
Judy Hills, Drs. Shoukry and  
Wendy Saleh, Liz Scanlon,  
Dr. Steven J. Stein and  
Dr. Anita Teslak

Partner in Mental Health Leadership



Money working for people

The Psychology Foundation of Canada and Desjardins Financial Security are pleased to partner to bring you the information in this booklet.

### The Psychology Foundation of Canada

The Psychology Foundation of Canada (PFC) is a national registered charity that supports parents and strengthens families through a number of initiatives including creating educational resources, developing training programs for professionals, and delivering community-based education. Founded in 1974 to promote the understanding and use of sound psychological knowledge to better people's lives, the Foundation is guided by a Board of Trustees comprised of psychologists and business and community leaders. PFC's programs, like *Kids Have Stress Too!*®, *Parenting for Life and Diversity in Action*, help Canadians better understand how to manage situations and relationships more effectively at home, school, community and work. To find out more, or to order materials, please visit PFC's Web sites at [www.psychologyfoundation.org](http://www.psychologyfoundation.org) or [www.kidshavestresstoo.org](http://www.kidshavestresstoo.org).

### Desjardins Financial Security®

Desjardins Financial Security, a subsidiary of Desjardins Group, the largest cooperative financial group in Canada, specializes in group and individual life and health insurance, and savings products and services. Every day, over five million Canadians rely on Desjardins Financial Security to ensure their financial security. With a staff of 3,800 employees, Desjardins Financial Security manages and administers close to \$21 billion in assets from offices in major cities across the country, including Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal, Québec, Lévis, Halifax and St. John's.

Desjardins Financial Security is committed to improving awareness of mental health promotion through a number of partnerships, as well as its annual Health is Cool! Survey. To find out more information about the Health is Cool! Survey and other mental health promotion initiatives, please visit our Web site at [www.healthiscool.ca](http://www.healthiscool.ca).

[www.desjardinsfinancialsecurity.com](http://www.desjardinsfinancialsecurity.com)

® Registered trademark owned by Desjardins Financial Security