MIND4 CHANGE

Attract, retain & work with the next generation in railway operations

Advice for multigenerational teams

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INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF RAILWAYS

KEY CONTRIBUTORS

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CONTENTS

1. DETAILED CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

The foundation of this deliverable is based on and inspired by research done by Mag.Dr. Elisabeth Ponocny-Seliger (Clinical-, Health- and Occupational Psychologist) and Lecturer and Researcher in Gender & Diversity at the University of Vienna, Austria. (Source: Gender Research). Characeristics and classifications of different generations are based on different studies, which are all referenced in each subchapter. Please refer to the original source provided for additional reference.

Generally according to Klaffke & Schwarzenbart (2013) generations can be classified in the following age groups:

Timeline of Generations (Ponocny-Seliger, 2024)
Classification based on Klaffke & Schwarzenbart (2013) Data based on employment statistics from Statistics Austria (2021)
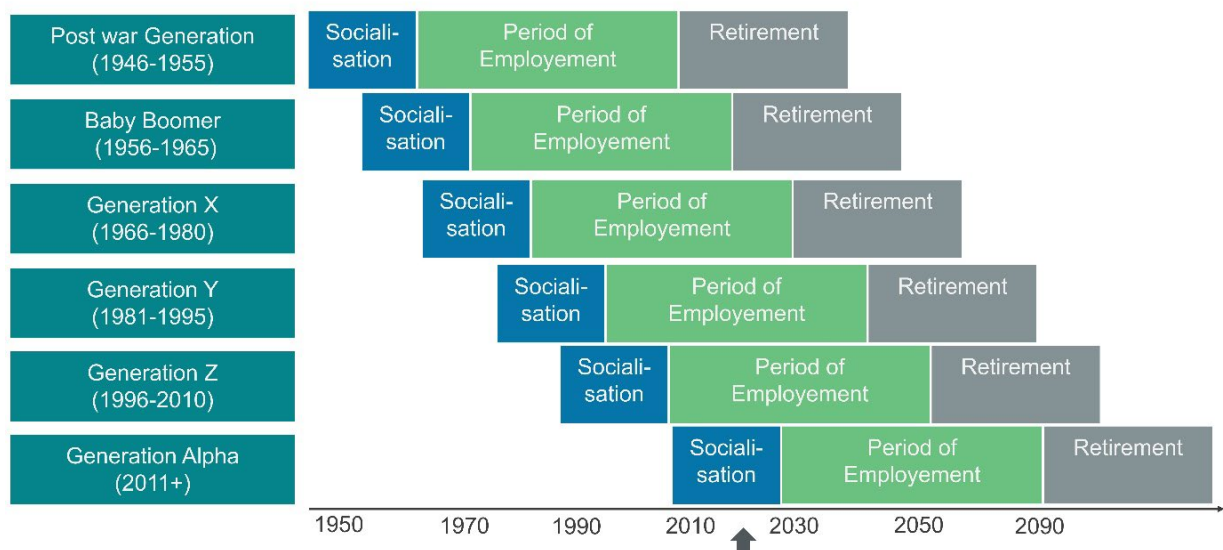
Figure 1. Timeline of Generations, reproduced with permission from Dr. Ponocny-Seliger (2024)

1.1. GENERATION ALPHA

(Generation according to Klaffke, M., & Schwarzenbart, U. (2013).)

GENERATION ALPHA (2011 +)

