Leading a Generationally Diverse Workforce

Text-Only Version

Overview

The Federal workforce is comprised for four different generations – Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers and Traditionalists. You are probably aware of the general characteristics exhibited by each generation. This course goes a step further and introduces you to strategies and techniques to understand individual preferences and effectively lead a generationally diverse workforce. Specifically, you will be able to identify generational and individual preferences throughout the stages of an employee's career. You will also be able to develop generational competence to better understand, appreciate and respond to the specific needs of your team. And you will be able to leverage strategies and techniques within your team to create an inclusive culture where all individuals and the organization can thrive.

This course provides examples to demonstrate how strategies and techniques can be applied in the federal workplace to manage typical situations. While this course focuses on leading a generationally diverse team, the importance of understanding individual preferences, needs, values and attributes is emphasized throughout. Since you have likely learned about the characteristics of each generation in previous courses, this course will not review characteristics. However, you can find a Generational Characteristics Job Aid in the Resources section, as well as key definitions in the Glossary. To learn more about other features in this course, select the Course Navigation button. You also have access to an Action Plan template for recording notes about the strategies and techniques you will learn throughout the course. Be sure to save this document to your computer. The following list provides a roadmap for the course.

- **Module 1: Course Overview**
  Module 1 highlights the importance and limitations of generational awareness and the importance of fostering an inclusive environment. It also introduces key words and definitions that are repeated throughout this course.
- **Module 2: Recruiting, Interviewing, Onboarding Employees**
  Module 2 highlights strategies, techniques and generational preferences for recruiting, interviewing and onboarding employees. Key strategies include crafting a job announcement to reach and attract all individuals and generations, using generational competence to conduct effective interviews and successfully onboarding new hires.
- **Module 3: Engaging and Retaining Employees**
  Module 3 highlights strategies, techniques and generational preferences for engaging and retaining employees. Key strategies include enhancing communications, creating a positive work environment, creating a culture of recognition and fostering job autonomy. The relationship between engaging and retaining employees is also explained.
- **Module 4: Developing Employees**
  Module 4 highlights strategies, techniques and generational preferences for developing

employees. Key strategies include creating customized learning experiences and facilitating learning transfer.

Generational awareness is understanding how significant political, economic, social, and technological events, during a certain time period, lead to common traits within a generation. Generational awareness is grounded in theory that there are traits and presences that occur in high frequency within a given group. In this case, a generation. Assume the bell curve on this page is representative of Generation X.
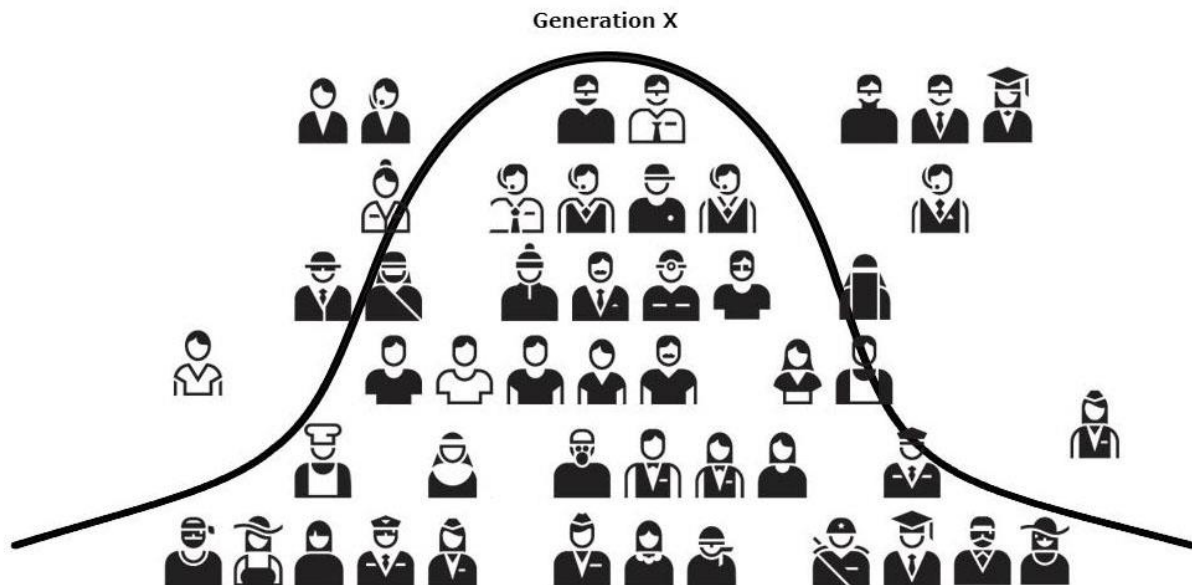
Generation X

According to research, the Gen Xers who fall within the bell curve are likely to exhibit similar traits and possess similar preferences, needs and values. You may have employees who are outliers or cuspers of their defined generation. Therefore, it's important for you as a leader to get to know each person individually. Ultimately, an individual's generation is only one piece of a very complex puzzle that includes culture, belief systems, education, socio-economic status and career stage. Life events, such as the birth of a child or being diagnosed with an illness, are also part of the puzzle. Generational awareness cannot solely be relied on to effectively manage an individual. Rather, it's a basic understanding of just one possible aspect of an individual. You can use it to inform your discussions with each member of your team.

Generational Awareness

Generational awareness provides a framework for identifying traits, preferences, values and attributes shared within a generation. Generational competence™ is using that information to strategically and effectively understand, appreciate and respond to the specific needs of individuals from all generations. Generational competence is key to leveraging diversity. The ability to leverage diversity fosters an inclusive culture where individual differences are valued and considered to effectively recruit, interview, onboard, engage, retain and develop employees. Leveraging diversity is an attribute that enhances your leadership skills. Go to www.opm.gov to learn about other leadership competencies.

Time for a learning activity. Match each person to their preference.

I feel more productive when I work face-to-face with people, so I prefer in-person meetings.

I want to drive growth in the organization, so I prefer opportunities to mentor employees.

I need absolute silence to concentrate, so I prefer telework.

I like to meet with my supervisor at least monthly, so I prefer regularly scheduled meetings.

You are probably wondering how you could possibly match these people to their preferences based solely on their appearance. The truth is you can't, and you shouldn't! The same principle applies to your employees. Research-based generational preferences are provided throughout the course. Avoid stereotyping your employees. Don't assume you know employees' preferences simply because they belong to a specific generation. Remember, most people fall within the bell curve and some do not.

Module Conclusion

In the modules that follow, you will be introduced to generational preferences. These preferences sometimes differ across generations, but it's important to recognize generations also share similarities. In a Center for Creative Leadership study, Jennifer Deal found that all generations essentially value the same things. Family is listed as the top priority for all generations. All generations desire trustworthy

leaders. All generations want to know how they are performing on the job and require feedback. And all generations want learning and development opportunities. Successful organizations leverage these similarities to ensure that leaders not only understand them, but create work environments that support them.

You have reached the end of Module 1. In this module you learned the value and limitations of generational awareness and the importance of leveraging diversity. You have multiple personal and professional skills in your leadership toolbox. Generational competence is an additional skill you will further develop during this course. In Module 2, you will learn key strategies and techniques for recruiting, interviewing and onboarding employees. Note that you can take the rest of the modules in this course in any order, however, you must complete all modules to receive a certificate of completion. Remember, you can record notes in the Action Plan.

