# Engaging a Multigenerational Workforce

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Thank you, Amy. Hi, everyone. I'm excited that you're here with us today. I'm Annetta Davenport, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and Certified Employee Assistance Professional living in Florida and working for Magellan Federal in their civilian employee assistance program. Thank you for joining us today for this topic. This is a professional sidebar passion of mine because my background as a human performance improvement specialist helping organizations meet their goals by developing their employees' potential.

But I also want people to thrive and enjoy their time in the workforce, because most of us spend a big chunk of our day in activities working and earning a living. So, let's get started.

So, here we are with our objectives. As a reminder, we presented this multigenerational workforce topic a couple week ago for a general audience. The beginning information is the same, but today's webinar is focused on the leaders. How would you as a leader lead a multigenerational workforce for optimal team performance?

So here are our objectives for today's presentation. The first one is we're going to describe the five generations currently in the workplace. Then we're going to learn how each generation influences the workplace. And then we're going to list some tips to help you and your staff embrace the multigenerational workforce.

But let's first start with a discussion and a poll question. And that would be, if people tend to act on preconceived perceptions about generational differences, how does that

contribute to conflict and stress in the workplace? So again, if people tend to act on preconceived perceptions about generational differences, how does that contribute to conflict and stress in the workplace?

>> All right. Great question to kick things off, Annetta. We've got lots of answers coming in. Perfect. Yeah. Lots of things about miscommunication, misunderstandings, biased input, poor communication, misinterpretation, not feeling valued. Lots of great answers on there. You can use the scroll bar if you want to scroll through those and see some of the other answers.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: So now, Amy, as a followup, our second poll question would be, do you think a greater awareness of generational differences can help you as a leader? So, do you think, a greater awareness of generational differences can help you as a leader? Wow, I think we're preaching to the choir today, Amy.

>> (Laughing) We're looking at 95%, yep. And it's anonymous. You guys can be honest. But that's wonderful that we're seeing lots of folks. They feel confident they're going to get a greater awareness and feel like it's going to help them.

>> We're going to go ahead and start with Generation Z. So, the most significant characteristic that they have is that they don't remember the 9/11 terrorist attack. A lot of us might think that's a shock, but they were either too young to have experienced the event, to form memories, or they weren't even born yet. So that's a big eye-opener for a lot of people who have been in the workforce for a long time, because Generation Z are the newest cohorts to come into the workforce.

And so technology is something that they just assume in daily living. And they have a global mindset. And they value diversity and innovation. So, they enjoy working with people, all kinds of different people. And they value skills competency, which I think a lot of people might find surprising, because sometimes Gen Z are quiet and don't express themselves all the time verbally.

But they do highly value skill competency. But they expect their employers to help them get trained, or even get education to learn these work skills, which is pretty commendable. So, this is the point that we want to remember about generations. generations are characterized by the events during their lifetimes and society's trends. That's what bonds people together into generations. And some people, there are a lot of us maybe in the audience right now, who can relate to two generations, because they were born in the in between years.

And according to the experts on generations in the workforce, they have kind of included years for these generations because of these types of characteristics. So for the Gen Z, 1996-2015 would be their birth years. But mostly it's because of the experiences, national and global, that occurred during that time.

So, again, remember to look at your handout, that these generational characteristics are listed for you to review. We encourage you to keep your handout and share this information with your colleagues so that you can have the eye-opening discussions that you never considered before this presentation. The other critical thing about the Gen Zers is that the COVID-19 response occurred at the tail end of many of their high school years.

And this highly impacted them as they went into the workforce. So, you might want to consider how do you think that this might have affected them going into the workforce? A lot of them, their junior and senior years were totally disrupted by the COVID-19 response. Think about, do you have Gen Z coworkers and would you consider the COVID-19 response as highly impacting them.

Now we're going to go into the millennials. They're usually known as millennials. They can also be known as Gen Y, but millennials is more recognizable. And their approximate birth years are 1977 to about 1995, according to Dr. Borne and Jason Dorsey. And in contrast to the Generation Z, the millennials were highly impacted by the 9/11 terrorist attack. So you can kind of see maybe in the workforce, there might be these big question marks, like why don't you remember post-9/11?

