

# [Developing, Leading and Engaging People]



## Lecture Title:

### 15. [Engaging People – Evaluating Engagement]

Lecturer: Paul Gauci

Date: 15 September 2025 9.00hrs-13.00hrs



Masters in  
Human Resources Management

# Learning Objectives

- Following this session students will be able to
- Understand Generational Engagement Trends: *Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z each has unique traits that shape their work engagement.*
- Critically evaluate the engagement levels of employees – within various generations - based on different research approaches. This involves examining research methodologies, diverse perspectives, and contextual factors.
- Apply Research Approaches to Understand Engagement: *Quantitative Surveys; Qualitative Studies; Mixed-Methods Research; Longitudinal Studies; Behavioral Analytics; Critical Evaluation.*



# Learning Method

- **Lecture focused on learning objectives and core content** as a key instructional process.
- **Formative assessment through participative learning tools and activities** will be utilised evaluating students' comprehension and academic progress throughout - with respect to understanding and applying HRM concepts.



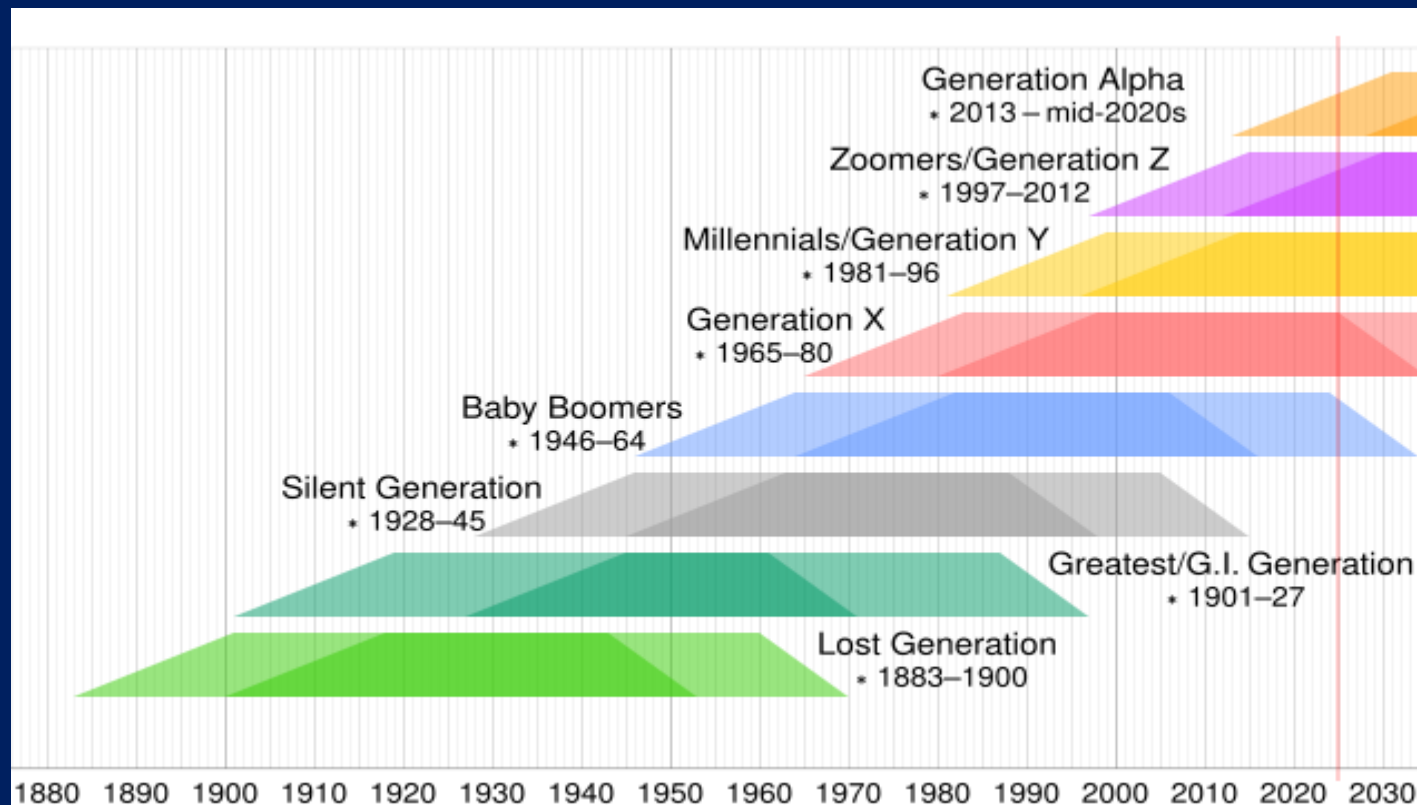
# Why Generational Engagement Matters

- The Changing Workforce
- For the first time in history, we have various generations working side-by-side.
- Each generation brings its own set of values, expectations, and communication styles to the workplace.
- Understanding these differences is key to creating an inclusive and productive work environment.
- A "one-size-fits-all" approach to engagement is no longer effective. Companies must adapt to meet the unique needs of each group.



# Defining the Generations:

- Quick overview of Gen X, Gen Y/Millennials, and Gen Z birth years and key characteristics.



# Video: Different Generations Going to Work

- [https://www.youtube.com/shorts/G\\_WmT8f\\_eas](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/G_WmT8f_eas)



# Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

- Motivation for this generation often stems from a sense of duty, loyalty, and the desire to leave a legacy. They value hard work and job security, and are often motivated by public recognition and opportunities to use their experience.
- *"To most Traditionalists, respect means you arrive early...and seek their guidance and wisdom... If you want to engage a Baby Boomer, you need to appreciate and recognize their hard work!"* (Gordon, 2016).
- They are also motivated by opportunities to mentor younger employees, which *"taps into their desire to feel needed" and "helps with knowledge transfer"* (Longshore Insider, 2021)



