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Baby Boomers

(Born 1946 to 1964) –
The Workaholics

Generation X

(Born 1965 to 1976) –
1st generation to value
work/life balance

Millennials/Gen Y

(Born 1977 to 1995) –
The Digital Pioneers

Generation Z

(Born 1996 & later) –
The Digital Natives

3 Ways Technology Can Unify a Multigenerational Campus

CTO III   *Authored by Rajiv Shenoy*

GENERATION Z
in today's classrooms

With Generation Z in today's classrooms and administrators and faculty delaying retirement, colleges everywhere face an unprecedented moment: multiple generations are now navigating the university experience together.
A generational perfect storm is swirling on campuses nationwide.

Today's incoming freshman are the most digitally advanced generation to date. Combine that with older generations coming to work well into their 70s, and you have four unique and differing generations under one roof. And that means countless chances for crossed wires, miscommunication, and perhaps even mistrust.

Just take communications, for example.
The difference between older and younger generations in preferred communication styles has almost become a cliché: Gen Z communicates with video and they multi-task across five screens, Generation Y sends text messages, tweets and instant messages to communicate, while baby boomers and older Gen Xers tend to prefer phone calls and emails. Throw in that the younger generations tend to use abbreviations, informal language and colloquialisms, and you've got a recipe for serious communication breakdowns.

I believe technology plays a huge role in engaging these four generations in meaningful ways, improving communications, dispelling mistrust, increasing efficiencies and driving the overall campus experience. In this white paper, we'll look at how you can use technology to unite your multigenerational campus.

Meet the Generations

Let's meet the generations. baby boomers, Gen Xers, millennials, or Gen Zers—each has its own set of core values, learning styles and technology views.

Baby Boomers

(Born 1946 to 1964) –
The Workaholics

Boomers are the agents of social change—from the civil rights movement to landing on the moon, there were many social achievements. The generation is noncon-formist, highly competitive and hard working. They prefer structure and discipline and are less inclined to welcome change. They are competitive so need recognition and rewards to keep them motivated. Boomers are regarded as the least tech savvy of all genera-tions, prohibiting their ability to keep up with develop-ments. Authority and parents were not to be challenged. How many of you remember the phrases "because I said so" and "just wait until your father gets home"?

Generation X

(Born 1965 to 1976) –
1st generation to value work/life balance

The generation gap is deep and wide between Gen Xers and baby boomers. Gen Xers: 1) are very self-directed, 2) believe it doesn't matter when or where the job gets done, as long as it gets done, 3) do not like having to show up at the same place and same time every day, 4) respond best to instructors who get right to the heart of the content and who demon-strate their expertise, 5) want to have fun, 6) learn best when they have a chance to sample and learn by doing, and 7) are not as attracted to traditional classrooms as their predecessors.

Millennials/Gen Y

(Born 1977 to 1995) –
The Digital Pioneers

Millennials have been pegged and defined by academics, trend spotters, and futurists: They're smart but impatient. They expect results immediately. They carry an arsenal of electronic devices—the more portable the better. Raised amid a barrage of information, they can juggle a conversation on instant messenger, a web-surfing session, and iTunes playlist while reading *Twelfth Night* for homework. Whether they are absorbing the fine points of the play, it's a matter of debate.

Generation Z

(Born 1996 & later) –
The Digital Natives

Generation Z has officially entered college. And just as the millennials before them, this generation is disrupting the way learning happens in higher education. But these differences go beyond just a greater dependence on technology. Gen Zers tend to embrace social learning environments, where they can be hands-on and directly involved in the learning process. They expect on-demand services that are available at any time and with low barriers to access. And they tend to be more career-focused earlier on in their college careers.

How this Impacts Your Campus

So, why should administrators care if faculty, staff and students are from different generations? Because they sometimes don't understand each other and may fail to communicate. And when generations do not interact effectively, it impacts the institution's bottom line. Tangible costs such as student recruitment and retention and faculty hiring can be negatively affected. And the overall campus experience may suffer.

Challenges can arise because each of these generations has specific core values, has differing learning styles and view technology in different ways. I know this challenge is exacerbated in higher education because of the combination of long-standing tenured professors and the transient student body.

