



Leading and Managing our Workplace Generations

(Aligned to the Moccasin Approach® Thinking)

The four generations currently in our workplaces (Date ranges seem to vary a lot).

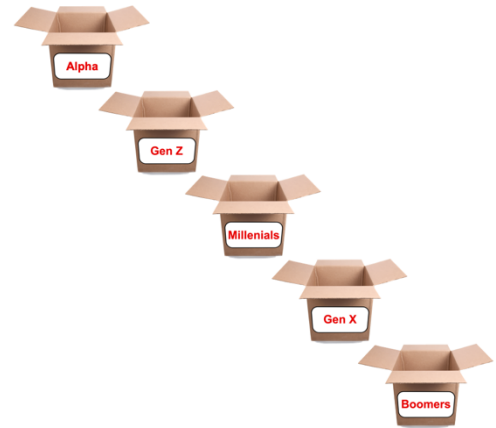
1. **Gen Alpha** (2010–2024). As employees, they often value:
 - a) Purpose Over Pay.
 - b) Authentic social justice (not lip service)
 - c) Inclusivity and Neurodiversity.
 - d) Expect AI to be integrated into working practices.
 - e) Psychological Safety.
2. **Gen Z** (1997–2012). As employees, they often value:
 - a) Purpose and meaningful work.
 - b) Regular feedback and coaching.
 - c) Flexibility and autonomy.
 - d) Authentic, values-led leadership.
 - e) Personal growth and career development.
3. **Millennials (Gen Y)** (1981–1996). As employees, they often value:
 - a) Purpose and meaningful work
 - b) Collaboration and inclusion
 - c) Feedback and coaching
 - d) Development opportunities
 - e) Flexibility and wellbeing
4. **Gen X** (1965–1980) As employees, they often value:
 - a) Authenticity and transparency
 - b) Frequent feedback
 - c) Diversity, inclusion, and social awareness
 - d) Flexibility and autonomy
 - e) Rapid development and progression
5. **Baby Boomers** (1946–1964). As employees, they often value:
 - a) Stability and job security
 - b) Respect for experience and tenure
 - c) Clear hierarchy and structure
 - d) Loyalty and commitment
 - e) Recognition for hard work and dedication

As you'll no doubt be aware, all of the above can vary greatly when you search the internet or talk to others about these generations.

Putting people in boxes

At LAPD Solutions, we have a very specific viewpoint on the generations and how they should be managed and led.

We recognise these generations and believe organisations should be conscious of their preferences and needs under their respective labels. “**But**” we believe that effective leadership is **not** about managing a group of people labelled under a generation differently. Instead, it is about **adapting your leadership and management style** to meet modern workforce expectations, personal preferences, and individual needs, such as neurodiversity and differing abilities, regardless of their assigned label.



We must do this while maintaining our organisational values, holding our people accountable and responsible for their actions and behaviour, and all colleagues being mindful of the consequences if we fail to do so. This thinking is underpinned by Emotional Intelligence (EI).

Leaders and managers need to consider that, like all humans, not each person categorised under these generations will be defined by that category or descriptors. We are all different as we have been shaped by parents, guardians, schooling, religions, friends, even people we have met when travelling, and the cultures we have experienced. We must **be very wary** of categorising and treating people the same, just because of a date range and given descriptors. When you think of it in that way, doesn't it sound odd that we've done that, at least a little bit?

So, the big question is: how do we approach our people to ensure we consider their generation label and, **more importantly**, their personal preferences, likes, and dislikes and how they wish to be led and managed in the workplace? You'll be delighted to know we have the answer, and it is through our Moccasin Approach®.

What is our Moccasin Approach®?

In 2005, LaPD Solutions Ltd coined the phrase “The Moccasin Manager®” and in 2006 “, The Moccasin Approach®” followed. Both were trademarked in the UK in 2017 and then in the USA in 2020. Our phrases are taken from the saying “walk in someone's shoes,” which, although often attributed to various Native American tribes, we are informed came from [the poem](#) “Judge Softly” by Mary Lathrap (1895).



To us, her poem suggests that if we do not know a person well enough, we will never know the challenges they face. So how can we judge them unless we walk a mile in their moccasins first?

A relatively simple task of getting to and from work for one person may be hugely challenging for someone else, especially for people who may have a hidden disability or condition. Some people might be dealing with loss, sorrow, or hidden pain, which may impact them daily. Until we **truly** know them, we don't know what the world is like from **their** perspective.

The Moccasin Approach includes two of the ingredients of Emotional Intelligence (EI), Social Awareness (includes empathy) and Relationship Management (developing relationships).



