

3 Keys to Engaging a Multi-Generational Workforce

The Stakes are High

We are entering a period where the communication styles, behaviors, and work environment expectations are changing rapidly. Driving those changes are the increasing numbers of younger workers (Millennials) within organizations. As a leader, **unless you have a framework for understanding differences in language, style, preferences, and values, then you are headed for trouble.**

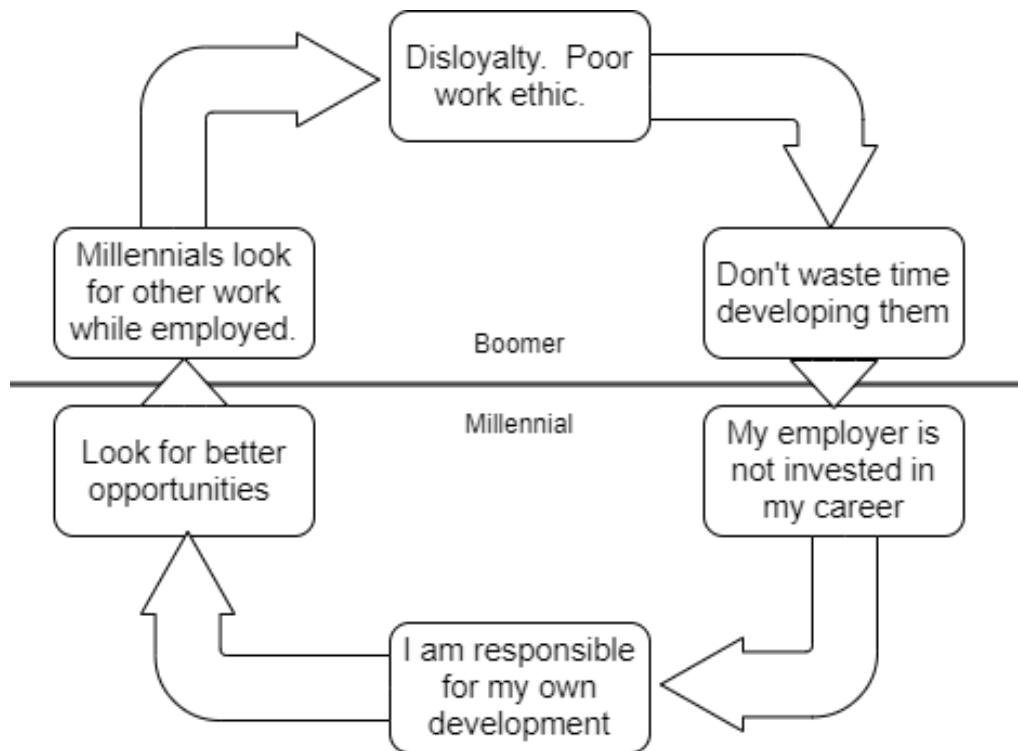
- Miscommunication.
- Breakdowns.
- Frustration.
- Loss of competitiveness.
- Difficulty attracting and retaining top talent.

1. Look at Different Perspectives

Multi-Generational Workforces face some common challenges. **We intend to provide you with the perspectives that will allow you to make better choices** when facing the conflicts that will invariably arise within your work environment.

Let's get the elephant out of the room: **Millennials think differently than Generation-X and Boomers.** That's not going to change. As a leader, you need to do more than separate fact from fiction about generational differences. You need to capitalize on those differences.

For example, 60% of millennials are actively looking for new work while they are employed. [Gallup, 2021]. As an employer, you might see this as a sign of disloyalty or a poor work ethic. Given that statistic, you might be reluctant to spend time developing younger staff. However, from the Millennial's perspective, they see that employers don't invest in an employee's career. Being responsible, Millennials take career development into their own hands. They do this by looking for new opportunities, including with other employers. If an opportunity presents itself, they want to be ready to capitalize on it by changing jobs.



Adapted from: Driving Fear Out of the Workplace, Ryan & Oestreich(1998)

You're not wrong about Millennials, and they are not disloyal. But, unfortunately, you're both interpreting the other's actions through a narrow perspective and getting trapped in a negative spiral of assumptions. The choice is yours. **Either you adapt to bring in and retain the workers you need, or they will adapt by going elsewhere.**

Improving in your multi-generational workforce does not need to be complicated, expensive, or drawn out. It starts with something simple like dispelling rampant misconceptions that each generation has about the other and why. With a greater understanding of background and motivation, subtle changes can produce huge improvements in outcomes. **Increased understanding is a massive lever for creating positive change.**

At Bovo-Tighe, **we help you develop frameworks for understanding differing perspectives.** We do this with a combination of training, shared experience, and coaching. This lets you make better decisions that capitalize on the unique talents of younger workers, retain rising talent, and build a reputation as an employer that people want to join.

Ignoring the challenges of a multi-generational workforce would be a costly mistake because, by 2025, 70% of the global workforce will be millennials.

Call us today at 707-853-5022 for a free consultation on how we can help you achieve your organizational goals with a multi-generational workforce. Or [schedule a conversation](#) at a time that works for you.

2. Reconsider The Role of Feedback

With the distributed workforce, near-instantaneous communication, and forced transparency, your success with Millennials is determined by how effectively you communicate the direction you are going and why. That means that feedback is vitally important, and they need it most from a generation not accustomed to giving or receiving feedback well.

