



Achieving peace in today's work environment

For the first time in history, there are five generations in the workplace: Traditionalists (born between 1925 and 1945), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1977), Millennials (born between 1978 and 1995) and Gen Z (born between 1996 and present), according to Wikipedia. Though you may not be familiar with the different generational names and birth dates, you are probably familiar with experiencing the differences in their work styles compared to yours. And yes, the differences — especially when not understood — can be annoying, aggravating, irritating and bothersome, and I'll stop there. A quick question: When you find yourself in a situation where the "differences" are creating challenges, how do you move forward productively?

The goal of this column is to provide you with eight strategies for how to approach the circumstances effectively to achieve win-win results or at least better manage the situation, regardless of the work style differences. Let's get started:

- Address the issue. Rather than attacking the person, to accomplish this strategy successfully, be prepared with facts, not gossip or rumors.

- Visualize the big picture. Consider the importance of the issue. Ask yourself, "Is this professional relationship worth sacrificing, or is the best solution to simply walk away rather than getting upset?" On the other hand, if you feel the situation

requires discussing, proceed appropriately.

- Be courteous and respectful. This helps defuse hostility. Furthermore, it is generally more effective to handle potential confrontational interactions in private than in front of other staff.

- Time your discussion appropriately. Timing here is just as important as in other aspects of life. When something unacceptable happens, we should usually take enough time to ensure we don't blurt out words we will regret later. Be sure to plan your approach in a non-accusatory manner, and think before you speak.

- Be solution-oriented. Remember, you have little control over the behavior of another person. So, ask yourself, "What am I doing that may be contributing to this challenging condition?" Then, consider what behaviors you should possibly change.

- Listen actively. Ask for clarification. Making sure you've heard the person correctly goes a long way in keeping communication clear. For example, "Just to be sure we're on the same page, are you saying that ..." is a technique that gives the person with whom you are speaking a chance to confirm you've heard correctly or to refine his or her message.

- Avoid defensive body language. Be aware of your nonverbal cues, including crossed arms, rolling your eyes, sighing heavily and rigid posture, to name a few. Give the other person your undivided attention, maintain good eye contact and avoid

moving into his or her personal space.

- Steer clear of assuming. Ask questions. Additionally, let the other person know how you perceive the matter. For example, you might say, "I'm concerned that the way your statement came across was a little curt. What were your thoughts in saying that the way you did?" Be sure to stay aware of your tone of voice, and strive to keep an even tone to avoid exacerbating the situation.

What's more, in using these eight strategies, you should also consider — or at least proceed on the premise — that the challenging person may not change. Ultimately, you can only be responsible for your behavior and how you allow the behavior of others to impact you.

You are the one fundamentally in charge of putting a stop to the behavior that upsets you. In the end, when you deal effectively with challenging team members, especially when making an effort to understand generational differences in the process, your actions will go a long way toward creating and sustaining a peaceful work environment.

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