



## Ten Tips for Leading a Multi-generational Workforce

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At the moment, there are five generations in the workplace: Veterans, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. However, Veterans are retiring, semi-retiring, or joining Boards. Generation Z is graduating college, wrapping up internships, and getting a foot in the door. Many are exploring ways to work independently and juggle multiple jobs. Their values and perspectives are progressive and unique, and we curiously await their impact on the workforce.

Each of these demographic groups brings a distinct set of aspirations and needs to the job. In addition to these demographic differences, each person is an individual, with unique goals and needs. Therefore, today's leader has to be an orchestra conductor, able to bring out the best performance from each musical section so that the orchestra's results are harmonic and well-timed.

A satisfied team is a motivated team. Based on my experience in working with internal audit departments of various sizes and across industries, below are ten ways to create motivated multi-generational teams:

1. Where practical, accommodate flexible and non-traditional work schedules and remote working arrangements. Once a requirement associated mostly with Gen Xers and Gen Yers, the ability to accommodate employees' lives makes for happier customers, increased employee loyalty, and lower turnover. More employees in all generations are finding it a necessary to achieve work-life balance. However, working from home is a privilege, not a right. Get non-traditional work arrangements, e.g., flexible hours, work at homes, etc., defined in writing before these arrangements begin. Keep the ground rules simple and fair, e.g., all employees must start their shift between 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. and the shift length is 7 1/2 hours.
2. Be sure to answer team members' "why" questions before they even ask them. Auditing attracts analytical people, i.e., those who closely examine facts to reach conclusions and enjoy doing so. Some analyticals may need to make a greater effort to communicate in an empathic manner when responding to others' questions. To project an empathic persona, ask the other party if what you said makes sense; adjust where necessary. Think about the information you would need to know if you were in the questioner's shoes. If you are a staff auditor, manage up. Try to anticipate information your manager needs to provide to his or her boss and incorporate these facts.
3. Optimize Millennial's technological savvy to leverage technology in your audit methodology.
4. Use technology to stay in constant communication on each project and gain visibility to everyone's work load.
5. Where you can, give authority. It will pay off in loyalty and make your team members better decision-makers and future managers in the end.
6. If you are a department lead, provide the right individual coaching and training to each of your team members. Create a mentoring program for the most promising and talented people as a

means of bolstering your institution's succession plan. Make career counseling available to employees.

7. Invest in your team members, so that they will in turn invest in their role and the organization. The most critical training need is to develop people management competency as soon as an individual becomes a lead auditor. All too frequently, the newly promoted auditor-in-charge has excellent technical skills and displays tireless attention to detail (e.g., test workpapers are clearly organized and cross-referenced). Often these abilities and proficiencies are the reason the auditor was promoted. Department leaders should help the newly promoted manager acquire an appreciation and a desire to delegate, build bench-strength, and get work accomplished through others.
8. Communicate to each team member specifically how their role adds value to the overall goals of the department and the organization. Ascribing to the adage of "what gets measured gets done", make sure that the performance appraisal system aligns with the whole organization's behavior and its core values. Additionally, make sure that the "game" rules, i.e., desired performance results, are clearly explained.
9. Inevitably, you and your team may end up having to deliver bad news to members of an area you are auditing. Develop a reputation for reaching agreements without bloodshed while sticking up for and supporting your team members.
10. Create an ongoing and meaningful exchange with each team member that communicates the value they add to the process. Connect with them personally. This is a strong recommendation for department leads, but staff auditors can do much to engage other team members, especially those of older generations.

In summary, take advantage of today's five-generation workforce by bringing out the best in each and nurturing desired behaviors by highlighting them --- focusing on the differences can potentially create more differences. Keep in mind that before you develop and implement an initiative to motivate the different generations of employees, you must ask them what they want. Otherwise, you risk spending time and money on initiatives that do not appeal to them. An effective leader fosters open environments where employees of all generations feel free to learn from each other while individually contributing to the organizational culture.



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Ann published her first book, *Mastering the Five Tiers of Audit Competency: The Essence of Effective Auditing* in May 2016. In it she shares best practices for every stage of the audit and explains how and why the most effective auditors master five essential competencies. New and seasoned auditors will benefit from her insight culled from over 30 years' experience in training thousands of their peers.