

Managing People and Organizations

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MGM603

Managing People and Organizations

Lecture 10



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Managing Multigenerational Work force

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Lecture Outline

1. What is a multigenerational workforce.
2. challenges in managing multigenerational workforce.
3. Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce.
4. The Role of the Inclusive Leader.

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What is a multigenerational workforce

Today's workplace is increasingly a convergence of multiple generations, with potential age gaps of up to five decades between the oldest and youngest employees. This multigenerational makeup, driven by rising retirement ages, brings together distinct cohorts—from Baby Boomers to Generation Z—each shaped by vastly different economic and social landscapes. Consequently, organizations now navigate a rich tapestry of diverse work attitudes, communication styles, and professional priorities.

What is a multigenerational workforce

These differences, particularly in areas like technology adoption, work-life balance, and career expectations, present both a unique challenge and a significant opportunity for businesses to foster inclusive and dynamic environments.

What is a multigenerational workforce



What is a multigenerational workforce

Baby Boomers

- **Born between 1946 and 1964**, Baby Boomers are the generation you're **least likely to have** amongst even a multigenerational workforce. However, not all Boomers will **retire at the expected age of 65**; rather, some will keep working out of joy and others may not be able to retire at a 'traditional' age. This means that while they make up a small slice in your pie, they're still likely to hang around longer than other generations.

What is a multigenerational workforce

Baby Boomers

- **This generation values loyalty, job security, and teamwork, and they tend to prefer structured environments and in-person interactions.**
- **Recognize achievements and offer leadership development.**

What is a multigenerational workforce

Baby Boomers as employees

- **Average time spent in job: 15 years**
- **Driven by: Financial stability**
- **Strength: Depth of experience**

What is a multigenerational workforce

Generation X

- Generation X hark from the period between **1965–1979**. They're like the middle child of the family; often overlooked while older (Boomers) and younger (Millennials) siblings share the limelight (for good or bad).
- They're **highly adaptable and experienced**, yet some of the most overlooked for promotions. And whilst they were once called the slacker generation, Gen X are most likely to have dependents both younger and older than them.

What is a multigenerational workforce

Generation X

- Independent, adaptable, and keen on prioritizing work-life balance, Gen X favor email communication and flexible work arrangements.
- Provide autonomy, consistent feedback, and growth opportunities.

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What is a multigenerational workforce

Generation X as employees

- **Average time spent in job: 5 years**
- **Driven by: Work-life balance**
- **Strength: Adaptable leadership**

What is a multigenerational workforce

Millennials Generation Y (born 1981–1996)

- This generation is **tech-savvy, purpose-driven, and motivated by flexibility and meaningful work.**
- Support with remote work options and values-based leadership.
- As of 2017, **they're the largest generation in the labor force** and the group that's experienced the starkest shift in career priorities.

What is a multigenerational workforce

Millennials Generation Y (born 1981–1996)

- For Millennials, **fun perks and quick promotions are a nice-to-have but job satisfaction, stability and opportunities to learn are non-negotiable. They marry and have children later, staying in tertiary education longer.** The oldest Millennials are in their early 40s while the youngest are still 20-somethings, so they possess diverse priorities even within their own age group.

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What is a multigenerational workforce

Millennials as employees

- **Average time spent in job: 2 years**
- **Driven by: Career growth, purpose**
- **Strength: Most collaborative**

What is a multigenerational workforce

Generation Z (born 1997–2012)

- The newest entrants to the workforce, the eldest of Generation Z were born in 1997.
- Much like Millennials, Gen Z are **interested in career and leadership development and want to see their work contribute to a larger objective.**
- They're **multicultural, tech native and all about employers exhibiting the same diversity and inclusivity they champion themselves**—which explains why Gen Z are more attracted to jobs that interest them than those that pay well.

What is a multigenerational workforce

Generation Z (born 1997–2012)

- This generation are proud digital natives who value inclusivity, mental health, and instant communication.
- Foster a diverse, well-being-focused culture with informal communication channels.