But to create Social Awareness, we must get to know people and their world from their perspective so we can communicate with them effectively, efficiently, and compassionately.

Applying the Moccasin Approach®

The Moccasin Approach® encourages leaders to “walk in another person’s shoes” to better understand perspective, motivation, and barriers.

In the organisations we have worked with, there has been a particular focus on understanding how best to lead and manage Gen Z. According to an April 2023 ResumeBuilder.com survey of 1,344 managers and business leaders, roughly **74%** of respondents found Gen Z to be the most challenging generation to work with.

My question is: “Is it the behaviour of some Gen Z people that’s the issue, or are the older ways people lead and manage the issue”? Now there’s food for thought. 🤔

When applying the Moccasin Approach to people labelled as Gen Z, we suggest:

1. Become more aware of who each person is before you judge.

Avoid assumptions such as:

- “They lack resilience”.
- “They are entitled”.
- “They don’t respect hierarchy”.

Instead ask:

- What expectations or misunderstandings are shaping their challenging behaviour?
- What support or clarity might they need? (Consider coaching or training).
- What workplace experiences differ from those of previous generations?
- How would they prefer to be led or managed? (Don’t assume).
- Are they knowledgeable about the organisation’s values and why they matter?

2. Lead with purpose.

Help Gen Z connect daily work to wider impact:

- Help them understand why their tasks matter.
- Link their responsibilities and output to the team’s objectives, targets, and KPIs, and provide appropriate praise, recognition, and developmental feedback.
- Ensure they understand that what they and their colleagues do impacts the organisation’s goals/objectives.



3. Coach more, command less.

Move from a directive management or leadership style to an altrocentric approach. Build your relationship with them by:

- Asking what they need from you and colleagues to do a great job?
- Using coaching questions to expand their understanding of areas of their work
- Asking them for their opinions when you are problem-solving.
- Encouraging ownership of identified issues and identifying solutions.

4. Expectations.

Do not assume workplace norms are understood.

Clarify:

- Expectations around communication and their standards.
- Professional boundaries.
- Quality and output expectations.
- Time management and accountability.
- That psychological safety should be practised, and they can use their voice (professionally, respectfully and politely).



5. Provide frequent feedback.

Use regular, constructive feedback loops:

- Short check-ins as you pass them.
- Give immediate praise and recognition, as this is the foundation of motivation.
- Share successes as inspirational stories to encourage others.
- Have real-time coaching conversations, and don't wait until performance management one-to-one reviews to do this.

6. Support growth and development.

Retain Gen Z talent by investing in progression:

- Discuss career aspirations honestly and realistically.
- Offer stretch assignments to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Delegate tasks to demonstrate your confidence in their abilities.
- Recognise errors as opportunities to develop and learn how to avoid them in the future.
- Create mentoring opportunities for them with new starters.

Leadership/Management Hints and Tips

Avoid:

- Stereotyping based on age.
- Equating different communication styles with a poor attitude. Are they neurodivergent?
- Micro-managing them, especially digital-native employees.
- Withholding autonomy unnecessarily.
- Offering advice instead of attention.
- Neglecting development conversations.
- Using “because I said so” leadership.
- Clinging to a single communication style.
- Being unclear about expectations.
- Using critique without context.
- Holding on to the past as the benchmark.
- Saving feedback for annual reviews.

Hints & 😊 Tips

In Summary.

Managing Gen Z effectively means balancing empathy with accountability.

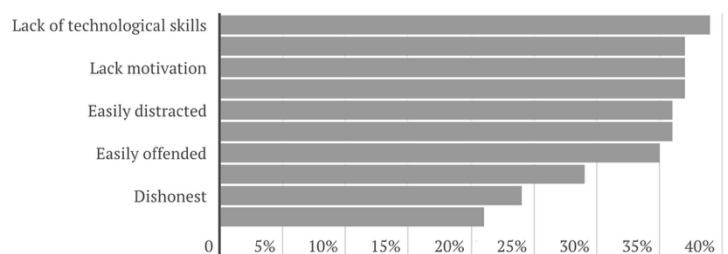
The Moccasin Approach® helps leaders and managers understand the person behind the behaviour, adapt their communication, and create conditions in which younger employees can thrive while still meeting organisational expectations.

Ask Yourself:

“Am I leading this employee based on assumptions about their generation, or am I taking time to understand their **individual** perspective, challenges and needs?”



Reasons Managers Find GenZ Difficult to Work With



Respondents could select multiple answers

ResumeBuilder.com