

# Managing a multi-generational workforce

Each generation has different work expectations. How can organisations address this challenge effectively without compromising on its core values? Nicol Myburgh, Head of the HR Business Unit at CRS Technologies, believes that while a standardised approach is ill advised, there are other opportunities to become more attentive to the requirements of a multi-generational workforce.



“Every generation has its own value system and way of working,” he explains. “Some of the millennial value drivers include receiving praise, being rewarded for participating, and the need to feel valued. Baby Boomers have a strong work ethic, are competitive, self-assured and independent, and unafraid of a hard day’s work.”

“Some might argue that one of the reasons behind these differences is that Baby Boomers had to work hard for everything they achieved and did not want their children to go through the same struggles they experienced. Consequently, they gave their children everything they wanted. Unfortunately, this cultivated a sense of entitlement.”

“Managing these differences can be extremely challenging. Baby Boomers sometimes view millennials as being disrespectful even though the latter might not feel this is the case. Another example is that Baby Boomers were taught that it is essential to acknowledge mistakes made and as far as possible, correct them. Millennials, on the other hand, look for ways to hide their mistakes.”

## Changing ways

Despite the criticism millennials face, one of the most often overlooked benefits of the new generation is that they can teach themselves.

Millennials rely heavily on sites such as YouTube to acquire skills they do not have when they need them. This can be something as simplistic as changing a flat tyre or more complex such as servicing a car. This negates the need for formal qualifications or having to rely on another expert to teach them.

“It’s simply a matter of doing a quick search online to find out how to do something,” says Myburgh. “Of course, there needs to be an understanding of how to effectively search for something online and which paths to follow to get the results in the shortest time possible.”

## **Separation anxiety**

The evolution of technology has also resulted in the creation of a mobile workforce.

This means the various generations can be physically separated from one another. It is also an effective way of avoiding confrontations that could develop as a result of differing value systems, approaches to work, and so on.

Typically, older generations prefer their own office, while millennials enjoy working in an open plan environment.

“But even though splitting the generations might be an effective tactic, decision-makers should focus on teaching the different groups to respect one another’s differences and focus instead on their respective strengths,” Myburgh points out. “Creating a more collaborative work environment will bring its own benefits, especially as companies look to digitally transform themselves. Linking the generations together might just be the best way to do so.”

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