Baby boomers grew up with transistor radios, mainframe computers, 33- and 45-RPM records, and the touch-tone telephone. Gen Xers matured in the era of CDs, personal computers, and electronic mail. For the millennials, the prevailing technologies were MP3s, cell phones, and PDAs; they communicate via instant messaging, text messaging, and blogs. And Gen Z, well, they've never known a world without smartphones and social media, so it's even more ingrained for them than millennials. If you don't communicate in five words and a big picture, you may not reach this generation.

Using Technology to Engage the Four Generations on Campus

So, how can technology and innovation help? For one, they can extract the benefits of the multigenerational campus by offering a mix of learning and training methods to help all generations become more engaged and efficient. To be effective, you need to have a next-generation, scalable infrastructure—an infrastructure that can support not only the needs of the generations on campus today, but next-generation technologies that include interactive simulations, virtual laboratories, and truly immersive learning environments involving augmented or virtual reality.

# 1 COMBINE MODERN COMMUNICATION TOOLS WITH TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION

Keep in mind that habits don't change overnight. Continuous communication is important for campuses today. But with several generations on campus, you can't assume everyone will embrace new communications tools quickly. So, have a blended communications program. Here are a few ways to do that:

Use Gen Zers and millennials as mentors. I know this seems ironic, but digitally savvy Gen Zers and millennials can help Gen Xers and baby boomers learn how to use digital communication and collaboration systems including, video conferencing, social media, learning management systems, etc.
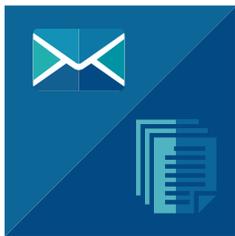
Combine email, workflows, etc. with tools like Slack. If we do this, we will keep all four generations inline. Slack, for example, is a collaboration tool that allows teams to organize communication into channels, share files, including documents, images, and spreadsheets, add comments, and send/receive notifications.
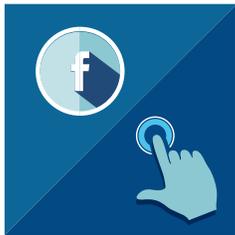
Ensure social adoption across multiple platforms. If you want to engage everyone in your audience, you can't use just one social platform. While Facebook is widely used by all, Snapchat and Instagram are massively adopted by younger generations. Use them all.

Use Cloud HR software. Do you want better communication of payroll, benefits and even improved communications? Cloud HR software will do all of this and it drives a better experience – that caters to all groups.

With several generations on campus, I think it's important to adapt your learning and training programs to a range of communications styles and training needs. The above steps consider generational differences. But let's remember our goal is to help all generations embrace and use the same communications tools.

2 EMBRACE BLENDED LEARNING

People learn differently regardless of age. But the differences between generations today are sharp! Gen Z and millennials, who grew up with the internet, are natural users of technology and gravitate to tech-based education. They're perfect candidates for self-directed learning, but they also highly value personal feedback. So, a mix of one-to-one, team-based and online learning works well. Their older counterparts, Generation X, share many of these preferences, but would rather work independently than in teams. By contrast, baby boomers grew up in the traditional classroom, so scheduled group workshops are likely to work best for them.

Blended learning incorporates a combination of digital and online media with facilitator-led classroom instruction and practical training. With blended learning, the instructor and learners are in the same physical space for at least some of the time. Face-to-face interaction with instructors gives learners the opportunity to ask questions or get clarity on certain issues. By combining the best of in-person and virtual/digital approach, it provides a unique opportunity to bridge generations.

In a *Campus Technology's* 2017 nationwide survey on the use of technology for teaching and learning, an increasing number of higher education faculty members said they employ a mix of online and face-to-face learning in their courses. A full 73 percent of respondents said they use the blended model — that's up from 71 percent in 2016. And while 15 percent of faculty are still teaching exclusively face-to-face, 12 percent have gone fully online (an increase from 10 percent teaching online in 2016).

Blending learning offers flexibility, convenience, and self-paced learning for all groups online experiences. **Here are a few of the benefits of blended learning:**

- 24/7 access: Learners have 24/7 access to learning material on their phones, tablets, computers.