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What is a multigenerational workforce

Generation Z as employees

- **Average time spent in job: TBD**
- **Driven by: Entrepreneurism, global citizenship**
- **Strength: Tech savvy.**

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Communication and Feedback Styles

- Different generations often have distinct preferences for how, when, and how often they communicate and receive feedback.
- Older Generations (Baby Boomers, Gen X): May prefer formal communication (e.g., emails, scheduled meetings) and annual or semi-annual performance reviews.
- Younger Generations (Millennials, Gen Z): Often favor instant messaging and collaborative platforms (e.g., Slack, Teams) and expect frequent, real-time, and informal feedback.

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Communication and Feedback Styles

- The impact will appear mainly in miscommunication, frustration, and feelings of being ignored or micromanaged.
- Important information can get lost if it's only shared through one channel..

What is a multigenerational workforce

Our four generation workforce provides challenges



challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Clashing Views on Work Ethic and "Face Time"

- Deeply held beliefs about what constitutes "hard work" and commitment can vary significantly.
- **Traditional View:** Often equates long hours and physical presence in the office with dedication and loyalty.
- **Modern View:** Tends to prioritize flexibility, efficiency, and outcomes (what you achieve) over "face time" (simply being seen at your desk).

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Clashing Views on Work Ethic and "Face Time"

- The impact will appear mainly in that resentment can build, with some viewing remote or flexible workers as "slackers," while others see rigid 9-to-5 schedules as outdated and inflexible

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

TACKLING LAWYERS BY GENERATION

BOOMER

(GRADUATED IN THE 80s/90s)



MINDSET & APPROACH

- Value hierarchy, formality, and respect for "the system"
- Believe in long hours, face time, and paying dues before advancement
- Strong focus on precedent and traditional interpretation of law

WORK CULTURE

- "Work hard, stay late, learn by observing seniors"

MILLENNIAL

(GRADUATED 2005-2015)



MINDSET & APPROACH

- More collaborative, open to work-life balance
- Willing to question hierarchy, ask "why" instead of just "how"
- Focused on efficiency, tech adoption and client service innovation

WORK CULTURE

- Look for mentorship and career growth rather than blind obedience

GEN Z

(GRADUATED AFTER 2020)



MINDSET & APPROACH

- Highly digital-native – they think in terms of automation, AI tools, and instant research
- Want purpose-driven work – not just money, but impact
- Very open to interdisciplinary thinking (law + tech + policy + entrepreneurship)

WORK CULTURE

- Prefer hybrid/remote work, dislike unnecessary office presence

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Technology Adoption and Digital Fluency

- The gap in comfort and proficiency with new technologies can create friction and inefficiency.
- Digital Natives (Millennials, Gen Z): Grew up with technology, adapt to new software quickly, and may prefer digital solutions for most tasks.
- Digital Immigrants (Baby Boomers, some Gen X): May have learned technology later in life and prefer more traditional, analog methods or require more training and support.

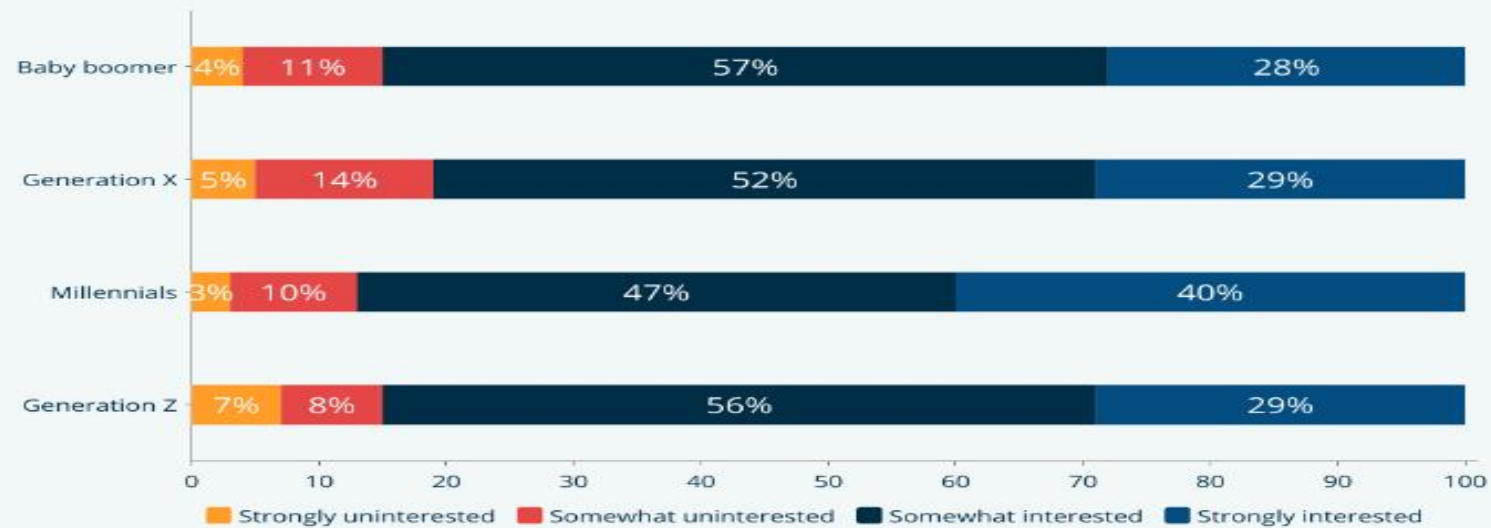
challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Technology Adoption and Digital Fluency