Recruiting, Interviewing and Onboarding Employees

Welcome to Module 2: Recruiting, Interviewing and Onboarding Employees! This module introduces you to strategies and techniques you can use to effectively recruit, interview and onboard individuals from all generations.

As you enhance your recruitment, interviewing and onboarding strategies, consider the importance of creating a productive and inclusive culture. When led and managed effectively, a generationally diverse workforce can benefit your organization in several ways. According to the American Association of Retired Persons, a generationally diverse team that works well together:

- Attracts and retains people of all ages
- Demonstrates more flexibility
- Makes better decisions because they are broad based with multiple perspectives
- Generates more innovative and creative ideas and
- Relates to the diverse needs of their customers.

This module introduces strategies for hiring and onboarding employees, including attracting and recruiting top talent, conducting effective interviews and onboarding new employees. Each strategy contains practical techniques, and research-based preferences or organizational examples. As you complete this module, remember to not assume you know your employee's preferences simply because they belong to a specific generation. Keep in mind, most people fall within the bell curve of their generation and some do not.

Attract and Recruit Top Talent

This strategy highlights ways to develop a targeted recruitment plan so you can reach a wider pool of qualified candidates.

Start Recruitment and Outreach Early

In addition to USAJOBS, use a variety of resources to reach top talent across generations. Even if a position is not readily available, establish connections with prospective employees. Consider the best ways to get your job announcement to a broad and diverse set of individuals.

Student Outreach

Consider student outreach. Many high schools and colleges host career fairs where students can meet and learn about potential employers. Career fairs give employers the opportunity to network with students who may be interested in working for them before or after graduation. Determine your hiring needs and work with college career centers to fill positions that require specific technical skills and knowledge.

Social Media

Join social media groups. Job seekers use social media sites to remotely search for job opportunities and establish connections with pother professionals. Social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are popular for sharing job information. Millennials and Gen Xers in particular, use these tools to establish virtual networks.

In-Person Networking

Network with people inside and outside your agency, with professional organizations including affinity groups and within your own personal network. Boomers and Traditionalists tent to prefer person-to-person networking.

QR Codes

Use Quick Response (QR) codes to provide potential candidates direct access to job information using a smartphone. QR codes send the message your organization is innovative. One Federal organization uses QR codes to distribute encrypted messages to potential hires along with their job announcement. QR Code generators are easy and free to create via the web.

Emphasize Your Organization's Mission

Be sure to highlight your organization's mission statement in your job announcement. All generations value work that contributes to a goal or mission they can identify with. For example, Millennials and Gen Xers looks for opportunities to have a positive impact, or even make history. Baby Boomers and Traditionalists, who have a wealth of professional knowledge and significant experience, search for opportunities to mentor and drive growth.

Highlight Your Organization's Benefits and Flexibilities

It is also important to highlight the benefits and flexibilities your organization can provide to attract individuals from all generations.

Benefits

Potential candidates search for attractive benefits including health insurance, leave, retirement and transit subsidies. Individual needs differ and candidates will review the benefits package carefully to decide if it fit their needs. Revie and understand your organization's array of benefits – questions may arise during the interview phase.

Work-Life Balance

Two popular flexibilities include the use of flexible work schedules and telework. Flexible work schedules enable staff to select and alter their work schedules to better fir personal needs and help integrate work, personal, and family responsibilities. Telework allows an employee wot work at an alternative site and offers the potential for greater productivity, higher employee engagement, and satisfaction.

Learning and Development

Review your organization's learning and development offerings, including the tuition reimbursement policy, and leverage available resources. Offering this information demonstrates a commitment to investing in their careers.

Conduct Effective Interviews

In this course, you learn key strategies and techniques for attracting and recruiting a generationally diverse pool of candidates. The next step is the interview. This section helps you uncover common generational biases or assumptions that may lead to losing the most qualified applicant; and focuses on techniques to conduct an effective interview.

Recognize Your Generational Biases

Recognize how you perceive individuals during an interview and notice assumptions or conclusions you make that may be bias-driven. Biases can prevent you from learning more about the candidates' qualifications or lead you to believe that someone is the best candidate for a position when, in fact, they are not. Consider all applicants regardless of age. Age discrimination in any form is illegal. Refer to the Age Discrimination in Employment (ADEA) in the glossary to view the Act.

Bias 1: All Millennials are tech savvy

Do not assume all Millennials are tech savvy. Ask candidates about their technological experience is it is a job requirement.

Bias 2: Baby Boomers are disinterested in continuing their learning and development

Do not assume Baby Boomers are disinterested in jobs that require them to continue their learning and development. Ask candidates about the skills they would like to develop. This open-ended question will provide candidates the opportunity to share their interests with you.

Bias 3: Traditionalists will retire soon

Do not assume Traditionalists will retire soon. The retirement age continues to increase and some people are working longer – many beyond their eligibility. Ask them about their short- and long-term career plans.

Allow Candidates to Meet Team Members

Include team members in the interview. It is beneficial for two reasons. First, your team can provide general feedback from different generational perspectives. Second, they potentially will provide the candidate with different generational perspectives about the job and the organizational culture. For example, a Millennial may be interested in hearing more about career paths and opportunities – he would benefit from speaking with a Boomer who started his career in Federal service. If the Millennial is hired, it may set the foundation for a long-lasting mentoring relationship.

Set Realistic Job Expectations

Convey accurate information during the interview to set realistic job expectations. This promotes employee retention once you onboard them. Be honest about the knowledge, skill and abilities needed to succeed in the work environment, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the job. If their job expectations are not met, they are likely to share negative opinions about your organization to a wide network. For example, Millennials and Generation Xers are more likely to share both their positive and negative experiences online through sites, such as glassdoor.com.

It's time to apply your knowledge! Practice applying the strategies and techniques you have learned in this module. Read the scenario and select a choice.

Scenario

You are looking to hire an experienced professional for a Senior Research Analyst position. You work with your HR office to create a unique job announcement that includes the relevant details of the job, as well as a brief overview of available benefits. The announcement is posted on USAJOBS. You also notify nearby universities and alumni networks, and post information on two social media sites, LinkedIn and Facebook, to ensure your outreach is as broad as possible. After the announcement period ends, the HR office narrows the applicant pool to the highly-qualified individuals. Your work team narrows the applicant pool to the top three candidates for a final interview. Today, you are interviewing a woman who has an impressive resume including relevant research experience. As the beginning of the interview, she shares she found the job announcement of Facebook. Interestingly, she comments that she was actually one of the first people who joined Facebook when it was established in 2004; she was attending graduate school. The interview progresses and is going well. You can tell she would be a great fit for the job. As you are finishing the interview, her cell phone rings and she reaches into her bag.

What kind of assumptions did you make when the cell phone rang? Choose your immediate thought:

    a) "How disrespectful! Is her personal life more important than this interview?"
    b) "Does she need to answer that? Maybe there's a family emergency?"
    c) "How embarrassing! She must have forgotten to silence her phone."
    d) "Why didn't she turn her phone off before she came into the interview? If she needed to be on alert, then she should have told me up front."

Take a moment to reflect on why you made that assumption.

She brings out her phone, looks at the screen and says, "I'm so sorry, I need to take this call." She steps out of the room for a minute and when she comes back, you finish the interview. Even though she's a great fit for the job, you are concerned her personal life may interfere with her work.