So sometimes it requires a dialogue. An informal dialogue. These millennials came of age during a time of fastest changes in technology in our society. So, they welcome technology with open arms. And a key point again here is that they will also be the largest workforce population in the United States and perhaps worldwide. The other thing I would like for you to consider as leaders is that this is anticipated also to be the largest veteran cohort group.

So, it's important to remember about veteran cohorts in disability and workforce, and this is according to recent statistics and research, is that a high percentage are college-degreed and they have real-world experience in leading people and a lot soft skills.

So even if they are starting a new civilian career, remember that they have a lot of skills and competencies that they learned while active duty. And they may have a little bit more in these competencies than someone who may have not been in the military. So that's just something to consider. And again, a lot of their competencies are in the soft skills, a category, as supervisors or with teamwork.

So, millennials, they expect their managers to be competent. They have kind of a keen eye looking for competency. And they are loyal to their colleagues. Sometimes, over their managers. So, there's a lot of fun YouTube videos that talk about how millennials will go into a job interview. They're just for fun. But the point is made they're loyal to their peers.

They value work-life balance mostly because of their childhood experiences. Now, if we go into the next generation, we're looking at Generation X. This is very interesting. They are the first generation to experience personal computer technology. We don't remember when there were no personal computers, right? They were born in the years between 1965 and 1976. They were the first ones that had any kind of personal, digital, usable technology at their fingertips like Atari and Walkman.

We're thinking these are such ancient-sounding names, but they were the first generation. In the workforce, they are beginning to step into senior leadership roles. They value work-life balance and family connections. And they definitely value competency on the job. So this is a common denominator for the millennials and the Gen X. They expect competency.

They were the first ones to experience the global more than crisis and the Acquired Immune Deficiency epidemic, AIDS. A lot of these things, according to their life experiences in their formative years, that may again help them to have a different kind of eye toward work experiences.

They were also the very first generation to experience a latchkey kid phenomenon where both parents worked outside the home. And also they experienced high divorce rates, at least in the U.S. society. And so this is why they value family life and personal interests over, let's say, the company's interests. It makes think when you think about this.

Next, we're going to talk about Baby Boomers, 1946-1964. The key thing here about memory, they are the population that don't have memories of World War II. So just like the Gen Zers who don't remember post-9/11, well, the Baby Boomers don't remember World War II. But they were part of the most massive social changes during their formative years.

So, they do use technology when they see it as useful for getting a job done. They were the generation that experienced first-hand the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, the Counterculture Movement. So you can see they were going through a lot of massive changes in society during their formative years. And it might seem like they might challenge authority, but the truth is, they do follow rules and they prefer structure.

And they prefer stability over frequent changes. So that is something that you might want to consider as a leader when there are organizational changes, or team member changes. Make sure that you're communicating that there will be these changes and what these changes

will look like, and frequently communicate what is coming down the pipeline so that the Baby Boomers in your team and in your organization will have a better sense of being able to manage that change.

Again, they appreciate technology and they will leverage technology to get things done when needed. And the other interesting thing is they are competitive in a good way and they are optimistic. So then we go to the traditionalists. Wow. A lot of us might think, gee, are they still in the workforce? Yes, they are.

Now, their birth years are probably around 1945 and maybe a little bit earlier. And, you know, we're talking about computers these days and handheld technology, but this generation was the first to even experience television and radio. And so we're like, gee, that was so far, long ago. Is this possible? Yes. (Chuckling) So, they were shaped by global events of World War II and the Great Depression.

So they can be somewhat conservative in a way, because they experienced this massive world war experience and then the Great Depression. A lot of them are actually in corporate executive roles. And some, even if they are retired from the workforce, they do a lot of volunteer work. So in a kind of a way, in what particular role they choose, they are still in the workforce even if they're not getting paid a salary.

