

The Power of 5 Generations:

How to Motivate & Strengthen Collaboration

Contact

www.maxwellmanagementgroup.com

hr@maxwellmanagementgroup.com

1-855.305.4078

The Five Generations

For the first time in history, five generations work together.

Generations	Birth Years	Age (2026)	Strength	Numbers in Canada
Traditionalists	before 1946	80+	Experience & wisdom	200,000
Baby Boomers*	1946 – 1964	62 – 79	Mentorship	4.5M
Gen X	1965 – 1980	46 – 61	Independence	7M
Millennials	1981 – 1996	30 – 45	Collaboration	8M
Gen Z	1997 – 2012	14 – 29	Innovation	4M

- **What is the fastest-growing workforce generation?**
65+ (Traditionalists)

The 4 Cs of Leading Five Generations

- **Communicate:** Use multiple channels to reach all preferences.
- **Connect:** Understand what matters to each individual.
- **Coach:** Regular, tailored feedback; quick coaching conversations.
- **Customize:** Adapt approach while maintaining fairness.

Quick Coaching Conversations

Scenario: A Director of Wellness notices a newer PSW seemed rushed during morning care with a resident. Instead of correcting them publicly, the leader takes 3–5 minutes to have a quick coaching conversation after the round.

1. **Start with Observation (Not Judgment):** “I noticed that things seemed a bit rushed with Mrs. Lee this morning.” How did the morning go for you?”
2. **Ask a Coaching Question:** “What felt most challenging during that round today?” (2 residents required extra help)
3. **Reconnect to Purpose:** “Mornings can definitely be busy. One of our priorities is making sure residents feel cared for and not rushed.”
4. **Problem Solve Together:** “What might help you slow things down just enough so residents still feel that connection?”
5. **End with Encouragement:** “You’re doing great work, and residents respond well to your kindness. Let’s try that approach tomorrow and check in again.”

Exercise

Improving Resident Dining & Experience

The GM is launching a new project in your retirement community to improve the resident dining and social experience. The team includes staff from five generations, a Baby Boomer Nurse, Gen X Rec Manager, Millennial Dietary Supervisor, Gen Z Recreation Assistant, & PSW's from several generations.

As the leader launching this initiative:

- What expectations would you set at the beginning of the project to ensure respect, collaboration, and shared purpose?
- How could you communicate those expectations in multiple ways (e.g., meetings, email, team huddles, digital messaging) so that staff from all generations receive the information in a way that works best for them?

What Strong Leadership Looks Like –

The Leader Sets Expectations from the Start

The leader might say:

“Our team represents different generations, experiences, and ideas, and that diversity is a strength. What unites us is our shared purpose: improving the daily experience and quality of life for our residents. To succeed, we need open communication, respect for every perspective, and a commitment to working together.”

The leader then sets several key expectations:

Respect Every Perspective / Focus on Resident Impact / Collaboration over Titles / Regular Progress Discussions

Communicating Across Generations

Communicating in Multiple Ways to Reach Every Generation: The leader also recognizes that different generations often prefer different communication styles.

And information will be shared in several ways:

- **Face-to-Face Team Meetings (Traditionalists & Baby Boomers):** Used for collaboration, brainstorming, and problem-solving.
- **Email Updates (Boomers and Gen X):** Used for formal communication, documentation, and clarity of expectations.
- **Short Team Huddles (All Generations):** Used for quick updates and operational coordination.
- **Digital Messaging / Team Apps (Gen Y & Z):** Used for quick updates, reminders, and coordination during shifts.

Leadership Cheat Sheet: Leading Across Generations

- Communicate in Multiple Ways
- Connect to Mission, Vision & Values
- Recognize Differently
- Balance Autonomy & Coaching
- Encourage Mentoring
- Ask Before Assuming
- Be Flexible
- Focus on Shared Purpose

Different Generations. One Standard of Leadership.



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People & Culture Resources