

Strategies to Effectively Manage Multigenerational Teams—Part 2

Here's a roadmap for working with Gen Xers.

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Those in the middle, Generation X, often are overlooked.

The emphasis in generational literature has focused on the retiring baby boomers and the up-and-coming millennials, both of which groups are significantly larger in numbers than Generation X. Most of today's generation discussions focus on those who are retiring—the baby

boomers—and the larger up-and-coming millennial generation. Those in the middle, Generation X, often are overlooked. This is unfortunate, because they provide and represent the next round of potential leaders, managers, and providers of care. They have experience, independence, and skills that are necessary and could be looked upon as those bridging the

gap. In any event, they are essential in the process of meeting the increasing demands for improving patient care in today's highly complex world.

Generation Xers share the key characteristics of being:

- Independent: Their independence is a result of their “latch key” upbringing.

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- **Efficient:** They look for ways to get things done so they can do other things they want to do (e.g., spend time at home). They are project-focused.

- **Reliable:** They have a tendency to stick with their job, even though roughly 40% are in careers that were not their original intent.

- **Device-friendly:** They are familiar with all platforms.

- **Willing to look for outside help:** They are open to and welcome external coaching and are willing to attend conferences. At the same time, they will use the various device options to learn.

- **Resilient:** They stick to it. They know they have to work and continue even with the many ups and downs they have lived through.

- **Seek a work-life balance:** Balance in their personal and work life is important.

Although each characteristic is essential to understand, their inde-

pendent nature is the most useful to consider when assessing how to utilize and take advantage of the abilities and skills of Gen Xers. Employees in this age group are required to work with colleagues who are both older and younger. The older generation has not retired at the pace expected. They continue to work longer due to improved health and the recessions they faced as their careers progressed. The younger generation is equally or more tech savvy and is more impatient than the Gen Xers. It is interesting to note that the older Gen Xers actually are getting close to retirement age, at 55 or older, and the older millennials are now approaching 40.

Even though they are more senior than the millennials, Gen Xers often are passed over for promotions. This raises the interesting question on what investment should be made in which generation. Gen Xers have knowledge of the culture and more experience and should not be forgotten in the grand scheme of things.

Today's healthcare environment is characterized by a great deal of

uncertainty and constant change. The threat of moving from the current system through a value-based system to "Medicare for all" (i.e., some form of a single-payer system) to consolidation, both vertically and horizontally, of the healthcare delivery system leads to the highest level of concern for the future. It is important to make use of the knowledge and skills of the Gen Xers and not skip over them and their talents.

The question is how to ensure

the younger generations. Keys to the future include hiring workers who have flexibility, are willing to change, and are able to adapt to changing technology, as well as recognizing that the knowledge worker has education and skills that can be a real asset to your organization.

Leadership should then recognize

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the characteristics of Generation X listed earlier. The Gen Xer is flexible, reliable, and has a focus on efficiency. What will it take in healthcare to succeed with the increasing demand for services? The answer is: efficiency and a willingness to be flexible in facing change. The Gen Xer can become a leader if he or she is not already one. The Gen Xer can contribute to the organization regardless of his or her position. What has been done to develop the culture to recognize this? Rather than focus on the millennial or the "retiring" boomer, focus on what can be done to use the talent and skills of the Gen Xer.

A culture of learning, applicable to both the millennial generation and Generation X, is essential to keep up with the demands of the future. The Gen Xer is open to attending conferences, with learning and networking opportunities, and also is willing to learn via any digital approach available. This flexibility provides the organization with many options to "invest" in the talent available. The Gen Xer is less likely to seek other employment and more likely to be grateful for the opportunity to learn. There is also a huge need for more highly skilled, technologically savvy knowledge workers to face the constant changes they will see in the future.

The Gen Xer is in between the boomers and the millennials and is, therefore, capable of learning from working with those two generations. Gen Xers are independent, suggesting that micromanagement is not the key, and that they should, instead, be

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The Gen Xer can contribute to the organization regardless of his or her position.

that the Gen Xer is not forgotten and is, in fact, developed to continue to contribute to the goal of providing and improving patient care. A big question to consider is "Who has the best potential for the role of manager?"

A favorite acronym is TWWADI—the way we've always done it! What is the culture of your organization, and what has been done to recognize the many changes noted in healthcare and the evolving millennial and Gen Xer knowledge worker (employee or staff member)? Executive leadership is more likely to be of the boomer generation or the older edge of Generation X. Even at this level, the acronym is applicable due to these workers' comfort, insecurity, or fear of failure, all leading to sameness or lack of change. This attitude eliminates the opportunity to develop

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allowed autonomy in their work environment. This in-between generation also benefits from a collaborative work environment. Consistent and

The more popular approaches to management (e.g., Lean, Agile) suggest that a project focus is key, and the Gen Xer is willing to get involved in projects. Projects must be of interest, not simply something that hap-

security... a 401K option, affordable health insurance, and the like will be important to this demographic.

There are crossover characteristics in each generation. Consider the keys from each generation in your thoughts and staffing plans, but remember that it is not black and white. That being said, when you consider the independence, efficiency focus, reliability, and resilient nature of Gen Xers, they are truly a valuable asset to any organization. **PM**

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regular feedback on job performance is essential. In fact, consider doing away with the annual evaluation in favor of more instant feedback. Consider offering social events beyond the annual holiday party. One caveat: during meetings and activities that are routine or considered not important, Gen Xers are more likely to focus on their devices than either of the border generations.

pens. Getting the Gen Xer engaged with a project, either in leadership or contribution to models, is a great way to improve patient care!

Recognize that Gen Xers are more settled, have families, and desire a good work-life balance. For them, the reward structure is built on education and development. Beyond that, consider benefits that lead to flex time. Also consider some level of



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