Attitude towards adapting tech. change	**Digital native, exposed to technology since birth, highly comfortable with digital interfaces, adopt new tech effortlessly.**
Work style	Is expected to be highly digital with a strong preference for flexible, technology-driven work environments.
Communication style	Prefer digital and visual communication forms and may lead towards AI-driven or automated interactions as they grow.
Career preferences	It is anticipated that they will seek dynamic, flexible careers, possibly with multiple income streams, blending traditional employment with gig or freelance work.
Learning style	Expected to favour highly interactive, personalized and tech-enabled learning experiences, including Virtual Reality (VR), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and gamified learning platforms.
Leadership style	Expected to prefer leaders who are visionary, innovative and supportive of a digital-first mindset.
Workplace priorities	Will likely prioritize technological advancements, work-life flexibility and alignment with personal values, including sustainability and social impact.
Attraction and retention	> Invest in advanced technology and provide a highly flexible work environment, > Emphasize corporate social responsibility and sustainability in the company culture, > Offer continuous learning opportunities through cutting- edge platforms, > Foster an inclusive, innovative and digitally connected workplace culture.
Training needs	> Augmented Reality (AR)/Virtual Reality based learning, gamified and interactive, > Collaborative learning (use platforms that encourage teamwork and creativity), > Personalized learning paths (adaptive learning systems tailored to individual progress), > Tech driven, continuous learning.
Key comp. for Managers	> Futuristic thinking, > Visionary leadership (inspire them with innovative, tech-forward strategies & ideas), > Personalized learning advocacy, > Creative and collaborative skills. Focus areas: > Focus on experiential learning, such as tech-immersive environments and real-life simulations, > Offer creative, flexible learning opportunities that allow them to innovate and problem-solve collaboratively.
Work incentives	> Tech-enabled, creative workplaces, > Personalized career paths, > Sustainability and global impact, > Innovation and creativity bonuses, > Expecting to be compensated well for their skills, especially in tech-driven and creative industries

1.2. GENERATION Z

FROM 1996 TO 2010

Attitude towards adapting tech. change	Highly comfortable, but cautious, how to engage with new tech, concerned about privacy and data security.
Work style	> Gen Z is entrepreneurial, pragmatic and highly adaptable, > They value flexibility, diversity and are comfortable with remote work and digital collaboration (energized working), > They are creative and prefer a non-standard and personalized workplace.
Communication style	> Prefer short, digital communications (like text or messaging apps) and video content, > They value authenticity and direct communication.
Career preferences	> They prioritize job stability, diverse experiences and the ability to make an impact, > They are highly tech-savvy and expect to use the latest technology at work.
Learning style	> Prefer on-demand, bite-sized learning through digital platforms. > They are comfortable with e-learning, video tutorials and interactive apps.
Leadership style	> Prefer a leadership style that is coach-oriented, with a focus on personal development and well-being. > They value leaders who are ethical, transparent and support work-life balance. > They need their managers to trust them.
Workplace priorities	> Diversity and inclusion, > Ethical work practices, > Job stability and opportunities for growth. > They value a workplace that aligns with their personal values.
Attraction and retention	> Emphasize workplace diversity, inclusivity and ethical practices. > Offer flexible work arrangements and a modern work environment with up-to-date technology.
Training needs	> On demand-learning (mobile accessible courses with bite-sized, modular content), > gamified learning (incorporate game elements to boost engagement), > Technology-integrated training (use AI, VR and simulations), > Career-oriented, flexible, fast-paced.
Key comp. for Managers	> Digital fluency, > Flexibility in work and learning (provide flexible work hours and access to on-demand learning), > Coaching for career development, > Diversity and inclusion awareness (be sensitive to their desire for inclusivity and ethical leadership).
Work incentives	> Clear, fast-paced paths for growth and learning opportunities, > Innovative work environment, work-life integration (flexibility to manage their work around their personal life, with remote work options), > They know their worth and they are not afraid to demand it.