- Time-effective: Classroom time is limited; blended learning allows learners to continue the lesson after hours and learn at their own pace.

- Cost-effective: An instructor need not be present for the entire learning period; learners can do some of the learning at home or in between classes.

- Improved learner engagement: They're working in a manner and at a speed that suits them. The addition of gamification elements can improve engagement.

- Flexible: Learners study at their own pace and can repeat lessons if they don't understand the concept the first time around.

- Connect anytime: Collaborative tools such as online discussions, blogs, instant messages and such let learners connect with each other and their instructor in or out of the classroom.

I believe blended learning is the future of teaching multigenerational students. To learn more about my thoughts on Blending Learning, check out my first CTO Perspective *"5 Ways IoT Will Empower the Campus of the Future."*

3 IMPLEMENT MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS BETWEEN GENERATIONS

The rise of technology and need for all students—as well as faculty and staff—to constantly learn new skills and keep up is one of the best arguments for multigenerational mentorship. But mentoring is not just about having older folks learn how to tweet. It is so much more than that—it's closing the knowledge gap for all groups. Older generations get to understand how the younger generations think and what they want. In return, the latter gain valuable insight into business strategy and how things work. But most important, it's about the generations learning each other's social behaviors and backgrounds, rethinking mindsets and growing personally.

So, take the initiative to implement a mentoring program to reap its benefits and improve communication between all four generations making up your campus.

Use mentoring software.

A digital platform gives you the flexibility and scalability a mentoring program needs for success. A digital solution gives Gen Z and millennials what they want. Critically, it's also ideal for administrators as it makes setting up, running and scaling mentoring programs seamless. And it enables institutions to expand their participant pool because they can enlist participants from throughout their campuses, no matter where they are physically located.

Embrace "reverse mentoring."

The concept of reverse mentoring was popularized in the late 1990s by former GE Chief Jack Welch. He saw the way the internet was transforming business, and he recognized that GE's youngest employees had a lot to teach its executives. So, he flipped the normal mentoring relationship on its head, pairing 500 senior leaders with new hires to meet regularly and learn about emerging tools and technology. Reverse mentoring - is blazing a trail through big business to address this very issue – how to meld the generations for continued success. As more generations coexist on campus with new ways of thinking, conflict can arise. A reverse mentoring program improves communication, bridges the gap, and reduces conflicts too.

I know of numerous multinational corporations like Facebook, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Deloitte, P&G, United Health and Target that have implemented some sort of reverse mentoring program.

It can also address issues around diversity and inclusion, topics much in the headlines this past year. Younger generations bring a powerful awareness around these issues, and they're often equipped with a critical-theory toolkit older generations lack.

For me, one of the greatest leadership challenges of this age is how to work across generations. Newer generations are not flawed versions of previous generations—each has its own compelling perspective to contribute.

As we learn more about the needs of all our students—and our faculty and staff—from Gen Zers to millennials to the Gen Xers, to baby boomers, let's consider how we can meet their needs and expectations for service, immediacy, interactivity, and group activities. Do faculty need to change their teaching styles? Well, maybe, at least a bit. This new generation of students may not want to hear them lecture for an hour. So, adapting teaching styles to suit the Gen Zers and millennials and other students is crucial to effective teaching and learning.

With technology—and particularly bandwidth and Wi-Fi—at the crux of the multigenerational campus today, the resourceful, forward-thinking and collaborative university has much to gain by seeking out strategic partners who understand higher education and the benefits that technology can deliver to their constituents and to their mission. Let's be at the forefront of those who will meet the ever-growing needs of all our stakeholders across the generations.

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ABOUT APOGEE

As higher education's largest provider of managed technology services, Apogee helps colleges and universities transition to and excel in today's digital era. Its comprehensive Managed Campus Suite includes network services that connect the campus to enhance learning outcomes, video that transforms the way students learn, and new digital engagement technologies that captivate students and drive meaningful engagement. Partnering with Apogee enables schools to derive greater return on their IT investments and increases student satisfaction while achieving budget stability and predictability.

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