How do you proceed?

    a) Say nothing; it's only an interview. You'll say something if she is hired and it becomes a habit.
    b) You highlight the flexible work arrangements mentioned in the job announcement.
    c) You explain personal phone calls are typically limited during work hours, but understand emergencies happen.

If you selected A, the woman clears her throat. This is certainly an option you may choose. However, it is helpful to try and understand what she may need in order to balance her work and family life. You can mention your organization's policy regarding the use of mobile devices in the workplace. Work-life balance is important for success, and you want to be sure you can accommodate her needs before you make a selection.

If you selected B, she says, "I am very interested in this job and really appreciate your willingness to work with me: my father is ill and currently in the hospital. I assure you my personal life won't affect the

quality and timeliness of my work." This is a good approach. You understand the applicant's situation and are willing to try to accommodate her need to find a good work-life balance.

If you selected C, the woman says, "I am really sorry, my father is ill and currently in the hospital. I don't receive frequent calls, but want my family to be able to reach me in this situation." This is a good approach. It's important to send the message that your organization understands family emergencies can happen, and your organization is willing to accommodate her need to find a good work-life balance.

Onboard New Employees

As a leader, you can develop generational competence to ensure employees have an effective onboarding experience. Onboarding, when done effectively, can better engage and equip employees to assimilate into your organization and meet its mission.

Generational Onboarding[1]

One of the essential roles of a supervisor is to ensure that their employees have an effective onboarding experience. Onboarding serves as "the face" of an organization. It's where individuals learn about their organization's mission, current programs, future initiatives, it's where they gain a better understanding of their corporate culture and they become exposed to the internal mechanisms of how things get done. And in today's world, where there are four different generations working together in the workplace, it also means that supervisors make a use of their generational lens when onboarding employees. So what are some of the generational considerations that you may want to employ in your onboarding program?

When you are onboarding folks who come from the Traditionalist and Boomer generation, you will find that the majority of them have worked in their profession for many years, so to ensure that they have an effective onboarding experience with you organization, and within your group, here's a couple of tips. First, make time to embrace and value their past experience. That means in their first days or weeks on the job, be sure to take time to recognize them for the experience and expertise that they are bringing to your group and then help them to see how they can apply their experiences in helping to move your programs and initiatives forwards. For Traditionalists and for Boomers, recognizing experience helps to spur engagement and build organizational connectivity. Be intentional about introducing them to their colleagues, and to your peers. Have them attend meetings with you, and when appropriate, have them be a part of discussions and deliberations. Understand that introductions, particularly formal introductions, are important to both generations. Getting to know people, not just programs, will help your Traditionalist and Boomer employees embrace their new organization and their new organizational norms.

Now when onboarding Generation X, makes sure to outline how you as a leader put into practice work-life balance and support for professional growth. Stress the importance of accountability and your expectations regarding how work products are to be completed both, in some cases independently, and in other cases, by teams that your Gen X employees may be leading. You should be aware that Generation X has a natural tendency to work independently when accomplishing mission objectives, so you may want to give some extra attention when you outline your expectations of teamwork and collaboration. Be sure to have a pretty robust conversation about learning and development and professional growth. Generation X tends to be attracted to jobs, and stay in jobs that allow them to

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[1] From the video "Generational Onboarding" presented by Jeffery Vargas, Chief Learning Officer, CFTC.

build their professional skills – skills that will help them secure some sort of either internal or external professional credentials. Generation X understand the value of continuing education and looks to build their professional resume even if they are brought into an organization at a senior level.

When onboarding Millennials, understand that you may be introducing them to the world of work, not just to work programs, products and initiatives that are under your control. Discuss and come to a mutual agreement on things like: What does a finished work-product look like? How will you, as a supervisor, communicate constructive feedback? What does work-life balance look like in this job? What's the possibility for career progression? And what's an effective and efficient work product feedback schedule? What's your expectation when an employee is interacting with senior officials? And finally what are the opportunities for detail assignments, rotational assignments, and professional development as a whole?

When you deploy a generationally aware onboarding experience you will find employees feel more valued, respected and appreciated for their professional contributions. And you will also find them to be more engaged and better equipped to work together and meet the mission of your organization.

Onboarding New Employees

Many employees make the decision to stay or leave an organization within the first six months. If possible, try to maintain contact with a new hire between the time you offer them the position to their first day on the job. Keep in mind that the onboarding process continues for up to a year. Many organizations fail when they view it as an event instead of a process. Two Federal organizations have used survey instruments to identify and validate the onboarding need of employees. The survey results have helped them revise their onboarding programs to make them more successful. To ensure your onboarding program is effective, get feedback from recent hires on the current process, and incorporate their suggestions for improvement into the process. For more information on onboarding, refer to OPM's Hit the Ground Running: Establishing a Model Executive Onboarding Program and Orientation Roadmap. These documents are located in the resources section.

To stay competitive, organizations must tailor their onboarding strategies to each individual. Consider generational preferences when onboarding new hires to make the process more meaningful.

Ensure Access to Resources

Make sure new employees have access to various resources such as computer access, contact lists and team files. This will make them feel welcomed and appreciated. Keep in mind these are research-based generational preferences. Individuals may have their own onboarding preferences.

Millennials

For many Millennials, this may be their first career onboarding process. This onboarding experience may not only prepare them for your organization, but for the work of work. Millennials often expect access to social networking tools that can help with productivity in the workplace, such as internal instant messenger services. A study conducted by Ken Blanchard concluded that experience with interactive media has led many young people to develop new skills, assumptions and expectations about the employers.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers prefer that employers focus on the process of onboarding rather than socialization in the company culture. As a result, completion of payroll, benefits and employment forms is critical for this generation and should begin before day one. Provide information such as organizational charts and the organization mission.

Support New Hires in Building Relationships

You should support new employees in building trusting relationships and help them assimilate into the culture. This is critical to a successful onboarding process. Millennials benefit from a cohort approach or a "buddy" that can lead them through the onboarding process. Partner them with one of your team members. Gen Xers, who often enjoy constant input and feedback, may benefit from a mentor relationship. Partner them with a Traditionalist who can provide ongoing guidance and feedback on their projects. For many Traditionalists and Baby Boomers, developing new relationships is integral to their successful onboarding. Formal introductions to colleagues are particularly beneficial in allowing them to establish relationships and assimilate into the organization.

Explain the Performance Evaluation Process

It is critical to set expectations early and inform all individuals how they will be evaluated. Show them examples of exceptional work products as a reference, is possible. Discuss career goals, performance measure end key performance indicators with new employees, particularly as they pertain to performance plans and Individual Development Plans, or IDPs. This also gives you a frame of reference to discuss an employee's ongoing performance and development. Creating IDPs is discussed in Module 4. Gen Xers in particular desire specific information on professional growth and an organization's credentialing process Explain these to them so they clearly understand what is expected of them and how they can succeed in the organization.

Knowledge Check

It's time to apply your knowledge! Practice applying the strategies and techniques you have learned in this module. Read the scenario and select a choice.

Scenario

You hired James, a Millennial, four months ago. He completed your organization's first week orientation and you meet with him biweekly. He was transitioning well to the organization during the first three months, but lately seem less enthusiastic. During your bi-weekly meetings with James, you are surprised when he yells you he feel frustrated because his skills aren't being fully utilized. He says that, during his interview, several team members told him he would be assisting them with data analysis, but instead is just doing what he considers "fact checking."