1.3.   GENERATION MILLENNIALS

GENERATION Y, FROM 1981 TO 1995

Attitude towards adapting tech. change	> Pioneers of digital age witnessed evolution of internet, social media and mobile technology, > Early adopters of mobile and app culture, smartphones, comfortable with apps and entertainment, > Expect app driven solutions for efficiency and convenience.
Work style	> Millennials are collaborative, > Tech-savvy and often seek purpose and meaning in work, > They value teamwork and are comfortable with remote work and digital tools (thinking before working), > They are seen as impatient, have a high capacity for adaption and are open to change, > They are driven by technology, prefer clear goals and structure, > They are adept to multitasking and like to use their creativity and approach projects from a variety of directions.
Communication style	> Prefer quick, digital communication methods like instant messaging and social media, > They appreciate transparency and frequent feedback.
Career preferences	> They prioritize meaningful work, career progression and opportunities for personal development, > They are more likely to switch jobs if their needs are not met.
Learning style	> Prefer interactive, digital and on-demand learning, > They value learning opportunities that are relevant and aligned with their career goals.
Leadership style	Prefer a leadership style that is inclusive, supportive and mentoring. They value leaders who are transparent, communicative and inspire them. They believe in logic; respect must be earned. They expect more supervision and immediate face to face feedback.
Workplace priorities	Opportunities for career advancement, personal development and meaningful work. They value a positive workplace culture and work-life integration. They are motivated by belonging to communities they consider meaningful and feeling a sense of purpose.
Attraction and retention	Offer career development programs and continuous learning opportunities. Foster a positive, inclusive workplace culture with focus on teamwork. Provide regular feedback and recognition for their work. Allow flexible work arrangements and opportunities to work on meaningful projects.
Training needs	Online and social learning, Purpose-driven Training (align learning with personal and career growth), Interactive content, Mentorship and Coaching, frequent feedback.
Key comp. for Managers	Collaborative leadership, Continuous Feedback, Tech-savvy Coaching (leverage digital tools in training and development programs), Purpose-driven Leadership (align training and career growth with their values). Focus area for Management: Offer Mentorship, but with collaborative, coach-like approach, provide growth opportunities linked to their personal values.
Work incentives	Flexibility, work-life balance, remote options, paid time off, career development, growth opportunities, provide opportunities for mentorship and coaching, opportunities for a greater purpose and impactful work, frequent feedback (positive and constructive), public recognition, acknowledgements in front of team and public audience, competitive salary, peer recognition.

1.4. GENERATION X

FROM 1966 TO 1980

Attitude towards adapting tech. change	Bridging the analogue and digital world, appreciation for both analogue and digital, open, but sceptical, more sceptical about innovation that doesn't seem to make life more efficient, tech use for productivity and efficiency, home use.
Work style	Generation X is independent, resourceful, and values work-life balance. They appreciate flexibility and often work well autonomously (Work as hard as needed).
Communication style	Direct and concise communication is preferred. They are comfortable with both in-person communications and digital communications (e-mail, phone calls).
Career preferences	They are pragmatic and often prioritize work-life balance over rapid career advancement. They value opportunities for skill development and career growth.
Learning style	Prefer a mix of hands-on learning and e-learning. They value practical, real-world applications of skills and prefer flexible, self-paced learning opportunities.
Leadership style	Prefer a leadership style that is approachable, flexible and participative. They value autonomy and expect leaders to be transparent and supportive. Not impressed by titles or intimidated by them.
Workplace priorities	Work-life balance, opportunities for career growth and skills development are key. They value a flexible work environment and autonomy. They expect change and require flexibility in rules or regulations. They enjoy some informality in the workplace. They work to live and do not see their work as a representation of their self-worth.
Attraction and retention	Offer flexible work schedules and remote work options. Provide opportunities for career advancement and continuous learning. Encourage work-life balance with appropriate policies. Recognize their need for independence and provide autonomy in their roles.
Training needs	Blended learning, Self-paced learning platforms, Training for Career Development, problem-solving Workshops, Digital learning (support with tech tools, but also room for traditional methods).
Key comp. for Managers	Empowerment and Autonomy, Work-life balance support, Results-oriented Leadership (they respond well to clear goals and expectations), Career development Coaching. Focus area for management: Provide leadership development programs and succession planning, offer flexibility and autonomy in their learning journey, using a mix of digital and in-person approaches.
Work incentives	Work-life balance, Clear paths for promotion, leadership opportunities, ability to make decisions without micromanagement, competitive salary and bonuses tied to performance.

