

Gen-Whenever

Recruiting & Retaining the 3 Generations



A WHITE PAPER PROVIDED BY ADAMS & MARTIN GROUP

Crabby boomers, skeptical Xers, entitled millennials—even a few traditionalists and members of Gen Z—all make up the working population. A multigenerational workforce brings diverse viewpoints, differing skill sets, and a mix of experience and eagerness. But finding and managing this eclectic group of talent is not successful without a strategy.

Age diversity in the workplace does present benefits and challenges. In order to cultivate the benefits of an age-diverse workplace, you must **recruit fairly** and with intention, and foster an **engaging environment** of understanding.

T-T-Talking 'Bout My Generation

Three generations—baby boomers, Generation X and millennials—make up almost all of the workforce (dates vary according to the source).



Baby Boomers

(born from 1946 to 1964)

- Optimistic
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Ambitious
- Workaholic



Generation X

(born from 1965 to 1980)

- Skeptical
- Self-reliant
- Risk-taking
- Balances work and personal life



Millennials

(born from 1981 to 2000)

- Hopeful
- Meaningful work
- Diversity and change valued
- Technology savvy

(American Psychological Association)

These stereotypes serve as a quick fix for understanding. However, the new kids on the block, the forgotten middle children, and the “get off my lawn” elders can often be mischaracterized. Shared experience leads to similar characteristics and behaviors, but they should not dismiss employees as dynamic humans.

However, relying too heavily on these generalizations can create an implicit bias, which can lead to unfair and ineffective hiring and management tactics. At worst, these stereotypes can lead to discrimination and/or a failure to understand your employees beyond the dimension of age. Luckily, while employees of different generations are different, they're not that different. There are one-size-fits-all tactics that you can employ to create a fair and engaging environment for everyone involved.

Attracting Talent from All Generations

How you find candidates and how you engage them during the recruitment process will affect the age diversity of your talent network. Here are some tips to get prepared.

Culture Check

Before you implement the strategies introduced in this White Paper, take a moment to **evaluate your culture**. Every organization has a culture, whether they are aware of it or not. **Work with your company's leadership to define it** and discuss what ideal coworkers can do to influence it.

Literally write down your culture so you can reference it during the interview process and while developing and implementing programs. Be aware this does not mean finding duplicates of your current employees but rather focus on finding candidates that will complement one another and share the organization's values.

Recruiting

You never know if or how a candidate will find you.

The Online Revolution

All ages are continuing the migration into the digital age. According to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), **54%** of Americans researched jobs online and **45%** have applied for a job online—more than double the number in 2005.

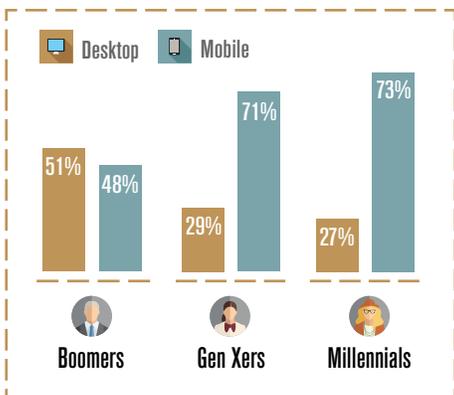
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Finding and being found by age-diverse candidates requires an online presence.

When creating an online job post, the language you use will make all the difference. Be aware of age-discriminating phrases like “**recent graduates**” or “**old-school.**” In addition to including the basics requirements of the position, candidly and objectively provide information about internal practices and cultural fit. Be honest about workplace practices and culture; not everyone is looking for a ping pong table and casual attire.

Once jobseekers see your online job post, they will likely visit your website and social media pages. Prepare your company sites to greet them. Begin with updating your websites with the most accurate information about your organization including cultural practices.

How the Generations Search for Jobs Online



You don't necessarily need a custom mobile application, but you must ensure that your website and respective job posts are mobile-friendly across various platforms. Make sure to test the mobile capabilities of your company's job application process yourself from a jobseeker's point of view.

Jobseekers are also likely to look to your social media pages to get a better feel for your company, especially sites like Glassdoor and LinkedIn. Currently, social media use spans all generations.

% of US Adults who use at least one social media site:

- Age 18 -29: **86%**
- Age 30-49: **80%**
- Age 50-64: **64%**
- Age 65+: **34%**

[Pew]

Even if they do not have an active profile on that site, jobseekers can see those pages via a Google search. They can look to your Facebook, Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and Instagram pages for more information and get a candid look inside your company. Actively update and maintain your social media pages, and make sure your organization's values and culture shines through, and gives an accurate and honest look into your workplace.