James is an asset to your team and you do not want to lose him. How would you respond?

a) "I'm sorry you feel that way, but this is part of your job. Your current assignments are very important in preparing you for future, more challenging assignments and a career path in this area. Let me explain how."

b) "Let's take a look at your Individual Development Plan, we'll see how you progressed, and identify the areas where you can move on to more challenging work."

c) "Can you tell me a few projects that you find most interesting?"

If you selected A, it's good to be honest with James about the work that is required of his position. It's also good to remind him how the work that he's currently doing will help him when he begins to take on more challenging assignment in the organization. At some level the onboarding program is not keeping James motivated to contribute to the team, His recent lack of engagement is a result of what the current plan is doing for him trying to stay on the current course is likely going to end in either a less efficient performance or with James leaving and you having to face an expensive recruiting process to replace him. If possible, work with James to identify a project that he feels provides more challenging work right away.

If you selected B, revisiting James' IDP is an important part of employee development and engagement. Meeting regularly with him also displays you are interested in his professional development and his overall success in the organization. Make sure you are realistic about the opportunities; if he finds out form co-workers that interesting work is a long way off, a perceived lack of honesty may discourage him further. Millennials often want to take on difficult work immediately. Think about the assignments James had in his first few months. If the work didn't engage him, you should recognize that and try a different approach.

If you selected C, asking James what types of projects excite him is a good way to understand the type of work he finds challenging. Adding him to different projects, if possible, is a great way to motivate him and get him working closely with other members of the team. It's also important to acknowledge James' concerns, which may result in him not understanding how the work he has been assigned adds value to the team. However, just because the work is not exciting doesn't mean it's not valuable. He still needs to complete his current work, but finding a way to show him he has not in fact signed up for a career full of monotony is likely to go far in keeping him interest.

Module Conclusion

Generationally diverse teams offer several benefits to the organization when led and managed effectively. As you recruit, interview and onboard employees, be aware of the different generational and individual preferences. This will lead to a better understanding of their needs and values in the workplace. In Module 3, you will learn key strategies and techniques for engaging and retaining employees. A job aid containing all of the strategies and techniques reviewed in this module can be found in the "Resources" tab. Remember to update your Action Plan to capture strategies and techniques you want to keep immediately at hand!

Engaging and Retaining Employees

Welcome to Module 3: Engaging and Retaining Employees! This module introduces you to strategies and techniques you can use to effectively engage and retain individuals from all generations.

Engaged workers are eager to perform on the job, develop skills, advance in their careers and improve an organization's effectiveness. Disengaged workers cost federal organizations billions of dollars a year in lost productivity. These individuals often do their work half-heartedly and make careless mistakes. They are most likely to leave an organization and turnover is expensive.

Engaged employees are passionate about their work and believe in the organization's mission. They continue to do good work despite challenges. Highly engaged employees are more likely to stay

committed to an organization. Engagement and retention are interdependent, and each one is key to maintaining high performance. In order to retain employees, you must keep them engaged.

Employees can be intrinsically and extrinsically motivated for different reasons. Intrinsic motivation is supported by providing work assignments meaningful to the employee. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is supported by providing tangible rewards to an employee – such as pay raises, cash awards, paid time off or non-monetary forms of recognition. Have a conversation with each employee to identify the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that are appealing to them. For example, if your employee is intrinsically motivated by doing research and staying current on topics related to the organization's work, assign her to a cutting edge research project. If, on the other hand, your employee is extrinsically motivated and needs to improve his public speaking skills, find out what type of recognition will incentivize the delivery of a successful presentation.

Employee engagement has become an important topic of discussion in the workplace.

Employee Engagement[2]

Organizations such as the Office of Personnel Management, the Gallup Organization, the Partnership for Public Service, and others have shiner a bright spotlight on Employee Engagement over the last several years. So why should federal leaders care about employee engagement?

Research shows two things:

1) highly engaged employees are significantly more productive, higher performing, and less likely to leave; and,
2) organizations with high employee engagement experience lower absenteeism and fewer accidents.

What's more, the research shows there is a high cost to having disengaged employees. Disengaged employees are not only unproductive themselves; they pull down the productivity of others around them. According to Gallup's research in their 2013 State of the American Workplace Report, actively disengaged employees are costing the US between $450-$550 billion a year. Every federal leader, whether they are a first-level supervisor, a middle manager, or a member of the Senior Executive Service, should care about productivity and retention. And in an era where most federal organization's budgets are flat or declining and workloads are increasing, the need to have a highly engaged federal workforce is more important now than ever.

Okay, so let's say you've bought into the business case for employee engagement. The question now is, "how do you go about increasing employee engagement with your Branch, Division, Office, or entire Organization?" Fortunately there's been a lot of research in this area. Although not all research agrees on what the primary drivers are for employee engagement, there is a general agreement on the top six or seven things that drive positive employee engagement including:

- Relationship with one's supervisor
- Having a good match between the work, and one's skills and talents
- The opportunity for growth and development
- Understanding how one's work contributes to the mission

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[2] From the video "Employee Engagement" presented by Jody Hudson, Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer, NRC.

- Having work that is viewed as challenging and important
- Having a sense of control over decisions pertaining to one's work
- Having room for empowerment and creativity
- Effective Leadership or the extent to which employees believe leadership at all levels of the organization generates motivation and commitment, encourages integrity, and manages people fairly, while also promoting the professional development, creativity, and empowerment of employees

As long as any improvement actions you decide to take result in employees being able to say, "Yes, the organization has improved in these areas," then engagement will go up. So what are you waiting for? Start increasing employee engagement today.

Strategies for Engaging and Retaining Employees

This module introduces key strategies for engaging and retaining employees. These strategies include: enhancing communications; creating a positive work environment; creating a culture of recognition; and fostering job autonomy. Each strategy contains practical techniques and research-based preferences or organizational examples. As you complete this module, remember, do not assume you know your employees' preferences simply because they belong to a specific generation. Keep in mind, most people fall within the bell curve of their generation and some do not.

Enhance Communication

Research shows open communication drives employee engagement and retention across generations. The more you communicate with employees, the more you will be able to understand what their motivation drivers are to better engage and retain them. Get to know each person on your team and you will soon learn his or her values. Understanding what your employees value helps determine how you might want to communicate with them. Research-based generational communication preferences are reviewed in this strategy. A Deloitte study on the best places to work in the federal government revealed that a top ranking organization created a quick wins guide for leaders to improve communication across the organization. Learn more about the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Quick Wins Guide" for enhancing communications and each technique below.

Share Relevant Information

Regardless of their generation, your employees want to know what is happening in the organization. Share organizational information to keep them updated on significant changes and events. Doing so, will help begin to gain their trust and loyalty. After management meetings, use quick email bursts, visuals, voicemail or in –person conversations to communicate and get feedback on new policies or changes. Millennials prefer to understand the effect and personal impact of the organizational change. Set up one-on-one meetings with them to discuss their concerns about specific changes and the potential impact. Gen Xers prefer information when it is most relevant, so share important information with them immediately. Also, they tend to prefer the straight facts, so be direct when you share information. Baby Boomers and Traditionalists, who have considerable work experience, prefer to share past experiences and insights related to organizational changes. Ask them to share with you how they've handled similar changes and share this information with your team.