- A "digital divide" can slow down processes, create dependency on certain employees for tech-related tasks, and lead to frustration on both sides

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Employee interest in new technologies in the workplace



Source: 2023 Digital Natives Survey
Q: How would you rate your interest in new technologies in your workplace?
n: 1,029

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Differing Motivators and Career Aspirations

- What motivates an employee can be generationally influenced, affecting engagement and retention strategies.
- **Older Generations:** May be motivated by job security, hierarchical advancement, titles, and financial rewards.
- **Younger Generations:** Often prioritize purpose, work-life balance, learning and development opportunities, rapid career growth, and meaningful recognition.

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challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Differing Motivators and Career Aspirations

- A one-size-fits-all approach to rewards, recognition, and career pathing will fail to engage large segments of the workforce.

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Traditionalists (1925-1945)



Motivation:

- Job Security
- Company Loyalty
- Skill building

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)



Motivation:

- More \$
- More status
- More challenges

Gen X (1965-1985)



Motivation:

- Praise
- Flex time
- Growth Opportunities

Gen Y (1985-2005)



Motivation:

- Greater purpose
- Daily accomplishment
- More influence

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Approaches to Hierarchy and Authority

- Attitudes toward organizational structure and leadership vary widely.
- **Traditional Approach:** Often respects a clear chain of command, formal titles, and top-down decision-making.
- **Modern Approach:** Tends to prefer flat(ter) structures, collaborative decision-making, and values a leader who is a coach or mentor rather than a distant authority figure.

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Approaches to Hierarchy and Authority

- Younger employees may be perceived as disrespectful for challenging ideas, while older managers may be seen as inflexible or "out of touch."

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Varying Expectations for Work-Life Integration

- The line between work and personal life is viewed differently across generations.
- **Traditional View:** Often maintained a clearer separation between work and home life.
- **Contemporary View:** Grew up with connectivity, leading to a more blended approach. They may expect flexibility to handle personal matters during the day but are also more likely to check work emails after hours.