Some Things Never Go Out of Style...

Online techniques may alienate older candidates or those without regular Internet access. If you are only receiving attention from a certain age group, this technique may not be fair. Be sure to utilize more “traditional” methods of recruiting including job fairs, referrals, and print ads. Partnering with a staffing services organization, like Adams & Martin Group, can ensure you optimize use of both online and traditional techniques, and fairly reach a wide audience.

Interviewing

Interviews are your first opportunity to broaden your understanding of a candidate.

During the interviewing process, once again, be wary of language. It's not illegal to ask how old someone is, but it can make them feel uncomfortable.

Avoid questions and phrases like these; some are rude, some are illegal:

1. **How old are you?**
2. **You're overqualified.**
3. **When do you plan on retiring?**
4. **In my experience, boomers/Xers/millennials are...**

5. **You have too much energy/not enough energy.**
6. **Do you have children? Do you plan to?**
7. **Do you think you're old enough to handle this responsibility?**
8. **We know young people tend to job hop ...**
9. **When did you graduate?**
10. **What's your childcare arrangement?**

It's a good thing there are plenty of other things to discuss in an interview. All jobseekers want to know more about your organization. The interview is your chance to dazzle them as well. Regardless of age, jobseekers want fair pay, comprehensive benefits, and a complementary work culture. Throw these conversation topics around like confetti.

For example, don't assume that only candidates of a certain age group are interested in certain benefits and programs. Lay out all of your company's programs and allow time for plenty of questions.

During the interview, be sure to include culture-based questions and provide honest information about your company's culture. In a survey of more than 200 HR professionals, **90%** of respondents rated recruiting for culture fit as “very important” to “essential.” However, don't skew perceptions of your culture based on the candidate. Make sure their first day—and career—will be everything it's promised to be.

As you get to know candidates, remember that age can limit exposure to certain practices and experiences. Nevertheless you can teach skills (to an extent), but you can't teach culture fit. Be sure that your organization's culture values all age groups. If a candidate is a stellar culture fit, don't pass them over; no one is too young or old to learn something new.

Before, after, and during the interview process, take a moment to conduct a self-assessment: **am I making fair inferences?** You can fight stereotypes simply by reflecting on any biases. If you feel as though you cannot interview fairly, it's best to ask for assistance.

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Retaining an Age-Diverse Workforce

Once you have recruited this fabulous, culturally-sound, age-diverse workforce, dedicated practices will keep your workforce engaged and turnover low.

Involved, passionate employees are more productive, more profitable, and build your organization's culture. Engaged workers consistently outperform non-engaged employees. They provide better service to your customers, remain loyal longer, and are better teammates. It is typical and recommended to create dedicated programs that will facilitate lasting engagement based on employee needs. However, it's unrealistic to have custom policies for certain coworkers. Fortunately, engaging programs and policies know no age limit. For example, if you allow Gen Xers to leave at 3 p.m. to pick up their children from school, you must make this perk available to all employees. This will be appreciated by millennials and boomers alike. Meanwhile, depriving employees without school-aged children can be detrimental to engagement.

According to Quantum Workplace, while there are many factors of engagement, they can be narrowed down to three themes:

- **Confidence in leadership**
- **The organization's commitment to valuing employees**
- **Positive outlook on the future**

This research coincides with our own internal research for employee engagement. We found the three main drivers of employee engagement to be:

- ***"I have confidence in my leaders' directions and decisions"***
- ***"Work culture brings out the best in me"***
- ***"[The organization] is interested in my growth and development"***

What They Really Want:

Boomers 	Gen X 	Millennials 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loyalty• Financial Security• Stability• Positive Work Ethic• Mentoring Other Generations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stability• Flexibility• Work/Life Balance• Child Care Benefits• Elder Care Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Productive & Meaningful Work• Flexibility in Dress/Attire, Scheduling, & Work Arrangements• Recognition• Team Environments

Engagement is crucial for all employees, but there is no quick fix. It may take some time for the practices that you implement to contribute to overall employee engagement. While the programs you implement will serve as the base, engagement is solidified through everyday efforts and interactions. Active efforts of inclusion go beyond the diversity of representation and create cohesive, efficient, and dynamic teams.

Implement

The programs described below will cater to all employees while serving their unique needs.

Pay & Benefits

Employees cannot even think about engagement if their most basic needs are not met. Be sure you are providing comprehensive benefits and calculating salaries objectively by focusing on experience and skill rather than age. To ensure fairness, check out our award-winning Salary Guide [here](#).