# Generation X (born approx. 1965-1980):

- Key traits and how they shape engagement.
- *Traits:* Independence, work-life balance focus, skepticism of authority.
- *Engagement:* Value autonomy, flexible schedules, and meaningful work.

- Generation X (born 1965–1980) Often characterized as independent and skeptical, Gen X values autonomy, work-life balance, and professional development.
- They are less focused on company loyalty and more on their personal and professional interests.
- *"They are deeply motivated by autonomy... not in a rebellious way, but as a measure of trust. They want to control how they work, when they work, and how their output is measured."* (Edwards, 2025).
- *"Since Gen Xers value a work-life balance, perks such as the ability to work from home and a flexible work schedule rank high on their list of priorities."* (Longshore Insider, 2021)



# Millennials (born approx. 1981-1996):

- Key traits and how they shape engagement.
- *Traits:* Tech-savvy, collaborative, desire for purpose and feedback.
- *Engagement:* Value career development, company culture, and recognition.

# Millennials

- This generation is often motivated by continuous learning, collaboration, and a sense of purpose. They thrive in environments with transparent communication and regular, constructive feedback.
- *"Unlike previous generations, Millennials don't view career growth solely through promotions. They want continuous learning, access to professional development, and opportunities to build real-world skills that evolve alongside their ambitions."* (Edwards, 2025).
- *"They are used to praise from their parents and teachers, [and] have come to expect evaluation of their work to be based on the outcomes they produce, not based on the age, experience, or tenure of the person who produced them."* (Longshore Insider, 2021).



# Generation Z (born approx. 1997-2012):

- Key traits and how they shape engagement.
- *Traits:* Digital natives, pragmatic, value diversity and social impact.
- *Engagement:* Value personalized growth, stability, and transparency.



# Gen Z

- Having grown up with technology and social media, Gen Z values diversity, individuality, and creativity.
- They are motivated by personalized experiences, a fun work life, and a strong alignment between their personal values and their employer's mission.
- *"Gen Zers...are motivated by diversity, personalization, individuality, and creativity."*  
**(Lub, X., Bijvank, M. N., Bal, P. M., Blomme, R. J., & Schalk, R. 2016)**
- They also actively seek out mentorship and appreciate *"work in a modern environment and business travel."* (Pechová & Stejskalová, 2019).