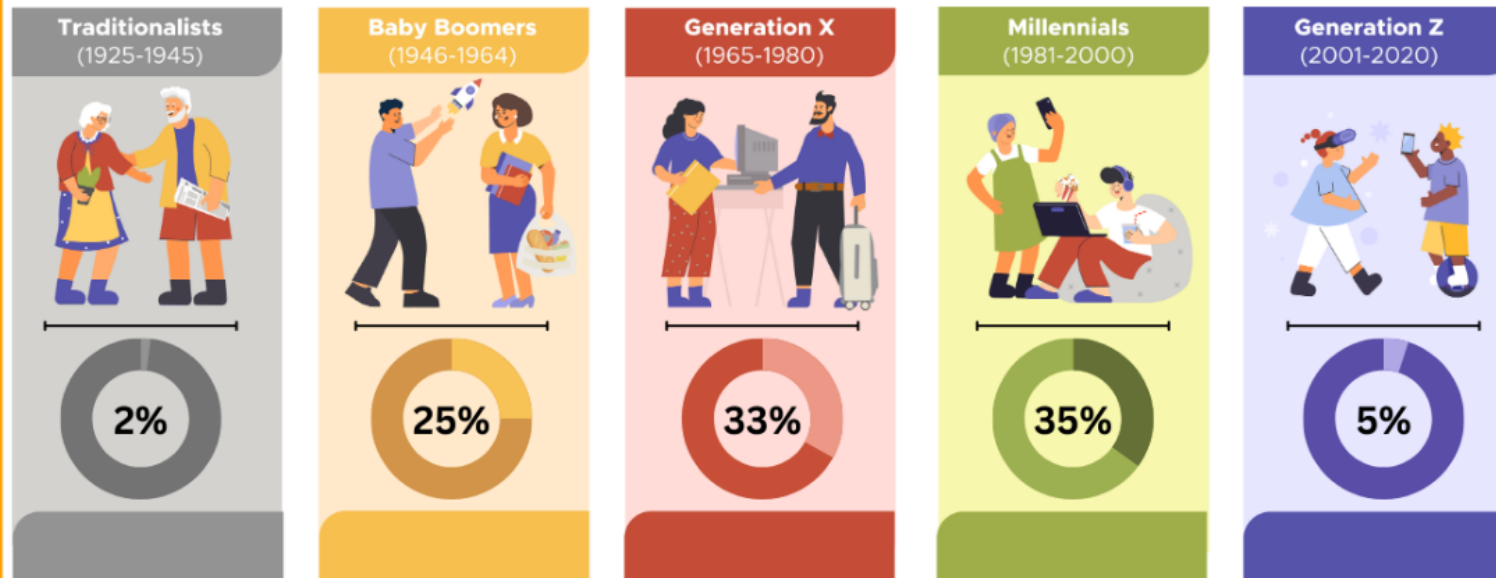
challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

Varying Expectations for Work-Life Integration

- **Conflicts can arise over availability, response times after hours, and the appropriateness of using personal time for work (and vice versa).**

challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

EVOLVING GENERATIONAL VALUES IN WORKFORCE BENEFIT PLANS



challenges in managing multigenerational workforce

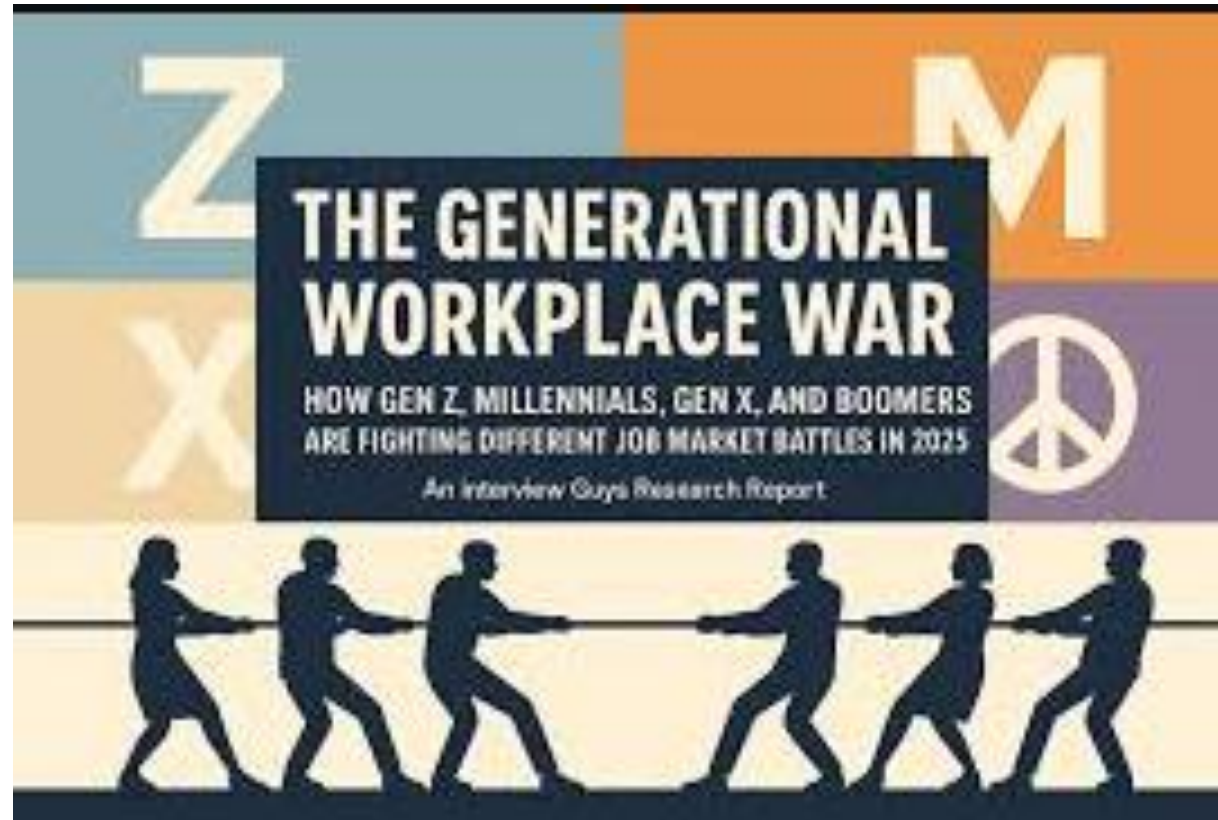
Resistance and Stereotyping

- The most pervasive challenge is the tendency to rely on generational stereotypes.
- Labels like "entitled" (for younger workers) or "resistant to change" (for older workers) are often inaccurate and harmful.
- These biases can poison team culture, hinder collaboration, lead to unfair management practices, and prevent leaders from seeing the unique individual behind the generational label.

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challenges in managing multigenerational workforce



Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce

Foster Fluid Communication

- **Diversify Your Channels:** Don't rely on a single method. Use a mix of formal emails (for official announcements), instant messaging (for quick collaboration), and video calls (for building connection). Ensure critical information is shared across all relevant platforms.
- **Normalize Feedback Loops:** Implement a culture of continuous feedback. Train managers to give constructive criticism that is respectful and actionable. Simultaneously, encourage upward feedback through regular check-ins, anonymous surveys, and an open-door policy (both physical and virtual).

Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce

Champion Flexibility and Customization

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offer a spectrum of options—remote work, hybrid models, flexible hours, compressed workweeks. Judge performance on output and results, not on physical presence or hours logged.
- **Personalized Recognition and Rewards:** Move beyond a one-size-fits-all rewards program. Some employees may value public recognition, others may prefer a bonus, extra time off, or opportunities for professional development. Ask your employees what motivates them.

Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce

Bridge the Technology Gap

- **Provide Purposeful Training:** When introducing new technology, frame it as a tool for efficiency, not just "the new way." Offer tiered training—basic for beginners, advanced for power users—and create a system of "digital mentors" where tech-savvy employees can assist those who are less comfortable.
- **Solicit Input from All Sides:** When adopting new tools, involve a cross-generational team in the selection process. Gen Z can highlight the latest innovations, while more experienced workers can provide insights on integration and practical usability.

Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce

Create Growth Pathways for All

- **Multi-Directional Mentoring:** Formalize programs that are not just top-down. Pair a senior employee (sharing industry wisdom and institutional knowledge) with a junior employee (sharing insights on digital trends and new tools). This fosters mutual respect and learning.
- **Skills-Based Advancement:** Clearly define the skills needed for advancement and provide accessible ways to acquire them. This shifts the focus from "tenure" or "age" to demonstrable competencies, which is fair and motivating for all.

Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce

Build a Cohesive, Inclusive Culture

- **Focus on Shared Goals and Values:** Unite the team around a common purpose, the company's mission, and shared values like respect, integrity, and customer focus. This creates a common language that transcends generational differences.
- **Actively Combat Stereotypes:** Call out and correct generational generalizations in meetings and conversations. Reframe statements from "Millennials are so entitled" to "Can you help me understand your career expectations?" Focus on individual behaviors, not generational attributes.