So, they are very people-oriented. They prefer in-person communication, whether it's face-to-face or even on the telephone. That's just what they prefer because remember, they were the first ones to even experience television and radio technology. So they're used to

in-person type of communication. They thrive on recognition of a job well done because they are very tenacious and they have an ability to persevere through challenges.

So, think World War II, the Great Depression. They learned to just persevere. And at work they experience -- they expect seniority based on age and longevity, like their loyalty to the company. So, they want to be recognized for their loyalty to the company and basically be there when maybe other people haven't been there.

So, generations are also defined by common societal practices present during their developmental years, such as parenting styles, technology use. And their childhood experiences, they will carry over into their adult behaviors. So this is what we want to remember and consider as leaders leading a team of a diverse generational workforce. So we do have another poll question here. And that is, after discussing the five generations, what is something new that you learned today that was like a surprise to you, or maybe you suspected it but now it was confirmed?

So what is something new that you learned today?

>> All right. We've got some great feedback once again. Coming in. Let's see. Yeah, the experience with 9/11. I feel like that was quite a shocker at the last session, too, that you did, Annetta, that a lot of folks didn't realize that. Yeah. The expectations in leadership, that there are still traditionalists working in the workforce. Somebody commented why my kids act the way they do. I like that.

(Laughter)

>> MODERATOR: The childhood experiences carry over, yeah. That's great.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: You know, it's funny about the kids parenting comment, because whenever people talk about generations, it's like oh, my gosh, this is actually happening in my family! (Laughing) It's very interesting. We're talking about the workplace, but this information can be transferred anywhere.

>> MODERATOR: Mhmm. Absolutely.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Yeah.

>> MODERATOR: Wonderful.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: I do appreciate all the comments. Yes. So, what we really want to do now is to consider that as a leader in the workplace, we want to look at how a person's lifespan stage actually influences their job, their approach to work, and when we consider generational influences in the workplace, some workers may not meet our expectations. But it could be dependent upon what stage of development they are.

So let's say you have a high school graduate who may not be the same in values as maybe someone in their 20s because they have not had additional experiences yet. By the time they get to be about 25 they've had some experiences in the workforce under their belt and now they've had some mentors that have led them and helped them develop as a worker and an employee.

So as a leader, just expect that there will be changes in a person's viewpoint as they progress their career and the workforce jobs that they have had and hope to have later in the

future. So, if we were to ask you another poll question. If you were to think about the stages of

the people -- the life stages of the people that you work with or for, or over, are they different

from yours? And how could the difference impact what is important to them and their approach

at work?

So you might want to think about do they have children and what are the ages of their

children? And are they the sandwich generation, taking care of elderly parents as well as their

own growing children. So how would that impact the preference for scheduling and flexibility,

maybe to work remotely, maybe to work on a hybrid setup. Think about those kinds of things.

What do you think?

How would this difference from your life stage affect how you approach them and how

they approach you in the workplace?

>> MODERATOR: Got lots of great answers once again.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Wow.

>> MODERATOR: A lot of folks thinking about the life stages of your staff, is it different

from yours. Lots of yeses to kick things off. And then how can the difference impact what's

important to them and their approach at work. So, lots of comments on yes, stage and family

life, it affects their approach to work. Different values, different life experiences. Trying to

recognize and respect those differences.

They have different work expectations for scheduling, for recognition and reward. Lots

of great feedback once again, you guys.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Yes. And I think we already know how these have impacted us, but maybe we have not attributed the impact to a life stage difference amongst employees. And these age differences, generational differences can be so wide, 20 or 30 years, even. So I'm really thankful for the way the audience is thinking here.

So now we talk about career stage of their development. So, we talked a little bit about the COVID-19 response. So, each person is in a different career developmental stage, but it's not necessarily based on age. We've talked about veterans, but there are also those persons who were displaced by the COVID-19 response. So you may have had people that relied on a career previously that was an in-person, more of a face-to-face type of career.

If you think about the tourist industry, you talk about the hospitality industry and then all of a sudden all these things got shut down. Event planners. So they have to do something different. They had to move to a different career, a lot of them. And so they may look older, although they're in kind of a junior role in a new job, in a new career.