# Comparing the three generations across key engagement drivers.

| Engagement Driver                 | Generation X                                                                                   | Millennials                                                                                       | Generation Z                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Feedback &amp; Recognition</b> | Prefers informal, direct feedback; recognition for individual contributions.                   | Seeks frequent, structured feedback; values public recognition and praise.                        | Expects continuous, personalized feedback; values public and peer recognition via social platforms.     |
| <b>Work-Life Balance</b>          | High value on flexibility and work-life separation. "Work to live."                            | Seeks integration of work and life; values wellness benefits and company culture. "Live to work." | Demands strict boundaries; values mental health days and flexible schedules. "Work to live."            |
| <b>Purpose &amp; Meaning</b>      | Motivated by autonomy and doing a good job; often loyal to their career, not just the company. | Driven by a sense of purpose and social impact; wants to feel their work matters.                 | Wants to see how their work aligns with personal values and the company's social mission.               |
| <b>Career Development</b>         | Self-directed; values skill-building and professional development opportunities.               | Expects clear career paths and mentorship; values continuous learning and upskilling.             | Demands personalized growth plans; values opportunities for new experiences and cross-functional roles. |



# Misconceptions vs. Realities

- Challenging the Stereotypes
- **Let's** address common, often negative, stereotypes associated with each generation and present a more nuanced, evidence-based reality.



# Myth about Gen X: "They are cynical and disengaged."

- **Reality:** Gen X values independence and work-life balance.
- Their scepticism often comes from observing corporate downsizing, making them loyal to their careers rather than a specific company.
- They are not disengaged; they are pragmatic and value autonomy.

# Myth about Millennials:

## "They are entitled and need constant praise."

- **Reality:** Millennials seek meaningful work and a strong sense of purpose.
- Their desire for frequent feedback stems from a need for validation and a clear understanding of their career trajectory, not just a desire for praise.
- They want to know their work is making a difference.



# Myth about Gen Z: "They are glued to their phones and lack social skills."

- **Reality:** Gen Z are **digital natives** who are highly adept at using technology for communication and collaboration.
- Their reliance on digital platforms is a skill, not a weakness.
- They are pragmatic and value financial stability, diversity, and social impact in the workplace.



# Academic Quotations on Motivating Different Generations



- Academic research on motivating different generations in the workplace reveals that while some motivators are universal, others are tied to the unique values and experiences that shape each cohort.
- A key theme is that effective motivation requires a **tailored approach**, moving beyond one-size-fits-all strategies.



- **Understanding is Key:**
- As Karyn Gordon states, *"Once we can truly realize this [that we are all different], we won't be so disappointed when we discover that our boss, daughter or spouse is not like us!"*
- This underscores the academic consensus that understanding generational differences in values, communication, and work styles is the foundational step for effective motivation.



- **McClelland's Theory of Motivation:** A study in the *Jordan Journal of Business Administration* found that different generations have different dominant motivators based on McClelland's theory.
- It suggests that older generations are driven more by **power** and **authority**, while younger generations are more driven by **achievement** and **affiliation** (Alkhawaldeh & Alla, 2025).
- This highlights a shift from hierarchical, command-and-control structures to collaborative, achievement-oriented environments.



- The Shared and Unique: Research also shows that while there are generational differences, some core values are shared across the board.
- For example, a study from the Center for Creative Leadership found that "family" is the value chosen most frequently by people of all generations.
- Similarly, all generations value trustworthy leadership, a safe workplace, and the ability to learn from one another.
- This suggests that while managers should adapt their strategies, they can also lean on universal human values to build a strong workplace culture.



# Case Study

- A Multi-Generational Success Story - A company that has successfully engaged multiple generations.
- **Company:** A tech company, "Innovate plc"
- **Problem:**
  - Innovate, Inc. struggled with employee turnover and low engagement scores across all generations.
  - Leadership saw this as a generational conflict.



# Groups Discussion

- Recommend to the company to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and implement a multi-faceted engagement strategy.
- Discuss what you should include and how you can implement this multi-faceted engagement strategy for Gen X; Gen Y (Millennials) Gen Z.

