

# Leading Multi-Generational Teams

February 6, 2026



**Kim Koch, PE**

Founding Principal of Insight Engineering

ARKANSAS ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTHCARE ENGINEERING – 2026 WINTER CONFERENCE



# Learning Objectives

- **Define the Current Generations Working and Entering the Healthcare Facilities Field**
- Understand Motivational Drivers, Communication Styles, and Feedback Preferences for the Different Generations
- Explore Specific Work Policies to Recruit and Retain Across the Generations



# Multi-Generational Workforce

- First Time in History Five Generations are Working Side by Side in the Workplace
- Opportunity for Improved Decision Making and Innovation Through Varied Perspectives
- Differences are Not Just About Age
  - Economic Conditions
  - Technology Adoption
  - Social Norms
  - Career Expectations



# Generations Defined

## Traditionalist or Silent Generation (81-98 Years Old)

- Shaped By:
  - The Great Depression
  - World War II
  - Radio and Movies
- Traits:
  - Dependable
  - Straightforward
  - Tactful
  - Loyal
- Worldview:
  - Obedience Over Individualism
  - Age Equals Seniority
  - Advancing Through the Hierarchy



# Generations Defined

## Baby Boomers (62-80 Years Old)

- Shaped By:
  - The Vietnam War
  - Civil War Movement
  - Watergate
- Traits:
  - Optimistic
  - Competitive
  - Workaholic
- Worldview:
  - Optimistic
  - Achievement Comes After Paying Ones Dues
  - Sacrifice for Success



# Generations Defined

## Generation X (46-61 Years Old)

- Shaped By:
  - The AIDs Epidemic
  - Challenger Explosion
  - Dot-Com Boom
- Traits:
  - Flexible
  - Informal
  - Skeptical
  - Independent
- Worldview:
  - Favors Diversity
  - Quick to Move if Employer Fails to Meet Needs
  - Resistant to Change at Work that Affect Personal Life



# Generations Defined

## Millennials (26-45 Years Old)

- Shaped By:
  - Columbine School Shooting
  - 9/11
  - Internet
- Traits:
  - Competitive
  - Civic and Open Minded
  - Achievement Oriented
- Worldview:
  - Seek Challenge, Growth, and Development
  - Fun Work Life and Work-Life Balance
  - Likely to Leave if They Don't Like a Change



# Generations Defined

## Generation Z (6-25 Years Old)

- Shaped By:
  - Life After 9/11
  - Access to Technology at Young Age
  - COVID Learning Environment
- Traits:
  - Global
  - Entrepreneurial
  - Progressive
- Worldview:
  - Self-Identify as Digital Device Addicts
  - Value Independence and Individuality
  - Preference to Work with Innovative Co-Workers and New Technologies



# Learning Objectives

- Define the Current Generations Working and Entering the Healthcare Facilities Field
- **Understand Motivational Drivers, Communication Styles, and Feedback Preferences for the Different Generations**
- Explore Specific Work Policies to Recruit and Retain Across the Generations



# Communication Preferences

BABY BOOMERS	GENERATION X	MILLENNIALS	GENERATION Z
In-Person	E-mail	Chat	Text
Phone Call	Concise Updates	Collaborative Platforms	Video
Journals	Hard Drives	iPads	Google Docs



# Feedback Preferences

## BABY BOOMERS

FORMAL FEEDBACK



## GENERATION X

TELL ME IF THERE IS A PROBLEM



# Feedback Preferences

## MILLENNIALS

FREQUENT COACHING  
& MENTORING



## GENERATION Z

CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK &  
REASSURANCE



# Primary Motivators

## Baby Boomers

Recognition, Legacy, Leadership Roles



## Generation X

Autonomy, Flexibility, Competence



# Primary Motivators

## Millennial

Purpose, Growth, Collaboration



## Generation Z

Stability + Flexibility, Authenticity, Learning



# Primary Motivators

## Compensation Matters to Everyone – But it is Rarely the Top Driver Alone

- Flexibility (work hours or procedures)
- Professional Development
- Public Recognition
- Ownership of Meaningful Work



# Learning Objectives

- Define the Current Generations Working and Entering the Healthcare Facilities Field
- Understand Motivational Drivers, Communication Styles, and Feedback Preferences for the Different Generations
- **Explore Specific Work Policies to Recruit and Retain Across the Generations**



# Work Policies to Recruit and Retain

## Policies That Matter to Everyone

- Clear Expectations and Accountability
- Fair Compensation and Benefits
- Respect for Personal Time



# Work Policies to Recruit and Retain

## Policies That Benefit Multiple Generations

- Flexible Work Schedules / Hybrid Options
- Paid Parental and Caregiver Leave
- Professional Development Budgets
- Transparent Promotion Criteria
- Cross Generational Mentorship Programs



# Work Policies to Recruit and Retain

## Policies That *Don't* Work Anymore

- One-Size-Fits-All Policies
- “This is How We’ve Always Done it.”
- Measuring Commitment by Hours Instead of Outcomes



# Best Practices for Leaders

- Set Clear Goals, Not Just Rules
- Focus on Outcomes Over Process (when possible)
- Encourage Cross-Generational Mentoring
- Normalize Asking How Someone Prefers to Work



# Best Practices for Leaders

## Defined Communication Practices

- Documented Individual Plan
- Preferred Method
- Preferred Time
- Review Annually and at Major Milestones

### EXAMPLE COMMUNICATION PLAN

Employee: Kim Koch

Date: 1/2026

Dedicated Off-Work Time: 6PM-8PM

Urgent Matters: Phone Call or In-Person

Need Reply Soon: Text

Informational: E-mail or Teams

Action Items: E-mail

Just to Make me Laugh: Teams or Text



# NON-GENERATIONAL FACTORS

Employee Behavior and Needs Vary Due to Multiple Factors

- Situational
- Cultural
- Experience
- Health



# HIERARCHY OF EMPLOYEE NEEDS



# Key Takeaways

- Generational Differences are Assets, Not Problems
- Flexibility + Clarity = Retention
- Strong Teams Have Policies and Procedures That Work for Multiple Generations
- Not Everything is Generational





## Questions?

What's One Small Change That Could Help Your Team Immediately?

Which Policies Might Unintentionally Exclude Certain Age Groups?

Where do you See Generational Friction Today?