Provide Ongoing Informal and Formal Feedback

All generations want to be kept informed about their job performance. Enhanced communication encourages open and honest feedback regarding the employee's strengths and weaknesses. Formal performance feedback is important during the performance appraisal cycle, but is not enough. Informal brief feedback is valuable when given immediately following an action, such as a presentation or interaction with a customer. All individuals and generations have preferences for both the frequency and the medium used for receiving feedback.

Millennials

Millennials prefer constant feedback and appreciate collaborative interaction through various mediums. In addition to formal feedback, consider using instant messages and text messages to provide positive feedback.

Generation Xers

Gen Xers prefer immediate feedback. Consider phone calls, emails and casual communication immediately after they have performed the action.'

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers prefer feedback when it is necessary. Consider face-to-face interaction and phone calls when providing feedback.

Traditionalists

Traditionalists prefer feedback if and when it is necessary. Consider using personal notes and individual interactions when providing feedback.

Leverage the Virtual Work Environment

Use virtual tools to promote communications with your team. An online collaboration tool to enhance two-way communication is an effective way to generate ideas for improving work processes as well as the work environment. It also promotes knowledge management and allows employees to share ideas across generations and the organization. Some Federal organizations use an internal online community, which helps them to build and share ideas, experiences, opinions, knowledge and best practices in a collaborative environment. Employees can rate, discuss and improve upon innovative ideas to help the organization. You can use different technologies, such as instant messaging, to quickly gather ideas. If possible, consider setting up a SharePoint site for special projects, new processes or other initiatives. Ask a few employees to champion the site and get other involved.

Improve Your Coaching Skills

To be an effective leader, you must observe, inquire, listen and respond to the needs of your employees. These important communication techniques will help you become an everyday coach to employees. Coaching is the ability to evaluate and address the developmental needs of employees and assist them in selecting experiences to gain vital skills. Seize the opportunities to improve your coaching skills. Every individual and generation desires some level of coaching but prefer different approaches.

Millennials

Millennials prefer coaching sessions and feedback often so they can gauge if they are meeting their performance goals. Communicate with them frequently on areas they excel in and can improve upon.

Generation Xers

Gen Xers are known for being self-sufficient; give them structure and some coaching, but implement a hands-off managing style. They prefer feedback to be constructive so they can put it into action.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers prefer being coached in peer-to-peer situations. Establish a friendly relationships and be specific in your observations of them.

Traditionalists

Traditionalists value seniority and experience in coaching relationships. They tend to prefer informal coaching. Asking questions such as, "Why do you think this is a problem?" is a good way to coach this generation without coming off too strong?

The U.S. Department of Transportation's "Leadership Quick Wins" for Enhancing Communication

- Drop by employee meetings. Show them you are interested in their work and offer insights you may have.
- Have an open-door policy. Make yourself available to employees by setting up office hours. Personal contact builds trust.
- Walk the halls. Build relationships with employees by walking around to meet them. Say hello to team members and ask them how they are doing.
- Invite employees out to coffee or lunch. Take them out of the office setting to reward them or learn more about them.
- Listen to your employees. Listen closely to what employees are telling you by holding a "listening session." Share with employees what you head and what changes you can make to improve.
- Conduct stay interviews. Conduct interviews with employees to find out more about what they're doing, what their goals are and what may be keeping them from achieving those goals.
- Turn your employees into consultants. Regularly host meetings where employees can channel their inner creativity by brainstorming solutions to problems.

Knowledge Check

It's time to apply your knowledge! Practice applying the strategies and techniques you have learned in this module. Read the scenario and select a choice.

Scenario

Two high-performing employees, Diego, a Generation Xers, and Mary, a Baby Boomer, have been working together on a project. Diego has shared with you that Mary takes up too much time being social during status meetings, and he is annoyed. He doesn't fell as though the meetings are productive and has disengaged himself from the project. He has skipped out on four of the project meetings in the last two weeks.

You schedule a meeting with Mary. When you mention Diego's name, Mary is clearly annoyed. She shares that he doesn't' seem interested in the project and appears to be too busy to attend project meetings.

You want to understand her perspective. You also want her to understand Diego's perspective. What do you say to her?

a) "Mary, have you asked Diego why he doesn't come to meetings anymore? From what I've observed, he does seem really busy. Is there a way you can shorten the meetings so that he can easily attend? I'm wondering how we can make this work and want to get your thoughts."

b) "Mary, can I share with you something I've observed? I think it's great that you like to socialize at work, however, not everybody likes to do this. You may need to be more flexible and adaptable to others in the group. How can I support you in doing this?"

c) "How about I schedule a meeting with the two of you and we can talk about a solution? Together, the three of us can figure out a strategy that will benefit both of you. Or, can I suggest you ask Diego if there's a different way to communicate on the project? I will support you in any way to make this project successful for both of you."

If you selected A, this is a good approach. You are offering Mary the chance to be self-reflective and come to her own conclusions about why Diego has removed himself from the project. She doesn't see his perspective; instead she sees a person who does not take the time to attend important meetings.

If you selected B, this is a good approach. You are being direct by telling Mary you have observed that she is very social on the job. You appreciate her camaraderie, and at the same time, you are bringing it to her attention that not everybody approaches work the same way she does. She needs to be flexible. You are making it clear that she needs to compromise to work successfully with other team members and offering your support to make this happen.

If you selected C, facilitating a conversation between Mary and Diego is a good way for them to see each other's perspective. Mary may not feel comfortable with the approach, so offering the option to speak with Diego herself is also good. By remaining neutral, you are showing that you value both of their perspectives and believe that they can find a way to work together. You are keeping the focus of the conversation on how to make the project successful and this is a good way to avoid making it personal for Mary. You are not asking her to change her personality. You are suggesting there is another way for her to work with Diego that is best for both of them.

Create a Positive Work Environment

Sustained engagement relies on a positive work environment. People spend one third of their life in the workplace and you have a responsibility to make sure you create an environment where you team enjoys coming to work. This strategy focuses on creating a work environment where all individuals can thrive.

Build Trusting Relationships

Strong relationships with your direct reports can lead to increased trust, better communication, and an enhanced understanding of their needs – all of which contribute to employee engagement and fosters a positive work environment. In order for employees to trust you, you must trust them. This means creating a safe environment where they feel free to express their ideas and concerns. A study by Dale Carnegie revealed that a "caring" manager is a key driver of employee engagement. Caring managers ask employees how they are doing and care about their well-being. They take an interest in their employees' strengths, find constructive ways to improve their weaknesses and are truly dedicated to seeing employees succeed. Chat with your employees regularly, not just to discuss performance, but to get to know them. Find out how they prefer to meet with you, whether it's formally or informally, in-

person, online or over the phone. This will require flexibility. Generational preferences can be viewed here but individual preferences may vary.

Millennials

Use humor when you speak with them and don't speak down to them. Be polite; if you respect them, they will respect you. Emails and voicemails are well received by this generation.

Generation Xers

Gen Xers tend to prefer bluntness. They prefer a more informal communication style. Email is a good way to catch up with this generation.

Baby Boomers

Establish a friendly rapport with them. Be direct when you speak with them. They tend to like the personal touches from supervisors, such as a lunch.

Traditionalists

Traditionalists prefer formal conversations and in-person chats. Ask them how they're doing during scheduled meetings and show respect for there are and experience.

Make Work Fun

Encourage your team to have fun on the job. This is a great way to boost morale and increase engagement. One way to do this is by forming a Morale Group with representatives from each generation. Charge this group with planning events, such as monthly birthday celebrations or teach activities outside of work, such as bowling. Not everyone can get to work early, go out to lunch, stay late or meet on weekends, so vary start times. In addition, keep all events optional.