Formative assessment



- **Solution:** The company moved away from a one-size-fits-all approach and implemented a multi-faceted engagement strategy based on research and feedback.
  - **For Gen X:** They introduced flexible work schedules and gave them more autonomy on projects.
  - **For Millennials:** They created mentorship programs, clear career development plans, and tied company performance to social impact initiatives.
  - **For Gen Z:** They introduced new learning platforms, created dedicated forums for diversity and inclusion discussions, and offered personalized growth opportunities.
- **Outcome:** Within two years, Innovate plc. saw a **25% increase in employee retention** and a **significant rise in engagement scores** across all age groups.





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# Critically Evaluating Engagement

- Our first goal is to **critically evaluate** existing research on generational engagement.
- This means moving beyond headlines and simplistic conclusions to question the underlying data and methodologies.
- It requires us to think like researchers, not just passive consumers of information.



# The Challenge of Generalizations

- The Danger of Stereotypes **Content:**
- Generational labels are helpful as a starting point, but they are broad generalizations.
- Not every Millennial is the same; not every Gen X'er has the same values.
- Factors like culture, socioeconomic background, and individual personality also play a huge role in shaping engagement.
- Our critical evaluation must always consider this **intra-generational diversity**.



# The Pillars of Critical Evaluation

- What to Look For **Content**:
- When examining research on generational engagement, we must consider:
  - **Research Methodologies**: Were the studies quantitative (surveys) or qualitative (interviews)? Was the sample size sufficient? Was it a longitudinal study?
  - **Diverse Perspectives**: Did the research include a wide range of industries, geographic locations, and demographic groups?
  - **Contextual Factors**: Does the research account for the economic climate, technological changes, and social events of the time?



# Example: Critiquing a Study

- A Practical Example **Content:**
- Let's imagine a study that claims "Gen Z values stability more than any other generation."
- **Critical questions to ask:**
  - **Methodology:** Was the study conducted only in one company? Was the sample size small?
  - **Perspective:** Were the participants all from the same country or industry? What about their socioeconomic background?
  - **Context:** Did the study take place during a recession, when stability is a universal concern?



# Individual Reflection and Discussion Prompt

- Let's Discuss!
- In your own experience, what factors do you think have the most significant influence on an employee's engagement, regardless of their generation?
- Think about your own workplace or past jobs. What made you feel engaged (or disengaged)?



# Key Takeaways

- Employee engagement is about emotional commitment, not just job satisfaction.
- A critical approach is essential to avoid generational stereotypes.
- Evaluating research requires us to look at the methodology, diverse perspectives, and contextual factors.
- We must always question the data and consider the "why" behind the findings.



# Research Approaches

- Research Approaches to Understand Engagement.
- Overview of the methodologies.



# Quantitative Surveys:

- *What they are:* Structured questionnaires, large-scale data collection.
- *Pros:* Measurable data, statistical analysis.
- *Cons:* Lacks depth and nuance.



# Qualitative Studies:

- *What they are:* Interviews, focus groups, case studies.
- *Pros:* Rich, in-depth insights, understanding "the why."
- *Cons:* Time-consuming, difficult to generalize.



# Mixed-Methods Research:

- *What it is:* Combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- *Pros:* Comprehensive understanding, data triangulation.
- *Cons:* Complex to design and execute.



# Longitudinal Studies:

- *What they are:* Tracking a group over an extended period.
- *Pros:* Captures changes over time, identifies long-term trends.
- *Cons:* High attrition, resource-intensive.



# Behavioral Analytics:

- *What it is:* Using data from digital tools, like communication platforms and productivity software.
- *Pros:* Real-time, unobtrusive data collection.
- *Cons:* Ethical concerns, doesn't capture motivations.



# Critical Evaluation:

- What it is: The process of analyzing and interpreting research with a critical lens.
- Why it's important: Ensures valid conclusions are drawn and applied appropriately.



- To analyze and interpret research with a critical lens, you're not just reading for understanding
- - you're actively engaging with the material to evaluate its credibility, relevance, and implications



# Video

- Navigating the Multigenerational Workplace | Leah Georges | TEDxCreightonU
- TEDx Talks
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzfAOc4L6vQ&t=620s>



# Step-by-Step Guide to Critical Analysis of Research

## 1. Understand the Purpose and Context

- Identify the research question or hypothesis.
- Consider the background: Why was this study conducted?
- What gap does it aim to fill?