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Key Leadership Strategies for a Multigenerational Workforce

Build a Cohesive, Inclusive Culture

- **Celebrate Diverse Perspectives:** In meetings, deliberately solicit opinions from people of different ages and backgrounds. Explicitly state that diverse viewpoints lead to better decisions and innovation.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

- In a multigenerational workforce, the traditional, one-size-fits-all command-and-control leadership style is obsolete. The modern solution is Inclusive Leadership—a **proactive and intentional approach that doesn't just manage diversity but actively leverages it as a strategic asset**. The inclusive leader **acts as a facilitator, a coach, and a bridge-builder, creating an environment** where five generations can collaborate, innovate, and thrive together.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Empathetic Architect: Designing an Equitable Environment

- An inclusive leader **does not assume that all employees are motivated by the same things.** Instead, **they architect a workplace that offers flexibility and choice.**
- They design systems that cater to diverse needs. This includes:
- **Flexible Work Models:** Offering a menu of options (remote, hybrid, flex-time) and evaluating performance based on outcomes, not physical presence.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Empathetic Architect: Designing an Equitable Environment

- **Personalized Recognition:** Understanding that a Baby Boomer may value public acknowledgment, while a Gen Z employee might prefer a learning stipend or mental health days.
- **Varied Communication Channels:** Ensuring important information is shared via email, instant messaging, and short video updates to meet different preferences.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Bridge Builder: Fostering Connection and Mentorship

- Inclusive leaders **actively break down silos and build bridges of understanding between generations.** They are the catalyst for mutual respect and knowledge exchange.
- They implement structured programs that facilitate connection:
- **Reverse Mentoring:** Pairing junior employees with senior leaders to share knowledge on technology, social media trends, and emerging consumer tastes, while the senior leader shares strategic wisdom and institutional knowledge.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Bridge Builder: Fostering Connection and Mentorship

- **Cross-Generational Project Teams:** Deliberately creating teams with age diversity to solve problems, ensuring that a variety of perspectives are heard from the outset.
- **Facilitating "Why" Conversations:** Encouraging teams to explain the reasoning behind their preferences (e.g., "I prefer a formal report because..."), which builds empathy and replaces assumptions with understanding.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Bias Interrupter: Championing Fairness and Individuality

- The inclusive leader is **careful in identifying and dismantling generational stereotypes**, which are a form of unconscious bias. They focus on the individual, not the generational label.
- They consistently:
- **Challenge Stereotypes:** They call out generalizations like "Gen Z is job-hoppers" or "Boomers are resistant to change" in meetings and conversations.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Bias Interrupter: Championing Fairness and Individuality

- **Focus on Behaviors:** They give feedback based on observable actions and results, not on perceived generational traits (e.g., "I noticed the report was submitted after the deadline" vs. "Your generation has no work ethic").
- **Ensure Equitable Opportunities:** They audit processes like promotions, high-visibility projects, and learning opportunities to ensure they are distributed fairly, not based on proximity bias or personal affinity.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Facilitator of Psychological Safety: Creating a "Speak-Up" Culture

- The most critical role of an inclusive leader is to **create an environment of psychological safety**, the shared belief that one can speak up without risk of punishment or humiliation. This is essential for harnessing the full potential of a diverse team.
- They model and enforce behaviors that build trust:
- **Admit Their Own Limitations:** They openly state, "I'm not an expert on this new platform, so I'm counting on you all to share your insights."

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Facilitator of Psychological Safety: Creating a "Speak-Up" Culture

- **request opposit Opinions:** In meetings, they explicitly ask, "What are we missing?" or "Who has a completely different perspective?"
- **Validate All Contributions:** They acknowledge every idea brought forward, ensuring that quieter or more junior employees feel heard and valued.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Developer of Agile Talent: Personalizing Growth

- An inclusive leader recognizes that career aspirations and learning styles are not uniform across a multigenerational team. They act as a career coach, not just a manager.
- They personalize development:
- **Skills-Based Pathways:** They focus on helping every employee build relevant skills, whether for a next promotion, a lateral move, or mastery in their current role.

The Role of the Inclusive Leader

The Developer of Agile Talent: Personalizing Growth

- **Offer Diverse Learning Modalities:** They provide access to learning in various formats—from formal workshops and online micro-courses to peer-to-peer coaching and job shadowing.
- **Have "Career Conversations":** They regularly discuss individual goals, understanding that for one employee, "advancement" might mean a leadership title, and for another, it might mean more autonomy or a specialized expert track.



Thank You