Foster Work-Life Integration

Work-life integration is becoming increasingly important to all generations. Without work-life integration, employees are likely to experience burnout, stress and dissatisfaction with their job. Telework and Flex Hours assist employees in managing their work and personal responsibilities. You should encourage employees of all generations to take advantage of flexible work arrangements if they find them beneficial. A simple way to encourage employees to take advantage of these work arrangements is to use them yourself. This will assure them that it is acceptable to do so as well. If you regularly arrive early and stay past close-of-business, employees may assume you expect the same form them. A top performing Federal organization make workplace improvement and job satisfaction a priority for employees. When they placed more emphasis on telework, job satisfaction levels increased. One way to increase job satisfaction levels is to implement telework and use internal and external blogs, weekly newsletters and social media sites to communicate with employees.

Knowledge Check

It's time to apply your knowledge! Practice applying the strategies and techniques you have learned in this module. Read the scenario and select a choice.

Scenario

Christine has been with your organization for over 20 years. She has always been a top performer and takes great pride in her work. Lately, she has missed a few deadlines. It seems as if her personal issues are contributing to her falling behind in work. Christine recently mentioned that her elderly mother, has moved into an assisted living home. Christine must travel to give her medication each morning and

periodically takes her to doctor appointments. You know Christine has a long commute. Some days, her morning commute takes at least an hour and a half and her afternoon commute can take even longer. Because of her commute, she arrives late each day and occasionally has to take leave in the afternoon to meet her mother's needs.

You have given Christine the option to telework but she has resisted, admitting that she was "old fashioned" and feels work should be done in an office. You feel she is a great candidate for telework. It could help her meet her mother's needs and improve her work performance. One day, she stops by your office for an informal chat and says, "I am sorry for being late, but my mom refused to take her medicine this morning, so I got stuck in rush hour traffic." You can tell she is very tired and you feel this is the perfect opportunity to revisit the telework option.

What would you say to her?

   a) "Christine, it concerns me that you've been coming in later than usual. Would you like to reconsider your telework option? It will save you a few hours a day in your commute."
   b) "You know, I remember you mentioned your mom is now in an assisted living facility. It seems as though this added responsibility is affecting your normal routine. The Employee Assistance Program offers an elderly support group for employees who care for their older parents. This group shares their stories of how they manage these added responsibilities, and you may be able to get some ideas."
   c) "Christine, I can tell you are stressed and aren't providing the same level of detailed work. If you need some personal time to work through these issues, please let me know."

If you selected A, this is a good approach. It's good you told Christine you are concerned about her. It helps build trust in your relationship with her. It's also good to encourage her to exercise the organization's telework policies. By telling her she will save time on her commute, you are sending the message that you really are aware that things may be difficult for her and that those extra hours will help her. Another way to show Christine that teleworking is encouraged is to telework yourself. You employees are watching you. If they see that you find teleworking to be a viable option, they will feel more comfortable doing it themselves.

If you selected B, this is a good approach. You are letting Christine know that you care about her by telling her that you remember her mother is sick. You are also letting her know that the organization values her family life and offers a support group. If she still f\does not feel comfortable with telework, do not push it. Instead, let her know that your door is always open and should feel free to stop by if she wants to.

If you selected C, this is a good approach. By telling Christine this, you are sending the message that you care about her. At the same time, you are letting her know that her performance is suffering and you want to help her. This will build trust. At some point, you should share with her that you think telework one or two days a week would be a great advantage to her, and that she is welcome to do that. Another way to show Christine the value of telework is by doing it yourself. If she sees that you find it to be a viable option, she will feel more comfortable doing it herself.

Create a Culture of Recognition

A culture of recognition inspires employees to do good work and recognize others for their contributions. In the past, people were accustomed to being rewarded for milestone accomplishments, such as years of service. Today recognizing individuals for their daily accomplishments strongly impacts their level of engagement and motivation. Research suggests there are generational preferences towards recognition, which you will earn in this section. Individual needs will differ but remember a simple "thank you" can go a long way.

Recognize Employees Who Meet or Exceed Goals

Work with your employees to set goals and then recognize them in a way that is meaningful and specific to them. Also, it's important that recognition is given to employees in a timely manner. Delaying recognition can cause employees to feel underappreciated, especially after they have put their best effort into a very successful project.

Identify Individual Recognition Preferences

Generations value different types of recognition. Some appreciate public recognition, while others are more comfortable with private. Ask your employees what their preferences are so the recognition is meaningful to them. Encouraging employees to nominate their coworkers for recognition is a great way to boost morale across the team. Ask Traditionalists who work with Millennials on successful projects to share their stories about the Millennials contributions to the project. Millennials will feel proud that older coworkers are recognizing their efforts. In the same respect, ask your employees to share how more experienced workers were able to coach and mentor them through projects. Baby Boomers and Traditionalists will feel a sense of accomplishment knowing their knowledge sharing has made a difference.

Millennials

Millennials prefer public recognition during such events as team meetings and award ceremonies.

Generation Xers

Gen Xers prefer paid time off, cash awards and participation in cutting edge projects.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers prefer public recognition, newsletter recognition and professional award nominations.

Traditionalists

Traditionalists prefer handwritten notes, plaques and pictures with senior leadership.

Knowledge Check

It's time to apply your knowledge! Practice applying the strategies and techniques you have learned in this module. Read the scenario and select a choice.

Scenario

Andrea, a Gen Xer, has recently become distant and appears disengaged one a new project. You have noticed many errors in her work, which is generally atypical of her performance. You schedule a meeting to discuss this with her. At the beginning of the meeting you tell her, "Your work is usually outstanding but I notice you have made a few errors on your current project. Is there something I can help you with?" Andrea sighs and says, "I am sorry about the errors, I am still recovering from all the work I did on the last project. Since Jay and Yadira left, I have taken on a lot of work."

You suddenly remember how much Andrea went above and beyond during her last project, and your failure to recognize her. You begin to suspect she is frustrated due to the lack of recognition for her extra efforts.

You consider Andrea to be a rising star on your team. What would you say to her?

a) "I know you can do great work, Andrea. I've seen it. Would it help if I made you the project lead and provided support staff?"
b) "You're right. You have had a lot of work and I appreciate all of your efforts. I am here to help you with whatever you need." After the meeting, you try to see if you can give her a time-off award to reward her for her hard work on the previous project.
c) "I can't tell you how valuable you are to the team. You went above and beyond on the last project. Two of our senior managers tell me that if it wasn't for you, that project would not have been successful."

If you selected A, this is a good approach. You are recognizing Andrea for her good work and giving her the opportunity to take on a leadership role. You are also providing her with support staff so she can fully devote her time to leading the project and is not just taking on more work. She clearly feels underappreciated for not being recognized on the previous project and this is a creative way to make up for it. At some point, you should ask Andrea what type of recognition she prefers and make sure to give her recognition in a timely manner on future projects.

If you selected B, this is a good approach. You aren't putting Andrea on the spot by recalling her previous project but you are demonstrating that good work does not go unnoticed. If you can successfully get her a time-off as ward, you are sending the message that good work is rewarded and this will likely renew her dedication to the current project. At some point, you should ask Andrea what type of recognition she prefers so you can give her recognition in a timely manner.