So when we consider these generational influences in the workplace, some workers may not meet our expectations regarding their stage of career development. Someone looking older than they should for that particular role, in a junior, entry-level role. But the best thing to do as leaders -- we have to put aside our assumptions and judgments as to why maybe an older employee may ask more questions about how do their job.

They appear to need more instruction. They could be new in that particular career and that particular position because this is maybe their second career, maybe because of COVID-19.

And then again with the example for veterans, there are some employers that have come together to identify competencies that they see are necessary to be successful in the workplace. And so these include things like knowing what career development looks like, good communication skills, ability to think critically, and to be fair with equity and inclusion that they have some leadership skills.

And they have a degree of professionalism and are able to work with teams and are comfortable with technology. So the veteran cohort is one population that's an example of this. But there are other workers as well. There may be other workers on your team that have a lot of these skills. And they won't tell you unless you ask. So that again is the critical point. You have to get to know your team members.

You have to get to know a little bit about their backgrounds and just in a friendly way, ask them about themselves and be not judgmental and be objective of what you hear. And that actually goes a long way to develop trust in the team relationship. And this is what we want to do. As leaders, we have to develop not just a bond, but that bond has to be built on trust. And trust has to do with getting to know a person offline, not always just asking them about their job, but also a little bit about what are their hobbies and interests, and do they have pets and little things like that that make people smile.

What are their hobbies, get to know each other. During that type of conversation, most people will share a little bit about themselves and maybe a little bit about their previous careers and that kind of thing, and maybe some of the strengths that they have. And so again, we don't

want to assume anything about people, but the only way we cannot assume is to actually ask

people about themselves. So now we're going to look at the U.S. Department of Labor

Competency Model. And this is for industries.

This is the general industry model, competency model. So at the very lower levels, one,

two, and three, the gray and the reddish levels, those are the very beginning competencies that

some employers and the Department of Labor have identified are competencies that all

workforce members should have in order to be successful. So this would be personal

effectiveness, academic competencies, workplace competencies.

So again, you have people on your team that basically, if they are a little bit older and

have been in the workforce for a while, maybe not in that particular job or industry, they do

have a lot of these other two one, two, and three competencies. The best thing to do as a

leader is to engage your team members and as you get to know a little bit about them you will

recognize where their competencies are.

So you want to identify an employee's strengths. And these strengths may be carryovers

from a previous job or career. Be curious as a leader. Be nonjudgmental and be willing to hear

their stories. You can take maybe 5, 10, 15 minutes and ask an open-ended question that

cannot be answered with just a yes or a no but needs a little bit more explaining.

And that way they can tell you a little bit about themselves and feel like they're part of a

team. So, the goal is to develop a bond and a trust in your supervisor relationship with your

employees.

So, we are getting to the end of our presentation, but we have a few parting thoughts. Start with being the example and do what you want your employees to do to develop a team. Model working with each other's strengths and helping to develop other skills at the same time. Begin with the thought that all generational characteristics are assets to the team.

So if we look at these four general areas, recognize the need for flexibility when considering all the approaches and skills and all generational characteristics can be useful to the team. So have that thought. We need to be flexible, all strengths are good, and stress the value of having open conversations about mentoring among all team members.

So regularly inquire about what's going well. Remember to talk about what's going well and why is it going well. What do you know, Joe, Suzy, John, about what's going well and why do you think it's going well and get that feedback from every level, vertical and all the horizontal peers and see what they know and what they bring to the table from their perspective, what they notice as going well.

Encourage everyone to provide solutions. In a brainstorming stage, every idea is not a bad idea. You throw it out there and you talk about maybe one is better than the other. Make it a group effort. Understand that seeing employees through the lens of generational stereotypes is faulty. How many times have we been proven wrong having a stereotype about someone who is younger or older?

