



LEVERAGING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

With five generations working side-by-side, there's a lot of talk about generational differences and how that affects work preferences. Expert Chris DeSantis recently led a very informative "Embracing Generational Diversity" Signature Seminar for the Alliance, during which he discussed generational perspectives and how these different perspectives can be beneficial to a team. With so many generations in the workplace, it is truly in everyone's best interest to work respectfully with each other to leverage everyone's strengths. We discuss a framework below to help cross-generational teams work successfully.

1. **Listen & Interact:** Providing opportunities for interaction leads to understanding each other's values/needs and breaking of stereotypes. In a hybrid environment, this is especially important, because deeper relationships lead to less bias and greater understanding. As Chris DeSantis discussed in the Alliance's Signature Seminar, we often unconsciously use confirmation bias (the tendency to favor information that confirms or strengthens one's beliefs) to support stereotypes. However, by truly getting to know others, we can more easily interrupt these biases. Consider holding off-site events for team members to get to know each other better, and have frequent check-ins to understand communication and work preferences. Implement a "reverse mentoring" program where junior employees can mentor more senior employees. Schedule quarterly exchange sessions focused on leveraging diverse generational strengths and offering opportunities for individuals to share experiences and perspectives.
2. **Set Expectations:** Clearly define parameters around success and communication up-front, as different generations and different individuals may have different expectations in these areas. As Chris DeSantis discussed, talking

early on about your work style, strengths, and roles/responsibilities helps set team expectations. Specifically, focus on how success on the project will be measured. Also focus on any preferences for communication on the project. For instance, if the client is more formal and does not appreciate text messages, let the team know. Hold regular “Alignment Check-ins” to ensure everyone's on the same page regarding project goals and expectations.

3. **Allow Flexibility**: Fostering a more flexible work environment is important for all generations. Establish holistic flexibility policies that allow for various forms of flexibility. Implement training on how to be successful using the various forms of flexibility. Provide leaders with training on how to lead in a flexible environment and strategies to reduce flex stigma. Hold conversations on how to drive culture and engagement in a flexible work environment.
4. **Vary Communications**: At the beginning of the project, it is important to ask team members about their preferred communication methods to understand their preferences. Create a communication matrix outlining which methods to use for different types of information. Use a mix of synchronous and asynchronous communication tools. Implement a communication feedback loop to regularly assess and adjust team communication strategies.
5. **Vary Work Structures**: Offer opportunities for individual and group meetings, so team members can work independently and in more collaborative settings. Remember to take different styles into account by providing a written agenda in advance and allowing different team members to participate through different methods (e.g., speaking up; allowing for comments later; making sure to check if anyone else has something to add).

The Alliance is here to help Members succeed by creating, leveraging, and fostering effective cross-generational teams and workplaces. Partner with the Alliance by using your member resources: the [Resource Library](#), [Strategy Calls](#), [Policy Reviews](#), [Advisory Hours](#) and [Signature Seminars](#). To discuss specific strategic advice/resources, contact [Manar Morales](#).