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## COLORADO HFMA GENERATIONS

by Dani Kimlinger, PhD, MHA, PHR

In the Colorado HFMA chapter, we have had a strong passion for diversity among our members. Part of this passion about diversity includes generational diversity. We appreciate generational differences in the workplace, and with that... here come the Millennials! Yes, and best practices in leading and managing multiple generations! I am a millennial! That's right, I'm admitting it! I also work for a firm which works with companies that receives a number of requests for training about generational "issues." Interestingly though, even though we have had a number of requests, we have a number of participants in our trainings who are skeptical about the need for these trainings. No, no, it's not just Generation X, the skepticism is articulated by individuals in many organizations. Are you skeptical? If you are, you are not alone. Some embrace this topic and find it absolutely essential in the workplace.

Typically, the initial intent behind exploring generational differences is to ease the tensions between the different generations. What is true is that although there are theoretically generational differences, there are just as many differences between generations as there are within each generation. This is important to note! Why is that? So that we don't put others into a box! The guidelines of what incentivizes a Gen Y vs. a Gen

X are very helpful! Additionally, what the core values are of each generation are is also important to note!

Even more than looking at "what does" and "what is," "why" is an important question! Let's look at the following common issues...

**"I can't believe how entitled my millennial employees are, they expect to be able to work from home and move up immediately."** Millennials have as a generation had supportive parents who have pushed them to succeed and put a lot on their plate in process. That is, as teens, many Gen Ys were involved in college prep courses, soccer, dance lessons, and community service efforts, the more the better! Guess what? It served them well! They were able to accomplish so much in so little time and had great support behind them. Now, just what about that working remotely? Can you imagine Gen Ys being confined to a library or desk to study for their exams? That's highly unlikely; they were more likely studying on the bus to their dance meet or in-between their many after school activities. Did "where" they were studying hinder them? Not from what we can tell!

**"I don't understand why my Gen X Colleague prefers to work alone, rather than work with me."** Gen X has historically been known to be the "latch-key

kid" generation. Many Xers had both parents working and therefore they had to learn to be self-sufficient early on. One rub that is clearly in play in this statement is the Generation Y's desire to work with others in a team environment and Gen X's independence. Many Gen Xers are only interested in what the end game for the initiative is; they would like to paint their own journey.

**"Why do those baby boomers get along so well with the Gen Ys?"** Baby Boomers and Gen Ys tend to be a natural fit for each other. The Gen Ys are looking for teamwork, mentorship and to make sure that everyone is included. The Baby Boomers want to mentor; they are hopeful and want to be part of a team that values their skills and all that they bring to the table. While the Gen Xs tend to be more independent, the Ys and Boomers enjoy the collaboration.

Exposure to expertise about generations can increase both understanding and appreciation of what all generations bring to the table! Diversity is often said to be a key ingredient to success, generational diversity should be embraced!

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