So we want to get to know the individuals and their experiences, both personal and professional, to better understand your team's strengths. You want to put these together. And

the fourth category, we want to develop a communication plan. This is extremely important. We want a communication plan that we can expect employees to follow that plan so that all team members can communicate well with each other horizontally, vertically, in multiple ways.

So if you have someone who prefers in-person communication, have a little bit of that. Have a few phone conversations. Have a few in the hallway type of conversations. If there are those who prefer technology, then use the email. Use Teams. Use Zoom if you have to. But use a variety of communication tools to accommodate each person's preference, and then let each person get a little bit more up to speed on certain types of communications that at one time they did not prefer.

So use in-person, use telephone, use email, use text, use group type of apps. Whatever it takes. And let everyone know that you have an eye on their preferences and their needs and that you're respecting that. And I believe that is the end. So we're going to go ahead and summarize our . . . Go back to the objectives. We described the five generations in the workplace.

We learned how each generation influences the workplace and then we had some tips for you to help you and your staff to embrace the multigenerational workforce. So, again, please download and remember to keep your handouts. There's a lot of additional information about the different generations. Share the information and have informal discussions about the handout for question prompts to your team.

So our last poll question, what is your takeaway? What will you do to engage your multigenerational team? And then I'll just hand it over to you, Amy.

>> MODERATOR: Thank you so much, Annetta. This was fantastic. I'm looking at all of these key takeaways that are rolling in here. This is fantastic. So many comments about being open-minded and being respectful to all employees and all of their ideas. That sums it up better than any of us could come up with. So, I love -- a couple folks just polling their coworkers more often, asking for that feedback.

Listening, engaging and being flexible, being inclusive. Absolutely loving all these. Take a moment, scroll through them. Might be something that you hadn't thought about that somebody else is putting out there. So with that, while those comments are still coming in, I'm just going to take a moment. Just want to remind everybody that your program, it is here to help you. It's also available to your family members.

So if you want more information on this topic or other health and wellness topics, please contact Magellan. Your program, it's here to help you. We can help you to be aware of just how you're doing, how you can improve in different areas of your life. We want you to thrive. That is our end goal.

So, you can contact your program day or night, 365 days a year. Doesn't matter if it is midnight on Christmas Eve, you can give us a call. We have toll-free numbers and then we also have our member website. I see that Melanie just put that information into the Q&A pod for us, thank you.

If you don't know your company-specific phone number or website, you can contact

your human resources department to help you. But you can also use that link that is in the Q&A

pod and that will help you look up your information. So I am going to end this poll question

here. It was fantastic. And we have a few minutes for questions. Let's see here. And I'm going to

have this pulled up while we go through the questions here.

Just give us some feedback on today's session. Let us know what topics you are

interested in to learn about for 2025. Yes, we have already started planning. (Chuckling) But go

ahead, give us some feedback on what you're looking for and then of course you can also type

any feedback that you have about today's session. We also have a certificate of completion

that's available for download.

So all of that will be up and running while Annetta answers some questions for us. And

Annetta, we do have a few good ones for you, so I'm going to go through these and read them.

So, one question that came in was, do you have any tips on working with those who are on the

edges of the different generations? One example here, this individual was born in 1978 but

would be offended to be called a millennial.

They always thought they were a Gen Xer. So, any tips on working with those who fall

into two categories there?

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Yes. And this is the perfect example of getting to know that

person the best you can. Because I have actually talked to people and they say, I was born kind

of in between, but I definitely am the previous generation. I don't relate to the younger ones. So

it's true, it is a very individualistic type of situation mostly. And some of these things can actually be cultural as well.

So again, ask the person, what are your preferences for technology, for work-life balance, what do you need as an employee working for this organization. And get that person's feedback that is very specific. And then be open again and be flexible to do the best you can as a leader to accommodate what their requests are. But it's definitely worth the effort to get to know this person.

And if you are that person, then just volunteer to let people know, I really identify with Gen X. And that's what I prefer a lot of their characteristics. So this is why very specific, getting to know your employee on your team is highly critical, because we don't know until we ask that question.

