

# Managing the Generations

## Understanding Four Generations and Their Impact on Your Business

For the first time in history we have four generations - each with a different set of ideals and priorities about work - working side-by-side in the workplace. There was a time when older workers were the bosses and younger workers did what they were told, no questions asked. There were definite rules as to how the boss was treated and how younger workers treated older workers. There was an expectation that younger workers would put in their time, earn respect, and get promotions after years of proving themselves to their bosses. Now, the rules are being rewritten daily.

At work, generational differences can affect everything. The way that these four groups of employees look at work affects how you can effectively build teams, deal with change, motivate and manage, and maintain productivity. It affects how you communicate, attract and retain workers, and how they work together (without misunderstandings rooted in generational differences).

As an employer, it's critical that you understand what motivates, inspires, and is important to each generation if you wish to create a work environment where everyone is working at peak productivity, getting along with one another, and working well together. One size management definitely no longer fits all employees. Greg Hammill, Director of Intern and Student Programs at Fairleigh Dickson University's Siberman College of Business, offers the following summary to help you understand the workplace characteristics of each group.

### The Veterans (born between 1922-1945)

**Work ethic and values** - Veterans value hard work and respect authority in the workplace. They are willing to sacrifice to help the company be successful, and believe in duty before fun. They have no trouble adhering to the rules and put their heads down to get the job done, no matter how boring or unsatisfying. Work to them is an obligation - a way to support the family.

**Leadership and Communication** - Veteran leaders are directive - they command and control. They prefer formal communications in the workplace (memos and reports). Their interaction style is individual - one-to-one.

**Feedback and Rewards** - No news is good news for the Veterans. Their satisfaction comes from a job well done, not from external rewards. They do not require praise from an employer, and as long as they are paid fairly for their work, they are happy. They are motivated by having their experience validated and respected through increased responsibility and promotions.

**Work/Life Balance** - work is work and family is family, and the two do not connect.

### The Baby Boomers (born between 1946-1964)

**Work ethic and values** - Boomers tend to be workaholics. They work efficiently, desire quality, and look for personal fulfillment in their work. They question authority and crusade for causes. They view work as an exciting adventure, and are generally not interested in work they don't enjoy.

**Leadership and Communication** - Boomers tend to lead in a way that is consensual and collegial. Their style of interaction tends to be team-oriented, and they enjoy participating in group activities at work. They prefer in-person as opposed to digital communication.

**Feedback and Rewards** - Feedback is great, but Boomers prefer to see their rewards by way of money and recognition. Give them a bonus and a new title and they're happy. They are motivated by being valued by their employers, and feeling needed in the organization. They want to know they're making a difference.

**Work/Life Balance** - this is a misnomer for most Boomers - as they have had little balance in their work lives - work has always come first.

## **Generation X (born between 1965-1980)**

**Work ethic and values** - Gen X'ers value structure and direction. They are self-reliant skeptics and work for them is a difficult challenge. It is a contract between them and the employer where they are paid for agreed upon work.

**Leadership and Communication** - Generation X leads in an egalitarian way. They want to see a level playing field and feel everyone is a player in the game. They are not afraid to challenge others (including authority) and ask why. Their interactive style is entrepreneurial and they look for new ways to do things. They communicate directly, and prefer communication to be immediate.

**Feedback and Rewards** - For Gen X, feedback is vital. If they don't get it, they'll come and ask for it. They are motivated by freedom, the ability to do things their way, and a lack of rules.

**Work/Life Balance** - Gen X is the first generation to really bring the idea of work/life balance to the workplace. They believe work is equally as important as family and are committed to both.

## **Generation Y (born between 1981-2000)**

**Work ethic and values** - Gen Y is always looking at what's next. They are born knowing how to multi-task and demonstrate tenacity and an entrepreneurial spirit in the workplace. They are tolerant of other perspectives and are accustomed to accepting everyone's way as a possibility. Work for them is a means to an end - they do want fulfillment in their work, but work funds fun.

**Leadership and Communication** - Gen Y'ers have not been in the workforce long enough for the characteristics of their leadership style to be determined. They prefer to communicate electronically - via email, text or voice mail and their interaction style is participative. They value others on the team and want to collaborate.

**Feedback and Rewards** - This generation looks for meaningful work, and want feedback that is immediate. They want everything at the push of a button. They are the "instant" generation. They are highly motivated by the promise of working with other bright, creative people.

**Work/Life Balance** - work is great, but fun is better. Gen Y wants balance, but would err on the side of "life" if they had to choose.

Understanding the way the different generations think, what they value, how they are motivated, and how they communicate can give you a better sense of how to manage them in your business to achieve greater productivity and collaboration. To read Hammill's informative article in its entirety, [click here](#).

