

Key Pointe COACHING

There are currently four generations in the workforce:

Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X and the Millennials

Some of the differences may stem from generational diversity in the workplace. Every generation is influenced by its period's economic, political and social events--from the Great Depression to the civil rights and women's movements to the advent of television and advanced computer technologies--so it follows that generational context also may affect the way they work, Patterson says.

Intergenerational conflict

Boomers may believe gen Xers are too impatient and willing to throw out the tried-and-true strategies, while gen Xers may view boomers as always trying to say the right thing to the right person and being inflexible to change. Traditionalists may view baby boomers as self-absorbed and prone to sharing too much information, and baby boomers may view traditionalists as dictatorial and rigid. And, gen Xers may consider millennials too spoiled and self-absorbed, while millennials may view gen Xers as too cynical and negative.

DEFINING WORK CHARACTERISTICS

Traditionalists (1925 to 1945)	Baby boomers (1946 to 1960)	Generation X (1961 to 1980)	Millennials (1981 to present)
• Practical	• Optimistic	• Skeptical	• Hopeful
• Patient, loyal and hardworking	• Teamwork and cooperation	• Self-reliant	• Meaningful work
• Respectful of authority	• Ambitious	• Risk-taking	• Diversity and change valued
• Rule followers	• Workaholic	• Balances work and personal life	• Technology savvy

Source: Patterson, C. (2005, January). Generational diversity: Implications for consultation and teamwork. Paper presented at the meeting of the Council of Directors of School Psychology Programs on generational differences, Deerfield Beach, Fla.

Common areas of conflict reported were work ethic, managing change and organizational hierarchy. Managers who utilize a variety of leadership styles will be better equipped to deal with potential conflicts as well as to provide appropriate management.