## 2. Evaluate the Methodology

- Is the research design appropriate for the question?
- Are the sample size and selection methods valid?
- Look for biases or limitations in how data was collected or analyzed.



### 3. Assess the Evidence

- Are the findings supported by data?
- Are statistical methods sound and clearly explained?
- Check for cherry-picking or overgeneralization.

## 4. Analyze the Argument

- What claims are being made?
- Are conclusions logically derived from the evidence?
- Are alternative interpretations considered?



## 5. Review the Sources

- Are references current and credible?
- Does the research build on or challenge existing literature?



## 6. Reflect on Implications

- What are the broader impacts of the findings?
- Could the results be applied in other contexts?
- Are ethical considerations addressed?



## 7. Form Your Own Judgment

- Do you agree with the conclusions? Why or why not?
- What would you have done differently?
- What questions remain unanswered?



# Tips for Thinking Critically

- Use Socratic questioning: Ask "Why?", "What if?", and "How do we know?"
- Be aware of confirmation bias—don't just look for evidence that supports your views.
- Stay open to multiple perspectives, especially in interdisciplinary research.

# Learning Activity: Critical Analysis

## Embracing the Rise: Millennials and Generation Z in Leadership

- <https://www.erickson.edu/resources/embracing-the-rise-millennials-and-generation-z-in-leadership?>

Formative Assessment



# References

- Alkhawaldeh & Alla, 2025 Jordan Journal of Business Administration
- Gordon, K. (2016, November 3). Inspire across generational differences in the workplace and at home. ManageMagazine
- **Ionescu, D. M., Petcu, A. V., & Lupașcu, C. (2023).** Adapting Motivational Strategies for Generation Z: Integrating Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors. *Manager Journal*, 37, 80-99.
- **Longshore Insider, 2021** Company-specific publication USA
- **Lub, X., Bijvank, M. N., Bal, P. M., Blomme, R. J., & Schalk, R. (2016).** A systematic review of generational differences in work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(6), 803-825.
- **Pechová, T., & Stejskalová, M. (2019).** The motivation of Generation Z in the work environment: A case study of business travel as a motivation tool. In *Proceedings of the 13th International Scientific Conference of the Faculty of Economics and Management* (Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 182-192). Czech University of Life Sciences Prague.

# Key Academic Publications on Generational Motivation

- Lub, X., Bijvank, M. N., Bal, P. M., Blomme, R. J., & Schalk, R. (2016). This is a key paper for understanding the academic landscape. Their systematic review, "A Systematic Review of Generational Differences in Work Motivation," published in the Journal of Organizational Behavior, offers a comprehensive look at the research. They find that, while some differences exist, the stereotypes of each generation's motivators are often oversimplified.
- Heyns, M. M., & Kerr, M. D. (2018). Their article, "Generational differences in workplace motivation," in the SA Journal of Human Resource Management, uses self-determination theory to explore this topic. They found that popular notions about diverging motivational needs among generations may be overblown, though there was one key difference: Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation X had different satisfaction levels with the need for autonomy.
- Urick, M. J. (2022). A strong book on the subject is Leadership in Multigenerational Organizations: Strategies to Successfully Manage an Age Diverse Workforce. It's a comprehensive resource that addresses the challenges and provides practical strategies for leaders.
- Twenge, J. M., Campbell, S. M., Hoffman, B. J., & Lance, C. E. (2010). This influential study, "Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Values Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing," published in the Journal of Organizational Behavior, is often cited. The authors highlight a shift in work values over time, suggesting that younger generations, in particular, may place a greater emphasis on leisure and extrinsic rewards (like money) and less on social and intrinsic values compared to older generations.
- Costanza, D. P., Badger, J. M., Fraser, R. L., Severt, J. B., & Gade, P. A. (2012). This article, published in the Journal of Business and Psychology, is titled "Generational Differences in Work-Related Attitudes: A Meta-Analysis." A meta-analysis combines the results of many different studies and can offer a broader view. This work explores whether age or generational cohort is a better predictor of differences in work attitudes.



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