## **Unique Business Ideas, Uniquely Canadian**

If you've been in business for a while, you may have experienced the kind of plateau entrepreneurs sometimes go through when business is humming along. There's nothing really wrong, but you can get in a rut where you're not necessarily keeping things fresh and innovative either. We've come across some unique Canadian businesses that have gained success by putting a new twist on an old idea, responding to a trend already present in the marketplace, or doing something no one else has done. We hope you enjoy reading about these interesting, proudly Canadian businesses and that they may cause you to think about your own business in a new and inspired way.

### **The Soap Dispensary**

The Soap Dispensary, a Vancouver based company that opened in October, offers a wide range of biodegradable and gentle soaps suitable for children, pets and people with sensitivities and allergies. A variety of established Canadian soap brands are represented among its offerings, as are products from other regions that fit with the store's refill-friendly focus. Products available at The Soap Dispensary come in bulk quantities and fully reusable bottles, thus helping to keep single-use plastic packaging out of landfills, watersheds and recycling systems. [www.thesoapdispensary.com](http://www.thesoapdispensary.com)

### **Make Cheese**

With a rising consumer interest in the ethical and environmental credentials of their grocery essentials, as well as increasing food prices, "grow your own" initiatives that put the food supply power back in the hands of the consumer are becoming increasingly popular. Now in Alberta, Make Cheese enables households to do exactly that for cheese, with all-in-one kits containing ingredients, equipment and recipes. Providing consumers with simple ways to create their own produce in the home, initiatives such as these offer chemical-free and cheaper alternatives to supermarket shopping. [www.makecheese.ca](http://www.makecheese.ca)

### **Moral Fibers**

This ethical fashion label was started by two Canadian business students earlier this year. Currently working with artists in Haiti, their mission is to give artists employment opportunities that will help them to develop their creative talent, and enable them to earn a wage almost four times higher than the national average. Moral Fibers commissions each artist to produce 12 pieces of art a month, which they buy for \$10 US a piece. If a painting is chosen to be printed on clothing, its creator will also receive 15 per cent of the revenue from every t-shirt sold. With hopes to expand to other countries, the Moral Fibers business model ensures a constant supply of fresh designs, while guaranteeing artists a decent salary to support their families. [www.moralfibers.co](http://www.moralfibers.co)

### **Library Rents People to Supplement Books**

A new public library, soon to open in Surrey, B.C., is planning to lend out human beings as well as more traditional media as a way to supplement books with local human expertise. Slated to open sometime in the coming weeks, Surrey's 77,000-square-foot City Centre Library will be

notable in many ways. The \$36 million library will allow users to "check out" human experts with knowledge of particular topics. Numerous such "living books" have reportedly already volunteered and will be available for chats over coffee in the library's new Café.  
[www.surreylibraries.ca](http://www.surreylibraries.ca)

### **Free Press Café**

The Winnipeg Free Press is the first newspaper in Canada to open a news Café where three of their employees work permanently, giving the public direct dialogue with newspaper staff. The Café serves up a menu of locally-sourced, organic dishes to office workers, while also functioning as the workspace of the newspaper's multi-media team. Open daily, it also hosts special events organized by the newspaper, such as book readings, music gigs, and earlier this month it streamed the live results of the Manitoba election, followed by a Q&A session with Café guests. The Café gives the public open access to journalists and editors. Hoping to attract a larger younger audience, the paper claims to have seen increased social media presence as well as more visitors to the Café, which suggests that giving a face to the newspaper has succeeded in boosting community engagement. [www.winnipegfreepress.com/cafe](http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/cafe)

Innovation is the key to business survival in a competitive, global marketplace. Can you take something your business currently offers and give it a unique twist? Can you capitalize on a current trend? Have you got an idea for something that's never been done? Look at your business with fresh eyes to see what new ideas you might bring to the marketplace.

## **Business by Design**

### **Using Visual Tools to Generate Excitement for Your Business**

In your mind you have a very clear vision for your business. You know exactly where you see it going and how you are going to get it there. You live it and breathe it every day and it rolls around in your head during almost everything you do. You are looking at that picture 14 hours a day. But are the people on your team (your family, your employees, your partners) seeing the same picture? Do they know what you see and are they aware of their role in helping you get there? Having it written down in a formal plan is effective, especially in helping keep you on track, but using creativity and visual tools can help the people around you get on board with your vision in a much more powerful way. Think of the difference between watching a movie on the big screen and having someone else tell you about the movie. Which has more impact? When they see the picture too, they can get excited about it. When they see their role in the picture, they'll work twice as hard to make it happen. Here are some creative ways you can start that process.

