

General Characteristics of the Generations

Generation	General Characteristics*
Baby Boomers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born between 1946 and 1964. • Comprise about 80 million of the nation’s employees. • Typically respond to symbols of recognition: enhanced titles, more money, special perks such as parking spaces, and other status symbols or symbols of peer recognition. • Optimistic and idealistic. • As a result of their large numbers, tend to be extremely competitive (because they had to be). <p>As this group ages, many are reflecting on their lives and are realizing that they have spent too much of their time working. They now may want to add more balance to their lives and may feel that the subsequent need to put “their time in.”</p>
Generation X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born between 1965 and 1980. • Comprise about 46 million of the nation’s employees. • Typically, they have little trust in the system. • Freedom is often perceived as the ultimate corporate reward – they often want training that enhances their skills, and portability of benefits like 401Ks that can be taken elsewhere. • Can be characterized by skepticism. <p>This generation has been affected by scandal in every institution from the stock market to the presidency. During their childhood, the divorce rate tripled and many of them were left to fend for themselves, while their parents worked (i.e. latchkey children). Many filled their time alone with computers and television. Although they became techno literate, they were not often involved in group activities. “People skills” may not generally be a characteristic. They seem to be drawn to informality and fun and are not impressed by titles and hierarchies. Their approach to work is one of balance: they see work as a means to an end and not an end in and of itself.</p>
Millennials (Nesters/Generation Y)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born between 1981 and 1995. • Are now at around 75 million entering the workforce. • Perceived as wanting to make a difference and knowing that their work has value. • If they question authority, it’s usually for the right reasons. • Characteristics include sociability, civic duty, and morality. <p>This generation was born with technology and is adept at multitasking. Most had a more solid upbringing than their predecessors and engaged in athletics and team sports.</p>

General Characteristics of the Generations

	(Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Dennis, 2002)
<p>Centennials (Generation Z, iGeneration/ Digital Natives)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born between 1996 and 2012 • Over the next 10 years, will make up to one-third of the workforce • The hyper-connected generation • Motivated by a focus on promoting social change, preserve the environment, fight for equal rights, and affect the world positively • Role hoppers • Value financial security • Self-taught <p>As this generation integrates the workforce, they are motivated by a high value of their insight and a culture of “unplugging”. Their personal time need to be respected. Flexible schedules and remote work need to be a norm for these Digital Natives.</p> <p>Unlike the millennials, they were born and raised during a global recession, so salary and job security are important factors. In addition, 63% of them rate an inclusive workplace as essential, having a strong preference to working with people from different ages, culture background, and skill levels.</p> <p>The “Zers” are also the most trained and well-educated generation in history.</p>

* These are generalizations and not applicable to all people in a generation.

Adapted from © 2004 Cook Ross, Inc. Managing A Multigenerational Workforce
THE DIVERSITY MANAGER’S TOOLKIT
Revised March 2022