>> MODERATOR: That's great. Thanks, Annetta. So, another question that came in is, can you discuss your experience with Gen Zers? Are they -- let me make sure I'm reading this right. Are they taking courses to learn how to work with the many generations before them? This individual says they have never taken a class like this at start of their career. It seems like we have to learn how to work with Gen Z and not the other way around. So, any comments or thoughts on that?

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Yes. Actually, I really appreciate that approach, because we do have to keep an eye on the fact that sometimes when we have people around us that are younger, they haven't had the experiences, maybe, that I might have had. And so we do want to

respect that and reach out to them and ask them what do you think you would like to see in

your first job, or in the company. And what could we help you with.

And let them tell you. I was pretty impressed -- I saw a video the other day on YouTube

of the best barbecue joint in Texas. And I thought this is interesting. Let me check it out. And do

you know, every single person that worked there, I would say were Gen Zers. Every single one of

them. And they worked very hard. They got up at 4:00 in the morning, they prepared, they

prepped and smoked their meat.

And it was very, very impressive because, when we hear these stories, we don't think

about the very young workforce having that kind of skill, or drive, and that kind of motivation to

really get out there. But they all owned a part of that business, that barbecue joint. And so

again, I was very impressed. That shattered a lot of my -- I guess my stereotype, because I

assumed that Gen Zers only preferred technology and jobs that dealt with technology.

But here they were, these young people, using their hands. And they were

entrepreneurs. And they were really -- they made, in their short few years within the workforce,

the best barbecue joint in Texas. It was very impressive. So, reach out to the younger

generation. Actually talk to them, ask them. They may be a little reluctant to share some stuff.

But help them to know that if they want to gain competencies, that you might be

available to do informal mentoring or maybe find resources for them. There are a lot of courses

on LinkedIn, for instance. And a lot of the younger generation really appreciate certifications

and micro-certifications, or skill sets that they can actually put on a resume, because they are

invested. They want to do the best job that they can and really be able to work in an environment and for a company that they enjoy being in.

>> MODERATOR: Wonderful. Thank you, Annetta. So it looks like we've got a couple minutes left here. So we'll -- we've got another question here. This person said, can you touch on the importance of understanding that many of the Baby Boomers and traditionalists may still be working due to financial reasons. So there is a level of empathy for each generation to keep in mind when it comes to the workforce.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Yes. Absolutely. And this is why, again, it's really important to get to know your team member as an individual. So, there might have been a lot of setbacks in a person's life. Maybe they had savings and then the savings went away for whatever reason. And I've heard people say they continue working because they need the medical benefits, for instance. And so there are people that work not necessarily for the money necessarily, the paycheck, but they're actually working because of the benefits that they can receive by being a full-time or even a part-time employee.

So, again, get to know your team member. Just because they're older, it does not mean that maybe their life goals were completely met. And so now they're still working on those life goals. And so financial reasons are a big part of why some of these traditionalists and Baby Boomers are still in the workforce. And I'm glad that that question was raised. Thank you.

>> MODERATOR: Yeah. Thank you. So we've got about one minute left, so I'm going to wrap it up on a high note here. We had a question that said, which barbecue joint was it that you saw in the video?

(Laughter)

>> MODERATOR: We'll end it on a high note here.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: I don't think I'm allowed to say, because there might be -- I don't know. Somebody might get upset. But they have a publication they put out every five years. It's a five-year publication. So just look that up.

(Laughter)

>> MODERATOR: There we go. Perfect.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: They print it every five years in Texas and they rate the best barbecue joints. (Laughing)

>> MODERATOR: Perfect. That's great. All right. Well, thank you so much to everyone who joined us today. This was a great session, Annetta. Thank you for coming back and doing another session on this important topic. We really appreciate it. Just a reminder, everyone, if you do want that certificate of completion, it is available to download right there in the bottom right corner of your screen.

And again, feel free to give us any feedback or suggestions for topics that you would like to learn about next year. So with that, we will conclude our session for today. Thank you again.

>> ANNETTA DAVENPORT: Thank you, everybody.

(Session concluded at 2:46 p.m. ET)