Baby Boomers	Feedback happens “once a year, with lots of documentation.”
Generation Xers	“Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?”
Millennials	“Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button.”

Source: Lancaster, Lynne C.; Stillman, David. *When Generations Collide* (2002).

It’s not the case that Boomers are giving feedback incorrectly. Instead, they were seldom trained in giving feedback effectively. When they were trained, it was using a “sandwich method” where you say something affirming, then provide the critical feedback, and end with another affirmation.

In *The Skilled Facilitator*, Robert Schwarz (1994) describes the approach using this exchange: “Alice, I have some negative feedback to give you. To get you receptive to the negative feedback, I’ll begin by giving you some positive feedback. Then I’ll give you the negative feedback – the main reason I wanted to talk with you today. Finally, to reduce the chance of your becoming angry, I’ll end by giving you some more positive feedback.”

To a Millennial, that style is like nails on a chalkboard. They genuinely want to do a good job. They are concerned with how their performance impacts other people and especially their relationships. Their success depends on more frequent feedback, sometimes at the task level, rather than focusing merely on long-haul performance. They are accustomed to using feedback to make micro-adjustments. They also don’t like uncertainty, and feedback provides the guardrails they need to thrive.

A Boomer might see that level of feedback as burdensome, which may originate from Boomers growing up in a world where changes occurred far less rapidly than today.

The solution to effective feedback with multi-generational workforces starts by recognizing the differences in style. It includes having a conversation about the role of feedback and jointly designing an approach that gives both groups what they need for success. For Millennials, feedback is not only about reviewing past performance. It’s also about clarifying expectations

so that they can better achieve larger organizational goals and objectives. As a leader, you'll get better performance from your Millennial staff when you design an approach to feedback together.

At Bovo-Tighe, **we help you develop skills for using feedback effectively.** This also shows your younger workers that you care about them and are committed to developing their skills and talents. When used well, feedback helps bridge the generational gap so that Millennials understand their role in your organization and they see that they have a future with you.

Call us today at 707-751-0270 for a free consultation on how we can help you put effective feedback systems in place. Or [schedule a conversation](#) at a time that works for you.

3. Build Relationships First

The Rosetta Stone to understanding the newer generation of workers is that **they see the world through a lens of relationships** - not just to each other, but to whatever it is that they care about. Your success as a leader of a younger workforce depends upon your ability to understand what matters to them and to build a bridge by which working together on your objectives will help them take care of their concerns.

The good news is that your ability to connect with younger workers is actually straightforward. Focus on genuine care and concern for your team. Be approachable and available for communication. Anticipate that ramp-up speed may be slower, but your ultimate results will be greater by developing the trust and relationship that the younger workforce requires.

The bad news for Boomers is that a significant part of their identity often gets associated with work, creating a stereotype of workaholics. Boomers need to guard against being overly critical of younger workers who have different values and a greater separation between work and personal life. (Meyers & Sadaghiani, [2010](#)),

Superficially, the differences between generations relates to the balance of tasks and maintenance in group dynamics. However, where Boomers might develop relationships over time by working together, Millennials focus on relationships as the fuel that motivates dedication to tasks.

If you want the labor and skill that Millennials add to your workforce, then you must learn to capitalize on their assets and adapt to their differences. At the same time, they will have to adapt to environments that are not as modern as they like. In all cases, whoever has the greatest ability to adapt to a changing environment will win.

At Bovo-Tighe, we want to give you tools and training to make it easier to adapt to generational differences in the workplace. Fundamentally, **either you adapt to bring in the workers you need, or they will adapt by going elsewhere.**

Call us today at 707-751-0270 for a free consultation on how to capitalize on generational differences. Or [schedule a conversation](#) at a time that works for you.

A Trustworthy Promise for Results

We don't sell workshops, training, or coaching. We sell results. The former are merely the tools we use to produce a measurable impact on your bottom line. **We have the courage to guarantee results** because we start with the upfront work to clarify the outcome you are committed to producing.

During our contracting stage, we're going to explore the challenges you face, what positive results look like, the value of those results to your organization, and how you'll be able to determine that you've achieved them.

We don't even invoice you until you're satisfied with the results. That's better than a money-back guarantee.

Ours is not a cookie-cutter approach. The results each organization requires will vary, though expected outcomes can include:

- Increased profitability.
- Increased staff retention.
- Increased safety.
- Reduced no-shows for shift work.
- Better communication.
- Fewer conflicts and less push-back.
- Increased production rankings.
- Turning around poorly performing worksites

Fundamentally, we think your organization is fine the way that it is. You are not broken. Our role is to help you put the metrics and processes in place so that you'll be able to chart a path forward to significant improvements no matter where you are.

At Bovo-Tighe, We Believe

- Investing in people and businesses for the sake of positive growth is the right thing to do.
- No matter where you are or what you do, understanding your people better is the key to significant improvements.
- When your leaders can produce aligned, passionate action within your teams, nothing will stop you from achieving your goals.

There is an undeniable cost of failing to adapt to the newer generation of workers. If you keep doing what you are doing, and do not change, you will lose the more contemporary skills that

you need to compete in the marketplace, you'll lose out on the diversity of candidates and staff, and you'll slowly become irrelevant to the younger marketplace.

Call us today at 707-751-0270 for a free consultation on how we can help you work more effectively with a multi-generational workforce. Or [schedule a conversation](#) at a time that works for you.