

UNDERSTANDING GENERATIONAL DIVERSITY

NAVIGATOR TOPIC GUIDE

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What is generational diversity?

Generational diversity refers to different social generations interacting in a common space.

A social generation is a cohort of individuals born within roughly a twenty-year period who collectively experience social change, important common events, and similar relational interaction.

A 15-minute meeting?

The Journey for Teams educational modules are designed for a 15-minute block because veterinary workplaces are busy! We recognize that more than 15 minutes is needed to discuss generational diversity in the workplace in depth. After the meeting, we hope the team will be inspired to explore this topic further as a team or individually. Check out Dr. Rodems’ resources at the end of this guide.

Let’s begin!

Refer to the [Navigator Handbook 1.0](#) and the steps below to help you lead and facilitate discussion about generational diversity.

1 To begin the meeting, welcome everyone to the room by name.

2 Remind the group that the culture of a Journey for Teams meeting embodies engagement, open-mindedness, respect, and compassion.



ENGAGED



OPEN-MINDED



RESPECTFUL



COMPASSIONATE

3  Play the “Understanding Generational Diversity” video.

4 Read aloud the 3 take-home messages from the 3-2-1 Discussion Guide:

- **Generations have common traits because they have shared experiences and reference points that help shape their worldview.**
- **Every generation has something to teach and something to learn. We all have experiences and knowledge to share. (Dr. Megan Gerhardt)**
- **Appreciate generational differences and use them to help improve communication between generations in the workplace. However, it is important to recognize everyone as an individual and not stereotype them based on their generation.**

5 Ask for 1-2 comments on the take-home messages.

Try to keep it brief to respect the 15-minute time commitment.

6 Read aloud the 2 questions from the 3-2-1 Discussion Guide.
Share your thoughts with your team.

Question for the team:

How do generational differences play a role in our communication or workplace challenges?

Spend a maximum of 5 minutes discussing the team question.

Question for individual self-reflection:

No need to share answers or thoughts with anyone.

How can I embrace generational diversity and treat everyone as an individual, while still appreciating the unique qualities that each generation brings to the table?

The most important part of the meeting

7 As a team, decide on **1 actionable and measurable behavior change** to implement in your workplace. Consider 1 from the list below, or come up with your own idea.

- Establish peer mentoring programs to leverage the skills of different generations and individuals. Emphasize that learning is expected from older to younger generations as well as from younger to older generations.
- Discuss communication styles as a team. What forms of communication should be used when? How formal or informal should they be?
- Ask your colleagues to submit one thing they think individuals of an older generation and one thing individuals of a younger generation should know that is important to veterinary workplaces. Read these insights at your next staff meeting and discuss.

Our actionable idea

8 Invite the team to self-reflect. Team members may consider and commit to **1 personal behavior change** (no need to share them with anyone).

- Identify someone in your life from a different generation and get to know them a little better. Ask questions about their life experiences and how they see the world.
- Read about what it was like to grow up in a time that was different from yours. Imagine if you had grown up under those conditions. Do you think you would be the same person you are now?
- Check out the Time.com blog post, “What To Know When Five Generations Share an Office,” for insightful tips on working in a multigenerational workplace.

9 **Thank everyone for contributing, and congratulate yourselves on how much you accomplished in 15 minutes!**

RESOURCES

Hennelly, D.S., & Schurman, B. (2023, January 5). *Bridging generational divides in your workplace*. Harvard Business Review Ascend. Retrieved May 20, 2023, from <https://hbr.org/2023/01/bridging-generational-divides-in-your-workplace>.

Janssen, D., & Carradini, S. (2021). Generation Z workplace communication habits and expectations. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 64(2), 137–153.

Kalita, S.M. (2024, January 24). *What to know when five generations share an office*. Charter-in partnership with Time Newsletter. Retrieved June 1, 2023, from <https://time.com/charter/6249581/what-to-know-when-five-generations-share-an-office/>

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Organizational Learning & Talent Development. (2022, May 4.) *The five generations at work* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuT8ysUhSgA>

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Strauss, W. & Howe, N. (1992). *Generations: The history of America's future, 1584 to 2069*. Quill.

The inclusion of resources by this author does not imply or constitute an endorsement by the American Veterinary Medical Association or the Veterinary Medical Association Executives.