#### **Map**

Just like we use maps when we are looking for directions to get from point A to point B, draw a map that shows where you are now, where you want to go, and the route you want to take to get there. One method, if you're particularly creative, is to draw the map yourself and then present it to your team and discuss the details. You might find it more helpful to simply enter your start and end points and have your team brainstorm the potential routes. You might be surprised at the things they come up with. Use all the typical things you'd find on a map - roadblocks, street signs, bridges, rivers or lakes, expressways and back-roads. There are all kinds of processes to get where you want to go. You might even want to discuss alternate routes in case you run into construction or road closures. Once your team has created the map,

have it reproduced in a large format and hang it in your staff room or office as a visual reminder of your chosen direction.

### **Stairway**

Another effective visual is the image of a staircase. Draw a staircase with the bottom step being where you are now and the top step being where you'd like to be in a given timeframe (say 3 years). Write down the broad steps that need to be taken to achieve your goal (with timeframes for each step). Once you've listed the broad steps, break each step down into a smaller staircase and write down the micro-steps you need to take to get to the next main level. Again, once you're done, enlarge it and place it somewhere prominent so it becomes a daily reminder of your goals.

### **Blueprint**

If you've ever built a house, you'll know it's impossible to do so without a blueprint. This is another visual tool that can be effective in imagining your vision. It's a bit more metaphorical than the first two, but can be fun nonetheless - especially if you or someone on your team is familiar with the blueprint process. What is your foundation? What do your studs consist of? Where will you place the walls and why? Where are the doors and in which direction will they open? Where will your windows be located? How much room do you need for storage? How many floors will your building have and how will they be organized? What will make up your roof? What materials will you use to build with? Create your blueprint and display it so your team can see how you're progressing on the building of your business "house."

### **Drawing**

Drawing can be a fun and creative way to envision business success. Gather your team together and let them come up with the metaphor that will represent your business. Maybe it will be a farm, or a city, perhaps a playground, an office complex, a resort, or a small town. Let your creative juices flow. Once you've created your metaphor, draw it out and ask yourself the questions that might be pertinent to that image. If you've chosen a small town for example, where will you put your town hall, the library, the industrial sector, and what do each of these represent in your business? Have some fun with this. You could even hire an artist once you're done to create a professional representation of your work. Hang it in your reception area. It will be a great conversation starter for people who come in to your business and will give you and your staff the opportunity to share your vision with them as well.

### **Photograph Collage**

If you're a hobby photographer, take pictures of things that represent your business success and vision. It might be the wide open spaces of a cornfield that represent infinite possibility, it might be a mountain climber that represents commitment and dedication to a task, it could be a computer chip that represents progress, innovation and the future. Combine them to create an artful collage of the elements that are important to you. Get your team to contribute their photos and/or ideas to add to what's already there. Look at each photo you've presented and ask what other images or ideas are generated from that photograph. Once all your photos are collected, mount them onto a large board and laminate it to display in your workplace. Don't let not being a photographer stop you from trying this exercise. There are plenty of sites on the web to download stock photos inexpensively. These sites are highly searchable so you could type in concrete words like "field" or "street signs", but you can also type in context words like "dedication" and "ingenuity" and it will bring up images that relate to your chosen theme.

If you're feeling a little stuck and want to generate excitement about your business vision, try one of these creative activities. They'll not only give you and your team a concrete visual

reminder of your goals, but will provide some fun, out-of-the-ordinary experiences for everyone to build a stronger sense of team and synergy in your business.

## **Killer Clutter**

### **Three Ways That Clutter Can Affect Your Business Productivity**

If your business isn't client-facing and you don't regularly see customers at your location, you might not think that keeping your office clean and clutter free is important. After all, if you're the only one who sees the clutter, does it really matter? So your desk is a mess with piles of paper everywhere - you know where everything is right? So you've got a few days of dirty dishes on the counter - who's going to notice or care? And those boxes, spread throughout the office that need to go into storage? They'll get there eventually. You need to focus on your business and not tidying up, right? Even if no one but you sees it, clutter can negatively affect your personal productivity. Here are some good reasons to think about giving your office a top-to-bottom clean-up, and then keeping it that way.

#### **Clutter Undermines Your Productivity**

Clutter is a distraction, whether you realize it or not. You might think you're concentrating on something else, but those dirty dishes and wayward boxes really are on your mind, even if only subconsciously. They're on your mental "to do" list for when you have a moment, and while they are sitting there, they're taking up valuable space and causing you to be less focused on what you're doing. When your space is tidy, your mind is able to concentrate more fully on the tasks at hand. When your space is clean, you'll actually find yourself calmer, more physically relaxed, and more focused.