1.5. GENERATION BABY BOOMERS

FROM 1946 TO 1965

Attitude towards adapting tech. change	Traditional forms of media, such as radio, tv and print, were NOT born in a digital world, tendency to adapt to tech more gradually, learning to use new tools as they become more prevalent, more practical approach, tech use for simplification of life and if it serves a clear purpose.
Work style	Tend to be loyal, hardworking and value stability. They often prefer a structured work environment and are comfortable with a traditional 9-to 5 schedules (Workaholics).
Communication style	Formal and face-to-face communication is often preferred. E-mail and phone calls for business communications.
Career preferences	They value job security and are motivated by recognition and status. Many Boomers are in senior roles and have accumulated significant experience. They prefer extraneous rewards and success measures like career progression. They are willing to put themselves in tough challenges for a material wealth, living for the present days.
Learning style	Prefer in-person training, workshops and seminars. They value mentorship programs and hands-on experience.
Leadership style	Prefer hierarchical, top-down leadership. They respect authority and experience, and they value leaders who are competent and lead by example. They believe that following hierarchical structure is the best for the organization, which makes it complicated for them to adapt to a more flexible environment.
Workplace priorities	Job security, benefits and clear path to retirement are important. They value recognition for their experience and contributions. They typically associate their position at work with their self-worth - they want to be in positions of authority, valued and rewarded.
Attraction and retention	Offer competitive benefits, including retirement plans. Provide opportunities for mentoring and sharing knowledge. Recognize their contributions and provide stability in their roles. Allow flexible retirement plan or phased retirement.
Training needs	Instructor-led Training, Hands-on Learning, Clear, step-by step Instructions, Peer-based Knowledge sharing, Technology adaptation (provide support for adapting to new technologies and digital tools).
Key comp. for Managers	Empathy and respect; patience with technology; coaching and mentorship skills; adaptability (help Boomer's transition smoothly into retirement or part-time roles).
Work incentives	Stability and long-term employment; strong retirement plans; recognition and respect; flexibility toward retirement (gradual transitions, part-time options).

2. ADVICE FOR WORKING IN MULTI-GENERATIONAL TEAMS

2.1. BENEFITS OF HAVING A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

A multigenerational workforce offers significant advantages for organisations.
A multigenerational workforce is not just a demographic reality; it is a strategic advantage that fuels growth, resilience, and long-term success.

- **Diverse skill sets and experience**
  Each generation brings unique skills sets, experiences and perspectives that enrich decision-making and problem-solving,

- **Knowledge sharing – learning opportunities**
  This diversity fosters knowledge sharing and continuous learning opportunities.
  Allowing employees to benefit from one another's expertise,

- **Enhanced creativity**
  The diversity of thoughts and approaches and the combination of varied viewpoints lead to enhanced creativity, creating a melting pot of ideas that drive innovation,

- **Effective succession planning**
  It also supports effective succession planning, ensuring that knowledge and leadership are passed seamlessly across generations,

- **Broader talent pool**
  By embracing multiple age groups, companies gain access to a broader talent pool, Strengthening recruitment and retention efforts,

- **Increased innovation**

- **Stronger team dynamics**

- **Flexible problem-solving**
  Teams become more dynamic, with flexible problem-solving approaches that adapt to changing challenges,

- **Cultural competence**
  A multigenerational environment promotes cultural competence, helping organisations better understand and serve diverse markets.

2.2. HOW TO MOTIVATE A MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE?

Motivating a workforce that spans multiple generations requires a thoughtful and inclusive ap proach. Here are key strategies to foster
engagement and collaboration:

- **Recognize and respect differences**
  Acknowledge the unique values, expectations, and work styles of each generation. This creates an environment where everyone feels understood and appreciated.

- **Offer flexible work arrangements**
  Flexibility in schedules and remote work options helps meet diverse needs, from younger employees seeking autonomy to older workers valuing work-life balance.

- **Provide opportunities for learning and personal development**
  Continuous learning appeals to all generations. Offer training programs, workshops, and career development paths to keep employees motivated and ready for future.

- **Promote cross-generational mentorship**
  Encourage knowledge exchange through mentorship programs. Younger employees bring fresh perspectives, while experienced staff share valuable expertise.

- **Embrace inclusivity**
  Foster a culture where every voice matters.

- **Ensure work-life balance**
  Support well-being initiatives and flexible policies that help employees balance professional and personal responsibilities.

- **Encourage team collaboration**
  Promote teamwork and create opportunities for cross-generational projects that leverage diverse strengths.

- **Lead by example**
  Leadership should model respect, adaptability, and openness to new ideas, setting the tone for an inclusive workplace.

- **Provide regular feedback and recognition**
  Timely feedback and acknowledgment of achievements motivate employees across all age groups.

- **Encourage cross-generational team-projects**

- **Facilitate intergenerational social activities**
  Organise events that bring different generations together, strengthening relationships and team dynamics.

