

Generational Interchanges™:

Tailor Your Onboarding Strategy to Each Generation



By Amy Hirsh Robinson, Principal ([Interchange Group Workforce Strategies for the New Economy](#))

Effective new hire onboarding will be critical for employee retention and engagement in the future as demographic shifts significantly alter the talent landscape. America's 80 million Baby Boomers will be succeeded in their roles by a cohort (Generation X) that is half their size, intensifying the competition among employers for top talent. Compounding the situation are the Millennials, representing the youngest generation in the labor market and entering the workforce with drastically different expectations for their careers, including how their employers treat and develop them during their first year on the job. Failure to properly engage each generation up front will prove costly for organizations.

To stay competitive, companies must tailor their new employee onboarding strategies to each generation.

Onboarding Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers have always worked and played hard, often competing with their numerous peers to get ahead and display outward symbols of success. Their values center on professional identity and prestige while staying youthful and healthy. When integrating new Baby Boomer employees into the company, focus on:

- Professional Renewal - Will they have the opportunity to recalibrate their career goals and skills?
- Organizational Hierarchy - Do they understand the organizational hierarchy to effectively navigate professional relationships?
- Performance Management Process - Do they know how they will be evaluated and by whom?

Onboarding Generation Xers

Generation Xers grew up with divorced, dual-income, late-working parents. Although their work ethic is strong, they are unwilling to spend every waking minute in the office at the expense of their personal lives. Gen Xers want their employers to recognize them on the basis of merit and efficiency, not the amount of time spent in their chairs. To onboard them for long term success, emphasize:

- Access to Information - Do they know where and how to access necessary information about their job and the company?
- Relevant Resources - Do they have the most pertinent resources to perform?

- Clear Priorities & Metrics - Are they clear on the performance metrics that the company and their bosses will be measuring?

Onboarding Millennials

Millennials are accustomed to and expect frequent encouragement and acknowledgement. Having grown up in a 24/7 world of global events and communication, they are motivated to solve large-scale problems and see blurred boundaries between work and the rest of their lives. To onboard this generation, provide them with:

- Community - Do they feel bonded to their peers, bosses, and subordinates as colleagues and friends?
- Corporate Culture - Are they clear on and enthusiastic about the company's culture and values?
- Professional Growth - Do they perceive their supervisors and HR partners as mentors who actively guide them in their careers?

Generational differences in values, motivations and behavior directly inform perceptions about work and the workplace. Thoughtful new employee onboarding procedures are vital to a company's bottom line, and can succeed if organizations are willing to adopt a strategic approach tailored to each generation.