

Promoting Trans-Generational Understanding in the Workplace

As more members of Generation Z (referring to those born after 1995) enter the workforce, and the Baby Boomer generation (born between 1946 and 1964) delays retirement, workers from different age groups are now in force at the labour market. As 4 generations (Baby Boomers, X, Y, and Z) of employees may very well be co-worked in the same office, and cross-generational workplace harmony has become a challenging issue for business managers. The “2021 Multigenerational Workforce Study” shows that Gen Z is viewed by other generations as the most difficult group to work with, with a different set of values and work patterns, and being more self-centred and lacking practical experience. As for Generation Y (born 1980-1995), they generally view the Baby Boomers hardest to deal with because of their resistance to change, stubbornness, conservatism, and unwillingness to listen to others' opinions. In addition, several other surveys about workplace conditions also reveal significant differences between different generations:

1. Communication Methods and Preferences

The older generation tends to prefer direct communication methods such as face-to-face meetings and phone calls, while the younger generation prefers email, social media, and other social communication platforms.

2. Tech Savviness

The younger generation is more flexible and comfortable in using new technologies, while older employees may require additional training and time to adapt to new tools and platforms.

3. Work Attitudes and Values

Older employees place more emphasis on job stability and a sense of achievement in their work, while younger employees focus more on the meaning of their work, work-life balance, job flexibility, and personal growth.

These differences seemingly make it difficult for employees from different generations to work together, but they can also become a rich resource in the workplace: young employees bring innovative thinking and agility, while senior employees bring value to the company with their rich experience and stability. To assuage the problems caused by the generation gap, corporate personnel should adopt a leadership approach that emphasises Fairness, Flexibility, and Friendliness (3F) to create a work environment in which every employee feels respected:

Fairness

When making daily decisions, managers should balance the work habits and values of employees from different generations, come up with decisions with a respectful and inclusive attitude, and ensure that workload and development opportunities are evenly distributed.

Flexibility

Employees from different age groups have different needs for work hours and work styles. Managers should provide flexible work arrangements (such as work hours and work-from-home arrangements) to allow employees to choose the work model that best suits them, where feasible.

Friendliness

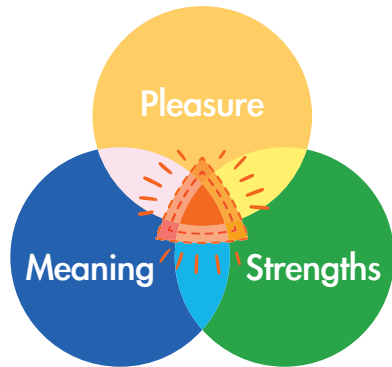
Friendly interaction between teams can enhance their collaboration effectiveness and creativity. By assembling cross-functional and multidisciplinary teams of employees from different age groups, they can get to know each other through cooperation and open dialogue, learn from each other's strengths, and achieve integration and mutual benefit.

Managing cross-generational employees is a learning process, and the key to success is for all parties to maintain an open attitude, patiently listen and accept different opinions and cultures -- And most importantly, to trust and respect each other to maintain good communication and achieve integration.



Love and Beginnings

In the face of immigration and retirement trends, the vacancy for mid-level management positions is increasing, but also undoubtedly bringing more promotion opportunities for the new generation of employees. However, leading a cross-generational team inevitably brings about pressure. In fact, workers from every generation aspire to be valued, appreciated, and able to utilise their strengths in their work. Managers can refer to the MPS analysis tool developed by Dr Tal Ben-Shahar, a psychology professor at Harvard University, to collaborate with employees of different backgrounds, in order to develop personalised work arrangements and provide support and guidance to help them achieve job satisfaction.



Meaning : Do what matters to you

Pleasure : Do what makes you happy

Strengths : Do what you 're good at

Guided by the above 3 criteria, managers can help employees identify areas of work they should be focused on by considering what are the tasks they find sense of purpose, fulfilment, and achievement in.



