

Introduction to Managing Today's Employees

Today's employees are more diverse than ever, comprised of people from different generations, with different skills, attitudes, and goals.

*" 'Come to the edge,' he said.
They said, 'We are afraid.'
"Come to the edge,' he said.
They came. He pushed
them...and they flew."*

Guillaume Apollinaire

A good manager is like a fine musician—constantly finding ways to tune and retune the department staff comprised of people from different generations, with different skills, attitudes, and goals. The ability to create an effective, purposeful team of knowledgeable, motivated employees can make the difference between a department's success or failure, and can significantly impact your credit union's ability to compete.

Generational Differences

Today's employees are more diverse than ever, comprised of people from different age groups, reflecting different generational traits. An often unrecognized issue that many managers face is the impact of generational differences in their work group. In studies

Objectives

In this introductory chapter, you'll learn to:

1. Recognize the generations co-existing today and the characteristics of each;
2. Identify two generational differences within employee groups;
3. Describe four employee challenges facing managers today; and
4. Recognize key staff members from ABC Community Federal Credit Union.

conducted every five years by the Families and Work Institute, generational differences proved to be a significant factor in workplace dynamics.

These differences will be discussed throughout this book. Familiarizing yourself with them will help you manage your employees better.

The Families and Work Institute breaks generations into five groups:

1. Millennials, born between 1982 and the present;

Activity 1.1

Unique Challenges



Your learning will be more effective if you apply the concepts you will learn in this course to the context of your own credit union. To help yourself focus on application in your department or credit union, list your four biggest challenges in the space below. You can refer back to this list as you work through the chapters in this text.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

2. Generation X, born between 1961 and 1981;
3. Baby Boomers, born between 1943 and 1960;
4. Silents, born between 1925 and 1942; and
5. The GI Generation, born before 1925.

The Impact of Generational Differences

According to the Institute's report, "The National Study of Changing Workforce," different generations have clearly different priorities. The resulting contrasts in core values can sometimes lead to generational conflicts. An example of generational differences in attitudes toward work and family provides an illustration of one source of

intergenerational conflict.

While Boomers tend to be more work-centric, Generation Xers and Millennials are generally more family-oriented or dual-focused, and they are less accepting of traditional family roles, such as mother as caregiver and father as breadwinner. For the younger generation, it's no longer solely the woman's role to handle issues such as doctor visits for sick children. A work-centric Baby Boomer manager may not understand when younger fathers take time off to share in child-care needs, to care for sick children, and to spend time with their families.

A Baby Boomer may also bristle when younger employees' dismissal of traditional family roles is echoed in their casual attitudes about the tradi-

Activity 1.2

Identifying Generational Differences Among Your Staff



Do you have the potential for generational differences among the people you manage? Use the following space to list the names of your staff by generation. Then photocopy your chart or refer back to it throughout your work in this course.

Generation	Staff Names
Millennials	
Generation X	
Baby Boomers	
Silents	
GI generation	

Understanding generational impact can go a long way toward helping create a cohesive, knowledgeable, motivated staff, and a more successful department.

tional roles of supervisor and subordinate. Conversely, a Generation X manager may not understand why a Baby Boomer employee struggles to master a software program.

Understanding generational impact can go a long way toward helping create a cohesive, knowledgeable, motivated staff, and a more successful department. In recent years, Boomers and Generation Xers have had to learn to understand each other and find ways to work together constructively. The problem lies in their basic differences in values, and how they see the workplace. The following activity contains a chart that compares the groups' differences.

The newest group to enter the workforce is also today's hottest commodity. This generation has been called "Generation Y," the "Nexters," and "Nintendo Generation." We'll call them the Millennials (1982-present). Millennials are sociable, optimistic, well-educated, collaborative, open-minded, and achievement-oriented. In the workplace, Millennials' enthusiasm and optimism may sometimes clash with more skeptical Generation Xers and older Boomers. With their skills

and work ethic, they could soon be promoted to supervise Boomers and Generation Xers. This could present its own set of managerial challenges.

Why is it important to understand the differences in generations that make up the workplace? Because in this uncertain economy and highly competitive financial services environment, organization across North America recognize that the competitive edge lies in their people. Those financial institutions that know how to recruit, manage, motivate, and retain employees, and forge them into a competent, effective team, will have a significant advantage in the marketplace.

Employee Challenges

Generational differences can complicate any office environment, but it's not the only issue facing managers. In the near future, supervisors will be asked to deal with many challenges, including the exodus of their Baby Boomer employees, an ever-changing workplace, ongoing problems presented by poor employee performance; and the delicate business of hiring the right people for the right jobs.

Activity 1.3

Typical Boomers and Gen Xers



This chart lists the attitudes of the typical Boomer and Gen Xer. Do you recognize these tendencies in your own employees? Review the lists and put a check mark beside the descriptors that fit your employees who are Boomers and Gen Xers.

Boomer	Generation Xers
Outlook: optimistic	Outlook: skeptical
Work ethic: driven	Work ethic: balanced/family-oriented
View of authority: love/hate	View of authority: unimpressed
Relationships: personal	Relationships: reluctant to commit
Perspective: team	Perspective: individual

Activity 1.4

**Review of
Generational
Traits**



Check your understanding of various generational traits. Match the description to the appropriate generation or generations. An entry may have more than one answer.