If you selected C, this is a god way to let Andrea know that her previous efforts were noticed. Andrea didn't realize that her good work was bring recognized by others because nobody told her. While it's good that you finally recognized her, it's important to provide her immediate recognition after a project. It may be worthwhile to see if a time-off award is possible. This type of reward can send the message that she is truly an asset to your team and will likely renew her dedication to the current project. You should also ask Andrew what type of recognition she prefers so you know how to reward her in the future.

Foster Job Autonomy
Job autonomy allows employees to exercise control, choice and discretion in how they get their jobs done. Employees with more autonomy feel a greater sense of ownership over their work, thus they tend to be more engaged. This strategy focuses on giving employees more ownership over their work.

Assign Work that Matches the Job Description
Assign work to employees that match their job qualifications and responsibilities. Allow them to be creative in their work so they can leverage their strengths and grow professionally. You can also organize projects to limit hierarchy and promote collaboration among employees. This allows everybody to shine in their area of expertise. Baby Boomers, in particular, bring a lot of experience and perspective

that can lead to important innovations. Give them flexibility in their job to try new things and support them if they fail.

Increase Employee Participation in Decision-Making

Involvement in decision-making is a key driver for employee engagement and job satisfaction as indicated in the results of a previous OPM Federal Employee Viewpoint survey. It is the biggest influence on employee satisfaction across all generations. Give employees decision-making authority, when possible. Trust their intuition and hold them accountable. Their buy-in organizational decisions will be greater if they know their opinions were taken into account. Often times, people are invited to make decisions because they have seniority, not because they are subject matter experts or stakeholders. Keep in mind those employees who do the work and have been involved on a project from day one. These employees can provide valuable insight on best practices and lessons learned. Baby Boomers and Traditionalists feel valued when they are able to use their experiences to provide input on important decisions. Ask their opinion when making important decisions, such as changing longtime processes. A successful Federal organization has their management team solicit employees input on work processes through a number or means including focus groups, team recommendations and employee surveys when making decisions. Think about work flows and processes in your own organization that need improvement. Ask employees for recommendations on processes and collect their ideas in a team meeting or via email. When possible, implement changes quickly so they can see that you value their input.

Provide Challenging Work

Challenging work allows employees to develop their professional skills. A good way to determine if you are meeting an employee's need for development is to think about how you presented the job to them during the interview. Do they have challenging work that can be considered "stretch assignment?" Do they have the opportunity to make significant contributions? Research indicates that engagement - and high quality performance - is greatest when the demands of the job are highest. Having challenging work assignments gives employees more confidence which will lead to greater autonomy. In addition, they will earn new skills and become more capable.

Module Conclusion

As you engage and retain employees, be aware of the different preferences each generation and individual may have. This will lead to a better understanding of their needs and values in the workplace. In Module 4, you will learn key strategies and techniques for developing employees. A job aid containing all of the strategies and techniques reviewed in this module can be found in the "Resources" tab. Remember to update your Action Plan to capture ideas and strategies you want to keep immediately at hand!

Developing Employees

Welcome to Module 4: Developing Employees! This module introduces you to strategies and techniques you can use to effectively develop individuals form all generations. Learning and development experiences are critical and important to all individuals and generations. They can positively impact retention and engagement, and expand your employees' knowledge and skills. You should not use a "one size fits all" approach with your team or assume everyone within a generation has the same preferred learning style, needs, interests and goals. Keep in mind, employees can learn directly through

on-the-job experiences, professional relationships and formal meaning. They can also learn indirectly by watching their supervisors and leaders. A good way to impact employee development is to lead by example when handling challenges in the workplace. You should also tailor experiences to meet individual interests and needs. Learn how you can work with employees to determine their learning and development needs.

Learning and Development[3]

Many organizations, private, public, and non-profit are working hard to manage their multigenerational workforce. Most work environments now consist for four different generations, which is certainly true in the federal government! As a result, we need to take a more holistic look at the processes we use to hire, collaborate, communicate and develop our employees. What do we need to change? What should we continue doing that will add value and help us enhance the skills our employees need to be successful in their careers, and help our organizations meet the important missions we have before us? A great deal of research has been completed in this area to help us identify each of the four generations, what they like, what they dislike, and what shapes each group. At the end of the day we find that there are many similarities that bind us together. And the differences are both manageable, and even reasonable.

Think back on the day you entered the professional workforce. Do you remember how excited you were? You were ready to take over the world! As we settle in we find our niche and begin to learn what is expected of us, and how we can contribute in a positive way to our organizations. If you step back and observe, you will find that your professional lifecycle will generally mirror what is happening before you. This may give you some additional insight on how to address the learning needs of your staff.

A few points to consider when working with your employees as you develop a plan for ongoing learning:

- What professional skills will your organization require to meet the goals and objectives, now and in the future? Once that is established you can identify the type of learning activities that will address those needs.
- What modes of delivery are best suited for the information, tools or techniques you wish to share with your employees? Advances in technology allow us to deliver information faster, and just in time. We should consider what expectations or outcomes we have for the employee to determine the appropriate mode to deliver that learning.

Moving on to establishing the employee needs. So, what is the best way to determine this? Observation is one part of this, the other is to ask them! Determining the needs of all of our employees is never as easy task, however, it is essential to our success and the key to creating a successful learning event is to be sure to include elements and activities that tap into each generation's objectives and preferences.

Strategies for Developing Employees

This module introduces two practical strategies for developing employees including: creating customized and meaningful learning experiences; and facilitating learning transfer. Each strategy contains techniques and research-based generational preferences. As you complete this module, remember; do not assume you know your employee's preferences simply because they belong to a

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[3] From the video "Learning and Development" presented by Sharon Ridings, Chief Learning Officer, EPA.

specific generation. Keep in mind, most people fall within the bell curve of their generation and some do not.

Create Customized and Meaningful Learning Experiences

Generations and individuals want developmental experiences that will further their growth, close skill gaps and increase career path options. The experiences you create and provide each employee will depend on an individual's developmental goals. Training funds do not always determine the type of learning experience you can provide them.

Utilize Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

Take time to understand your employees' learning style, needs, interests and goals before creating and providing developmental experiences. Begin the conversation by asking:

- What are your short-term career goals?
- What are your long-term career goals?
- What do you consider your biggest strength?
- What skills would you like to improve?

The answers to these questions will help you and your employee identify specific and achievable goals. The next step is to work with each employee to identify learning experiences, such as a new project, rotational assignment or training to meet each goal. Then, set expected outcomes and a timeline appropriate for each learning experience. At the end of the discussion, each employee will have a customized IDP. Refer to the IDP throughout the year to reevaluate learning and development needs; and track progress.

Leverage the 70/20/10 Development Model

The 70-20-10 Rule for Leadership Development is a research-based leadership learning and development model the emerged from the Center for Creative Leadership Lessons of Experience research. This model suggest that successful leaders learn, grow and change in response to three general types of experiences over the course of their careers. An individual's development should reflect these types of learning experiences and include: 70 percent on-the-job experiences, 20 percent professional relationships, and 10 percent formal training.

70 Percent

70 percent of your employee's development should be on-the-job experiences such as challenging job assignments, job shadowing or job rotations. Stay alert for experiences that meet your employee's needs and be sure to include them on their IDP.