Liven Up Your Soul

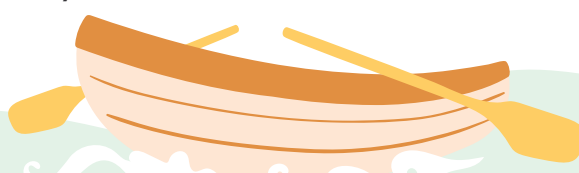
The Key to Success in Fostering Teamwork

Marco, a young businessman, was supposed to take a cargo ship to a bustling city for business negotiations. Yet, the ship accidentally sank, and Marco was stranded on a deserted island, where he met a sailor. The sailor was strong and sturdy, so Marco suggested that they make a raft together. Joining forces, they finally managed to build a raft and hoped to leave the island.

Just as they were about to leave the island, they heard the cries of an old man and a pregnant woman. The old man and pregnant woman begged Marco and the sailor to take them with them. Marco thought that the two were only going to be a liability and burden, so he refused and instead promised to help them seek rescue as soon as possible after they were rescued. Marco and the sailor found some food for the two and set off. Nonetheless, they encountered a storm soon after setting off, and Marco had a knock on his head and fell unconscious. The storm swept the two of them back to the island. When the pregnant lady saw Marco injured, she immediately helped him with first aid. Fortunately, Marco recovered under her care.

After this incident, Marco had the opportunity to learn that the pregnant woman was actually a doctor, and the old man was a retired captain. Had it not been Marco's prejudice against them based on their appearance and age, he might have already reached his destination. The doctor could have used her professional knowledge to care for the injured, and the experienced retired captain could have predicted the weather and steered the wheel. After repairing the raft again, the four of them ultimately set off on their journey back home.

More often than naught, we are easily influenced by external factors and develop preconceived notions, such as ageism or judgements based on looks. To collaborate with different people, we must abandon our preconceptions and open our minds to understand each other's strengths in order to complement each other's weaknesses. This is also true in the workplace. To create a harmonious and complementary work environment, we must learn how to respect each other and truly understand each other.





Dealing with the Workforce Entry of the Millennials

with a Growth Mindset

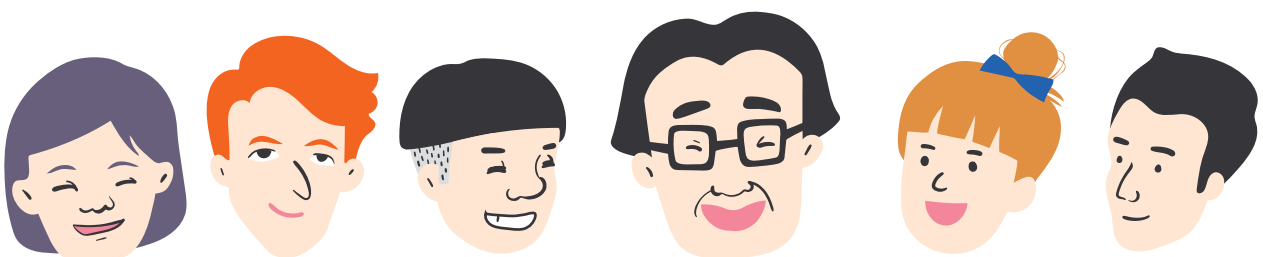
Mr Wong's manages a team of 12 salespersons. In recent years, there is a gradual increase in the proportion of the younger generation of employees in the team, rising from a loner to 5. All 5 of them are incredibly intelligent and motivated, but the problem lies in the fact that they often use foul language, which may cause discomfort to customers. Three months ago, Mr Wong sternly instructed everyone during a team meeting to refrain from cussing during working hours. He thought the problem was resolved, but after the meeting, he noticed that the 5 new generation employees started showing signs of resistance, and even escalated the issue by complaining about his leadership skills to his superiors. The conflict was temporarily resolved with the intervention of the senior manager, but they understood that the "generation gap" was an issue, which needed company's attentions. Therefore, they suggested Mr Wong to seek advice from the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) service.



