

Perspectives

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Generations in the Workplace

What's the Impact of Five Generations in the Workplace on Real Estate Decisions?

A strong corporate culture consists of the intangible values that embody your brand.

For the first time in history we have five generations sharing the same workplace and spanning over eight decades of age related workers. What characteristics define each generation? What do these generations want in a workplace? What do they expect of leadership and why does this matter?

The five generations are defined as Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials and Gen Zers. Corporate facilities will have to continually blend the differing needs, wants and desires of each generation to maximize productivity, profitability and the cultural experience of all employees. With the Traditionalists reaching the twilight of their work experience, the workplace continues to evolve. However, make no mistake, the expectations of the Boomers, Gen X'ers, Millennials, and Gen Z'ers are dramatically different and "one size does not fit all."

The successful work experience of today must optimize productivity and collaboration while accommodating the specific needs of each generation in an organization's workforce. This means providing an array of social activities, a variety of work experiences, flexible work schedules, remote working initiatives, technology resources, collaborative workspaces, safety and health initiatives, leadership development programs, a balanced work-life environment, emotional support and change management programs that all invigorate innovation," just to name a few." The ongoing challenge will be managing this shift in the workplace with a detailed focus on the bottom line while at the same time offering the worker more control and flexibility over their work environment.

The workplace is becoming more purposeful and adaptive to the varying needs of each generation. This is manifesting itself through the ongoing focus on social well-being and healthy workplace initiatives that provide a strong sense of belonging to an organization. These are important attributes of a balanced, connected and highly nuanced work-life experience. The most efficient and successful workplaces will be those that are willing to adjust to the needs of their employees and implement meaningful change management programs.

As the younger generations become a greater percentage of the workforce, we will see the need for more amenities, dedicated spaces that foster collaboration, private areas for “head-down” work, outdoor areas for gathering in fresh air and impromptu areas where the natural “casual collision” of personal interaction sparks innovation.

While location will always be important in making smart real estate decisions, the heightened understanding that all of these workplace attributes are tremendously important to accommodate today's workforce. Successful decision makers must learn how to engage and lead these generations to drive business performance as part of their overarching real estate strategy.

The Generations:

Traditionalists (1925-1945): 2% of workforce

- Dependable and straightforward
- Prefer personal touch communication (handwritten letters)
- Motivated by respect and providing value

Baby Boomers (1946-1964): 25% of workforce

- Competitive, workaholic, team oriented, impatient
- Prefers most efficient form of communication (Email and phone)
- Motivated by company loyalty and teamwork

Generation X (1965-1980): 33% of workforce

- Flexible, skeptical, independent
- Prefers most efficient form of communication (Email and phone)
- Motivated by work-life balance, personal interests, and compensation

Millennials (1981-2000): 35% of workforce

- Fiercely independent, achievement oriented, open-minded
- Prefer IMs, texts, and email to communicate
- Motivated by quality of management and a unique work experience

Generation Z (1996-Present)

- Progressive, less focused
- Prefer IM's, texts, and social media to communicate
- Motivated by individuality and creativity

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