Moderate Stress

All people have an optimal stress point, where an individual has enough stress to be motivated but not so much that they become overwhelmed. Boomers are more likely to occupy senior leadership roles and be overwhelmed, while millennials in entry-level jobs may not have enough to stay motivated. Create an open dialogue and share responsibilities to moderate stress based on each employee's unique stress point.

Mentor Programs

Your employees have a lot to learn from one another. Create mentor and reverse mentor programs to increase exposure and teamwork. Retention is **25%** higher for employees who have engaged in company-sponsored mentoring. (Deloitte)

Lead with Transparency

Transparent leadership and practices promote fairness, reduce jealousy, and boost connectedness. How you define transparent leadership will vary depending on your workplace. Focus on sharing information about programs and practices that directly affect your employees.

Structured Career Paths

Regardless of where an employee is in their career, there are always opportunities for growth. Amongst engaged employees, **96%** have a clear idea of what is expected of them and **81%** say their supervisor takes an interest in their career development (Quantum Workplace). When an employee knows exactly what is expected of them, it helps everyone get ahead and it can reduce jealousy and misunderstandings surrounding promotions and growth.

Employee Recognition

Amongst engaged employees, **83%** receive recognition for a job well done (Quantum Workplace). It's not only millennials who want recognition. In fact, **50%** of employees who don't feel valued plan to look for another job in the next year (Huffington Post). Create a structured program to praise and recognize employees. For more information and tips on recognition, check out our White Paper [here](#).

Ongoing Education and Training

Technology is developing and advancing all the time, be sure coworkers of all ages have the opportunity to learn before they

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are replaced. Consider programs like “lunch and learns”, conferences, and off-site classes.

Survey Frequently

Conduct anonymous surveys frequently so employees can voice their opinions and concerns. When reviewing survey results, focus on what you can learn about your employees, rather than evaluating how *you* are doing as an employer. Take immediate action based on those results; do not allow issues to fester. According to TNS Employee Insights, **70%** of engaged employees agree that their organization takes action based on survey results.

Mandatory Fun

It's not mandatory for employees to participate in engagement events, but it's mandatory for you to sponsor activities. Allow for coworkers to intermingle in relaxed environments away from work. This can include happy hours, volunteer efforts, and team competitions. People tend to socially prefer interacting with others who are closer to their own age, so go out of your way to foster collaboration.

Maintaining Employee Engagement

Once your engagement programs are implemented, it's up to your leadership and team managers to create a fair environment. They set the tone and foster day to day collaboration and are champions for inclusion.

Can't we all just get along?

Raised with different parenting methods, historical events, technological advances, and general experiences, conflict is inevitable but not insurmountable.

The villain is not time or each other, it's a lack of communication and understanding. Don't allow yourself to get absorbed into the stereotypical generational differences, instead focus on the real root of the problem and utilize traditional methods of conflict resolution.

For instance, if an Xer is frustrated with a millennial's lack of ability to work independently, the problem is likely not that the millennial needs constant validation and participation trophies. It is more likely that the millennial did not receive the training that they needed. Use generational stereotypes to understand, not condemn or dismiss.

The Responsibility of Inclusion

To promote inclusion, keep an eye out for teammates who may be treating other employees unfairly, and promote plenty of

teamwork and collaboration. Let employees be their authentic selves, but discourage exclusionary behaviors.

Unite your team towards a common cause. All generations are looking for meaning in their work. A shared purpose goes beyond our understanding of age. To learn more about facilitating a shared purpose, read our White Paper [here](#).

Generational differences are nothing new. We have worked through them in the past and we will continue to do so. However, with dedicated efforts and programs, we can make teams even more efficient and effective by focusing on similarities rather than our differences.

Tips from Within

James Sense is a Regional Vice President for Roth Staffing Companies (parent company of Adams & Martin Group). He manages several teams across Southern California, with ages ranging from recent college graduates to some of AMG's most tenured coworkers. Check out his tips for managing a multigenerational workforce:



“Managing different generations can sometimes be difficult, but I have found that if we learn to recognize strengths within each generation, we can take advantage of these strengths and unite as one unstoppable team. The more we can collaborate, intermixing different generations and viewpoints, the more the teams will learn what the tenured coworkers can offer and the tenured coworkers can learn from the newer coworkers innovative ways to do the same tasks. Today's managers have to focus on the overall result, not how it gets done.”

ABOUT US

Adams & Martin Group has received awards for quality and service excellence in alignment with the Malcolm Baldrige criteria and we remain the only staffing firm to be ranked the #1 fastest-growing, privately-held company in the United States by *Inc.* magazine. We are now one of the largest, privately-held staffing companies in the nation.

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