During the consultation process, Mr Wong admitted to experiencing significant stress over the past 3 months. He felt that he constantly motivated the team to thrive and fought for the best benefits on their behalf. However, he was now being "recompensed" for "doing the right thing" and received complaint from his 5 young employees. This made him feel let down, affected his sleep quality, and even impacted his sales performance.

Practising the dogma of "addressing emotions before addressing the issue", our Consultant first expressed concern for Mr Wong's emotions. Understanding his goal-oriented personality and tendency to focus less on emotional management, it became clear that he was finding it difficult to control pent-up emotions. The consultant emphasised the importance of self-care, how to recognise negative emotions in daily life, and taught him relaxation exercises to improve sleep quality.

Additionally, during the consultation, the consultant discussed how different generations grew up in drastically different environments and educational systems. This discussion sparked Mr Wong's interest in exploring the characteristics of new generation employees and learning effective communication techniques to help them comprehend that his measures were not ad hominem but rather for the sake and wellbeing of the company. Finally, he realised that the generation gap that caused the conflict was not a matter of right or wrong. He then suggested his company to allocate more resources and encourage regular team-building activities for cross-generational teams, fostering trust, embracing diverse ideas, and creating a collaborative work atmosphere.





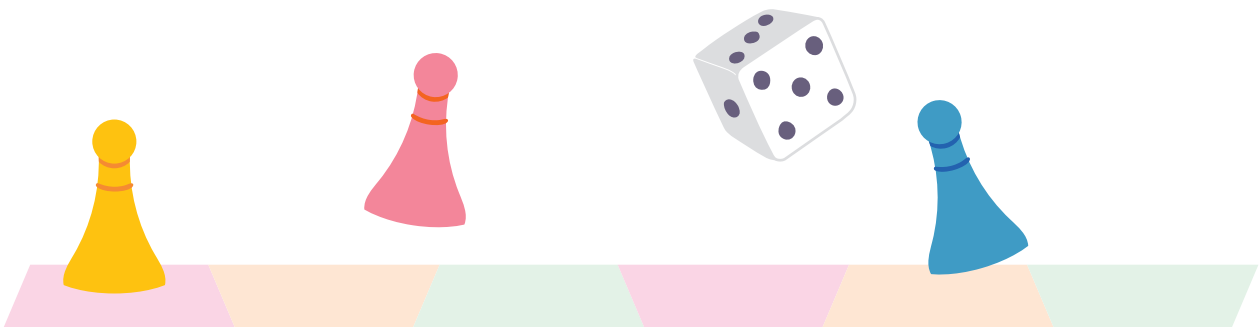
To Learn or To Play? Why not both?!

Board Games: Injecting FUN into Training

Against the backdrop of workforce outflow due to emigration and retirement, many businesses are beginning to find their mid-management resemble more and more like a vacuum. More employees from the new generation will be promoted managerial roles, and companies need to have long-term plans to enhance their creativity, adaptability, and leadership skills in order to develop their strengths and improve the company's efficiency. Recognising this, our team has developed some training courses that combine learning with entertainment by incorporating the element of boardgames. It is our hope that participants can leverage their leadership skills and teamwork spirits while having fun at the same time. With the help of tools and activities, we believe that integrated learning and entertainment will become attractive and effective especially for the workplace to be filled with new generation.

To deepen HR personnel's understanding about these training models, we are launching a free board game experience day called "To Learn or To Play? Why not both?! Board Games: Injecting Fun into Training", participants can experience the fun that board games bring as a training tool. We have received overwhelming responses which indicates that companies are interested to new tools to deliver training.

If your company wishes to integrate learning and entertainment by incorporating the element of boardgames for your employees, please be welcomed to contact Mr. Chan at 2731 6358 or email marketing@fourdimensions.org



Four Dimensions Consulting Limited (FDC) is a private limited company set up by Hong Kong Christian Service (HKCS) in 2005. Employee Development Service (EDS) of HKCS is the first EAP provider in Hong Kong since 1991. We offer total solutions to assist employees with work/life issues, develop strengths/potentials, increase work engagement and positivity at work, which ultimately enhance organizational excellence and sustainability.

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