Challenging Job Assignments

Look for ways to use your employee's skills and experiences outside of the normal scope of their work. Assignments may be different for each employee depending on their current skills and developmental needs. You may provide employees, who have the right skill-set, the experience to help fix a failing assignment or project, serve on a cross-functional team, or lead a group project.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing allows employees to gain knowledge in a particular area of interest within a short time frame. It also helps establish relationships with other employees. Use your network and seek experiences for your employees.

Job Rotations

Job rotations allow employees to move laterally into a position. Rotations vary in length from weeks to months. They expand an employee's knowledge and skills, and provide different responsibilities. Furthermore, rotations promote collaboration among agency divisions or across agencies. Partner with another supervisor to create a job rotation or temporary job swap, and inform your employees of available assignments.

20 Percent

20 percent of an individual's development should come from professional relationships with mentors or coaches. Consider providing a reverse-mentoring experience. These relationships increase knowledge transfer among generations and help:

- Ensure critical information is not lost;
- Build team morale by promoting good working relationships across multigenerational teams;
- Prove a cost-effective way to develop employees; and
- Encourage employees to build working relationships within and outside your organization.

10 Percent

10 percent of developmental experiences should include formal training. This includes instructor-led courses, web-based training courses, e-learning programs, professional certifications, and magazines or e-journals. Keep in mind that generations tend to have different learning preferences. For examples, Millennials and Gen Xers are likely to prefer web-based training including online courses or webinars. Baby Boomers and Traditionalists are likely to prefer instructor-led training, formal education programs and professional books, articles or journals.

Hold Employees Accountable for their Development

Development is most effective when employees and supervisors fulfill their responsibilities. Employees should play an active role by identifying specific and achievable goals, determining learning experiences, and tracking progress of expected outcomes. Supervisors should engage employees in development conversations and support them in reaching their goals. The Individual Development Plan provides a realistic account of progress, and clear reasons why employees should master or develop new skills.

Knowledge Check

It's time to apply your knowledge! Practice applying the strategies and techniques you have learned in this module. Read the scenario and select a choice.

Scenario

Carolina, a Traditionalist, is a Senior Editor on your team. She is very efficient and manages to take on more work than less experienced team members. You want to make sure she continues to expand her skillset and remains engaged in her work. You schedule a meeting with her to discuss her Individual Development Plan. During the meeting, Carolina expresses interest in graphic design. She informs you that her recent work editing a series of executive presentations also required her to design and make recommendations for information graphics. You are a bit surprised but definitely see how her role has evolved from editing content.

What developmental experience would you recommend her?

a) Include graphic design as a development goal on her IDP and have her attend an instructor-led graphic design course.
b) Include graphic design as a development goal on her IDP and have her attend a professional networking event for graphic designers.
c) Include graphic design as a development goal on her IDP and coordinate a job-shadowing experience with a graphic designer in your organization.

All answers are a good approach. It is your job to work with her to identify experiences for her IDP. Be sure to confirm her preferred learning style. Support her development in this area and find ways to incorporate graphic design into her future work.

Facilitate Learning Transfer

Learning transfer is the process of applying newly acquired behaviors, knowledge and skills at work in order to improve performance. It maximizes your learning investment and benefits the organization. This strategy focuses on facilitating learning transfer before, during and after a learning experience to ensure an employee's successful application of new knowledge and skills.

Prepare Employees Before a Learning Experience

Encourage employees to prepare for the learning experience. Help them fully understand how the course will assist them with current or future assignments. Learn different ways you can facilitate learning transfer before a learning event.

Choose Relevant Experiences

Consider your employee's current skill-set. Suggest learning relevant to the employee's developmental goals listed on their IDP.

Assess Readiness

Determine if your employee has the prerequisites to maximize the benefits of the experience. For example, if the activity focuses on advanced programs and policy, make sure your employee has at least an intermediate understanding of the subject.

Set Clear Goals and Expectations

Set clear goals and expectations. This facilitates skill or knowledge application when they return to the job.

Further Excitement and Motivation

Show excitement and interest in their learning. Your employee need to believe he or she can finish the experience and apply it in the workplace. You may want to:

- Allow employees to decide when and how they wish to develop their skills and knowledge
- Make employees accountable
- Communicate that employees are expected to report back what they learned during the experience
- Convey that employees are not expected to take phone calls or answer emails if attending instructor-led training. Assign someone to support their project while they are out of the office.

Encourage Participation During a Learning Experience

During a learning experience, encourage employees to actively participate and determine how content can be applied to their work.

Prevent Distractions

Prevent distractions. Try not to interrupt the employee or allow others to interrupt the employee. This demonstrates that learning is a priority for you and your team. One missed session can cause a disconnection if a set of activities builds on one another.

Provide Opportunities for Practice

Provide the employee with opportunities, additional materials and/or space to use their new knowledge.

Stay Involved

Stay involved during the employee's learning experience. For example, if the employee is on a rotation, ensure you communicate with the host supervisor and employee to inquire progress.

Recognize Employee Participation

Recognize the employee's participation individually or within a group setting. This conveys the importance of learning and encourages participation in future experiences.

Encourage Knowledge Transfer After a Learning Experience

Encourage learning transfer after the experience. This will build team morale and promote good working relationships across multigenerational teams. Learning transfer allows employees to share best practices and institutional knowledge. This is increasingly important as generations retire. Learn different ways you can encourage knowledge transfer.

Conduct a Post-Learning Debrief with Team

Have your employee brief your team by sharing key concepts and answering questions about their experience. Brainstorm ways to integrate the new knowledge and skills within existing processes.

Offer a Reasonable Workload

Allow the employee time to reflect and apply new skills. This may require coworkers to take on extra work that will gradually be given back to the employee.

Provide Support

Encourage and support employees as they apply their new knowledge. Reinforce desired behaviors, use mistakes as learning opportunities and consider pairing a newly trained member with an experienced member who possesses the desired skillset.

Monitor Progress and Evaluate Performance

Ensure learning continues after each experience – review the employee's IDP and discuss his/her progress.

Knowledge Check

It's time to apply your knowledge! Match each of the activities to the technique it is most associated with.

Techniques:
- Prepare Employees Before a Learning Event
- Encourage Participation During a Learning Event
- Encourage Knowledge Transfer After a Learning Event

Activities:
- Prevent distractions
- Monitor progress and evaluate performance
- Assess readiness
- Offer a reasonable workload
- Stay involved throughout the experience
- Choose relevant experiences

The correct answers are as follows:
- Prepare Employees Before a Learning Event
    - Assess readiness
    - Choose relevant experiences
- Encourage Participation During a Learning Event
    - Prevent distractions
    - Stay involved throughout the experience
- Encourage Knowledge Transfer After a Learning Event
    - Monitor progress and evaluate performance
    - Offer a reasonable workload

Module Conclusion

Consider your employee's generational and individual learning preferences. Use this knowledge to help determine the best learning experience to meet each employee's goals. A job aid containing all the strategies and techniques reviewed in this module can be found in the "Resources" tab. Remember to update your Action Plan to capture ideas and strategies you want to keep immediately at hand!

Course Conclusion

Congratulations! You have reached the end of the course. In this course, you learned how to effectively recruit, interview, onboard, engage, retain and develop individuals across generations. Generational awareness provides insight into identifying traits, preferences, values and attributes shared within a generation. Continue to develop your generational competence to strategically respond to the specific needs of individuals form all generations. Refer to the Leading a Generationally Diverse Workforce Job Aid that includes the strategies, techniques and examples discussed in this course. You may now print your Certificate of Completion.