

**ary  
Business  
Review**

**Summary.**

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**A few weeks ago, my dad and I had a discussion about respect in the workplace. We talked about how difficult it is to manage across generations when you are much older or younger than your team.**

**My dad didn't understand why his direct reports responded to his voicemails with emails instead of calling him back, whereas I didn't understand his preference for phone calls when the same information could be communicated via text.**

**Our disagreement shed light on a challenge that is common in today's workforce: learning how to collaborate with and appreciate the unique preferences, habits, and behaviors of colleagues who grew up in different times than ourselves.**

**The sad truth is that age gaps between managers (like my dad) and their team members (like me) can hinder our mutual respect for one another.**

**When we fundamentally can't relate to someone due to generational gaps, we often resort to using harmful stereotypes and blame solvable problems on each other instead of working to understand — and value — the differences that distance us. Our job performance and productivity are negatively impacted as a result.**

**To get guidance around how we can move past this and realize the many benefits of cross-generational work, I spoke with Professor Megan Gerhardt, director of leadership development at Miami University's Farmer School of Business and author of *Gentelligence***

**1) Challenge harmful stereotypes.**

**For the first time in modern history, there are five generations in the workforce. Apparently, we each exhibit unique personality traits and values.**

- **The Silent Generation (born 1925 to 1945; loyal but traditional)**
- **Baby boomers (1946 to 1964; collaborative but averse to change)**
- **Generation X (1965 to 1980; independent but bleak)**

put a high value on flexible work and prefer to communicate digitally. On the other hand, someone who entered the workforce in 2008, during the Great Recession,

**both older and younger than**

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**Just like an individual's race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, dis/ability, class, p**

**Additional**

**developing initiatives that encourage both older and younger generations to connect and s**



shutting them down, give them space to respectfully demonstrate their abilities by asking questions and encouraging them to weigh in. Likewise, if an older worker is quick to dismiss a younger team member, address it by suggesting the younger team member speak up in the moment. For example, you might say, “Michelle, did you have an idea you wanted to add?”

Follow up with the older team member privately and remind them that even if someone has less experience, their insights are welcome and valuable. This advice goes both ways. If you see a younger team member making assumptions about their more seasoned colleague, ask them to change their behavior. Remind your team that diversity of thought helps increase the scale of new insights and allows organizations to make better decisions and complete tasks more successfully.

“When we move away from the mindset that generational interactions are a win-lose proposition, the possibility emerges that intergenerational collaborations can result in greater learning and success for all involved,” Gerhardt said. “Every generation has something to teach and something to learn. We all have experiences and knowledge to share.”

Instead of perpetuating an “us versus them” dynamic at work, let’s change the narrative moving forward.

There are ways to bridge the generational gap. It begins with communication, humility, and a deeper curiiddcoll<sup>td</sup> elag