2.3. WHAT ARE THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE CHALLENGES YOU NEED TO OVERCOME?

- **Communication differences**
  Each generation has its preferred communication style, from face-to-face conversations to instant messaging. Misunderstandings can arise if these differences are not acknowledged and bridged.

- **Generational stereotypes**
  Preconceived notions about age groups;
  such as younger employees being "tech obsessed" or older workers being "resistant to change"; can create tension and hinder collaboration.

- **Managing a variety of employee expectations**
  Different generations often have distinct priorities, whether it's career advancement, job security, flexibility, or purpose-
  driven work. Balancing these expectations requires tailored strategies.

- **Technology divide**
  While younger employees may embrace new tools quickly, older generations might need additional support and training. Closing this gap is essential for efficiency and inclusion.

- **Different work values and work styles**
  Some employees value autonomy and innovation, while others prioritize stability and structure. Aligning these diverse approaches under a common organizational culture can be challenging.

- **Adapting to change**
  Rapid changes in technology, processes, and workplace norms can be stressful for certain age groups. Leaders must ensure smooth transitions and provide adequate s upport.

- **Flexibility in work arrangements**
  Preferences for remote work, hybrid models, or traditional office setups vary across generations. Offering flexible options while maintaining fairness is key to engagement.

2.4. KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ✓ Understanding generational differences/strengthening employee retention through generational understanding,

- ✓ Knowing effective communication techniques,

- ✓ Promoting knowledge sharing,

- ✓ Embracing technology as a bridge – harnessing digital tools foe inclusivity,

- ✓ Creating cross-generational teams,

- ✓ Valuing experience and innovation equally,

- ✓ Providing training and development/promoting lifelong learning and development,

- ✓ Creating spaces for all generations (workspace design considerations,   social events and team building),

- ✓ Multigenerational leadership development = training leaders to manage age diversity,

- ✓ Enhancing organizational flexibility – adapting to evolving workforce needs/ responsiv HR Practices.

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTIGENERATIONAL TRAINING

3.1. WHAT IS MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE TRAINING?

To attract and motivate employees across different generations, training programs should address themes that resonate with everyone.

Key areas include:

- Social, cultural and ethics sensitivity: building awareness and respect for fiverse backgrounds and values.

- Diversity aspects: promoting inclusion and understanding of generational, cultural, and personal differences.

Different training methodologies:

Organisations should adopt a mix of training approaches to meet the learning preferences of each generation.

For example:

- On the job/ workplace training
- Classroom instructor-led training
- Virtual instructor-led training
- E-learning or online training
- Simulations or virtual reality training
- Gamification or game-based training
- Job rotation
- Cross-Training or multi-skilling
- Coaching or mentoring
- Peer-to-Peer training
- Case-based studies or story telling
- Role playing
- Self-directed or self-paced learning
- Microlearning or bite sized training
- Mobile apps learning

- Blended learning (combines traditional in person trainin with online)
- Group learning
- Action & experiential learning (actions on real-time problems)
- Discussion groups / workshops/ focus groups
- Seminars/ conferences
- Problem-base

More information can be found on "TRAINING METHODOLOGIES FOR ALL GENERATIONS".

4. CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEARNING LAB SOLUTION/ PLATFORM

In the second phase of MIND4CHANGE, starting in 2026, we will launch Mind4Change 2. This phase will focus on developing a basic learning laboratory designed to provide:

- A Learning Management System (LMS): A robust software platform that enables management, delivery, and tracking of individual learning progress, ensuring a structured and personalized learning experience.

- Engaging content with interactive features: The platform will host dynamic learning materials and offer essential interactive elements such as practical applications, simulations, experiments, problem-solving exercises, and project-based learning opportunities.

- Supporting cultural change by strong insights

- Creating a Mind4change network, community

Example of consideration:
- Select generation you are from

- Choose your preferred training method/ styles or have an AI choose the method for the generation (more advanced)

- Choose the level of tech integration/ user-interface (simple to advanced)

- Choose the level of adaptive learning

- Pacing and flexibility (younger gens – self-paced vs older gens more structured)

- Learning content format/ layout

- Generational values/ work ethics (hierarchy / respect vs flexibility, quality, feedback)

- Group dynamics (for group learning)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LMS	Learning Management System

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