- a. Boomers
- b. Generation Xers
- c. Millennials
- d. Silent Generation
- e. GI Generation

- _____ 1. They're getting ready for retirement
- _____ 2. Two generations that split their focus between work and family. Their work is extremely important to them
- _____ 3. The youngest generation in the workforce
- _____ 4. This group is likely to be more skeptical
- _____ 5. This group is optimistic and enthusiastic
- _____ 6. Which two groups are more likely to work in collaboration?

Answers appear in appendix A.

Exodus of Baby Boomers

One of the biggest issues in the workplace today is the departure of Baby Boomers as they retire. When they leave, they may be taking huge amounts of departmental knowledge with them. Managers who don't take the time to

capture that knowledge before it departs could find their department in a temporary bind as they try to fill the knowledge gap. What can a manager do to ensure that Boomers deposit that important knowledge with others before they retire?

Activity 1.5

**Preparing for the
Boomer Exodus**



Assess your department's risk posed by Boomer retirement by answering the following questions.

- 1. Do you have Boomers on your staff? _____
- 2. List their core responsibilities: _____

- 3. Do you know if they're preparing to leave? _____
- 4. Are you cross-training replacements? _____

Activity 1.6

More Differences



Use the following space to note which types of differences have the most potential to create communication breakdowns among your staff.

Other Differences and Changes

Generational differences are just one example of ways that employees can differ from each other. Differences in religious, ethnic, racial, gender, political and educational backgrounds also have the potential to create communication barriers based on different values or outlooks. Personality and communication style are two other areas in which your team members probably differ.

to learn and relearn their jobs. Still, some employees have trouble keeping up, while others simply resist change and refuse to adapt. It's up to managers to clearly communicate the corporate vision, then help employees make the changes that will keep them in the game.

You can access more information about the changing workplace at www.businessknowhow.com.

The Ever-Changing Workplace

Today, organizations are changing faster than ever to match the competition, meet customer expectations, and implement emerging technology. Employees are under constant pressure

Performance Issues

Perhaps the most difficult challenge for any manager is an employee with a performance problem. This can be a trying, perplexing situation, and will draw on every one of the manager's

Figure 1.1

Tips for Confronting Performance Issues

Here is a list of "don'ts" when dealing with performance issues.

1. Don't get emotional.
2. Don't delay discipline.
3. Don't use generalities.
4. Don't do it on the fly, no matter how busy your schedule is.
5. Don't dump on the employee.
6. Don't play favorites.
7. Don't discriminate.
8. Don't act as if you've never made a mistake.

core resources to resolve. Left untreated, performance problems will only get worse, and eventually infect the entire department. Excellent managers find ways to identify, address, and fix performance issues early.

Figure 1.1 gives you a list of tips for dealing with performance issues.

What about the employee who once had the right competencies, but when their role changed, failed to properly adapt to the new realities? What about the employee who took the job without the proper competencies, hoping that training would augment their shortcomings, but it didn't?

In both cases, the manager is typically left with the enormous question of what to do. It's essential to help



employees become an asset to the department, not a liability.

Meet ABC Community Federal Credit Union

Learning is easier when there is a context in which it can be applied. For this reason, the remainder of this book will refer to a case study of a fictitious credit union, ABC Community Federal Credit Union. We will use the member services department as our application context to help you learn about managing today's employees. The department is managed by Ricardo Gonzales, a bright, dedicated manager, a respected supervisor, and a competent credit union employee. An overview of this credit union is shown in the case study.

Summary

This chapter has taught you to recognize the characteristics of generations co-existing today, and to identify generational differences within employee groups. You learned to describe employee challenges facing managers today. You were also introduced to the key staff members of ABC Community Federal Credit Union. The next chapter will provide information about managing employee performance.

Case Study: An Overview of ABC Community Federal Credit Union

ABC Community is a \$350 million federal credit union with over 100 full- and part-time employees. ABC serves over 25,000 members and 86 employee groups. The organization emphasizes planning for the future, and is dedicated to expanding the services it provides to members. The credit union has developed comprehensive one- and five-year plans, and uses customer feedback scores to improve services.

The department consists of seven employees who provide various services to members including opening, closing, and updating accounts, handling complaints, assisting tellers, cross-selling services, and overseeing the member survey.

The department handles approximately 60 transactions a day by phone, the Internet, and face-to-face encounters. Staff ages range from 18 to 56. Employees receive continuous training opportunities in an effort to keep current with policies and trends.

The department also works diligently to adapt itself to the credit union's long-term plans. To keep in step with the credit union's five-year plan, the department has created their own list of goals:

- Become more skilled in Internet use;
- Increase the number of mortgages being serviced; and
- Add small business loans to their list of member services.

Acquiring these skills will require a comprehensive learning plan for current and future staff members. The future promises to be more competitive and more successful than ever.

PLAY PAGE



Complete this activity to see how much you remember about each of the generations.

Reminder:

To access the Play Page, go to <http://training.cuna.org/playpage/index.html> or go to www.cuna.org and type "Play Page" into the Search Box. Select the title of this module, and then the chapter you want to review.