#### **Clutter Leads the Way to Procrastination**

Clutter calls you from one thing to another, and if you are the procrastinating type, it keeps you from focusing on your work by constantly demanding your attention. Say you are working on a difficult project and you get stuck. You get up to take a stretch break before you get back to the problem, but as you look around the room you notice the piles of paper on the counter and head over to begin sorting through them. You then want to put the papers away but realize your filing cabinet is overflowing and you can't put the organized papers in there until you clear out the top drawer. Once the drawer is clear and you've filed your papers, you need to do something with all the stuff you've taken out of the drawers, and on it goes. Your cluttered environment can seriously affect your concentration. If there was nothing to distract you because your environment was neat and tidy, you'd be much more likely to simply sit back down after your stretch, and dive back into the problem!

#### **Clutter Kills Time**

It is simply not possible to be organized when your environment is full of clutter. Whenever you need something, you will waste valuable time searching for it. Hours can be spent looking for things, and over time those hours add up. The time that you waste could have been spent on valuable business activities like producing quality work, marketing your services, selling your product, or meeting potential new clients.

Take a look around you. Be honest. What is the clutter factor in your workspace? Could you use a day's worth of de-cluttering? The time you spend clearing up your space will pay you back in spades with increased concentration, more energy, and greater productivity. When you're done, you'll breathe a sigh of relief and wonder why you didn't do it sooner!

## 7 Tips for Innovative Business Success

### Business Principles Worth Sharing from Apple's Leader

Recently, the world lost one of the most visionary and brilliant business leaders of our time. Whether you loved him or whether you didn't, you can't deny that your life, in some way, was impacted by him. Steve Jobs will be remembered by some as a consumer tech visionary developing groundbreaking products ("It's not the consumers' job to know what they want," said Jobs).

Others will remember him as a charismatic genius with a self-assured management style and unconventional approach to business. Often criticized for his intense and singular focus, attention to detail and extremely high expectations of the people who worked for him, Jobs carried the burden of being a brilliant visionary. He envisioned things years before they became a reality, and other raced behind him trying to bring to life what was so clear in his head, it was almost as if he'd already used it. He could be a hard task master, but he was fiercely committed to the people he worked for, to the ideas he knew would change the world, and to the consumers for whom he was creating.

This visionary icon lived by principles that precipitated Apple's meteoric rise to what is arguably, the most valuable company on the planet. These principles (as detailed in *The Innovation Secrets of Steve Jobs*, McGraw-Hill, 2010) are universal - they apply to everyone - and given the success they brought to Jobs, are worth considering as you build your business.

1. **Do what you love.** Jobs once said, "People with passion can change the world for the better." Asked about the advice he would offer would-be entrepreneurs, he said, "I'd get a job as a busboy or something until I figured out what I was really passionate about." That's how much it meant to him. Passion is everything.
2. **Put a dent in the universe.** Jobs believed in the power of vision. He once asked then-Pepsi President, John Sculley, "Do you want to spend your life selling sugar water or do you want to change the world?" Don't lose sight of the big vision.
3. **Kick start your brain.** Jobs once said creativity is connecting things. He meant that people with a broad set of life experiences can often see things that others miss. He took calligraphy classes that didn't have any practical use in his life -- until he built the Macintosh. Jobs traveled to India and Asia. He studied design and hospitality. Don't live in a bubble. Connect ideas from different fields.
4. Say no to 1,000 things. Jobs was as proud of what Apple chose not to do as he was of what Apple did. When he returned in Apple in 1997, he took a company with 350 products and reduced them to 10 products in a two-year period. Why? So he could put the "A-Team" on each product. What are you saying "no" to?
5. **Create insanely different experiences.** Jobs also sought innovation in the customer-service experience. When he first came up with the concept of Apple Stores, he said they would be different because instead of just moving boxes, the stores would enrich lives. Everything about the experience you have when you walk into an Apple store is

intended to enrich your life and to create an emotional connection between you and the Apple brand. What are you doing to enrich the lives of your customers?

6. **Master the message.** You can have the greatest idea in the world, but if you can't communicate your ideas, it doesn't matter. Jobs was the world's greatest corporate storyteller. Instead of simply delivering a presentation like most people do, he informed, he educated, he inspired and he entertained, all in one presentation.
7. **Sell dreams, not products.** Jobs captured our imagination because he really understood his customer. He knew that tablets would not capture our imaginations if they were too complicated. The result? One button on the front of an iPad. It's so simple, a 2-year-old can use it. Your customers don't care about your product. They care about themselves, their hopes, their ambitions. Jobs taught us that if you help your customers reach their dreams, you'll win their undying loyalty.

Jobs died at the age of 56, but he left a legacy that is unparalleled in this generation. In June of 2005, he gave a commencement speech at Stanford University. This quote from that speech sums up the man and his vision.

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And, most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary."

What's your dream? What do you envision for your business and your life? What do you truly want to become? Food for thought from someone who was true to those convictions and changed the world.