Navigating and Enhancing Effective Intergenerational Communication

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Increase awareness and understanding of generational traits and distinct needs in the workforce.

- Consider the context and preferences of an intergenerational workforce, and the impacts of these needs on workplace communication.

- Explore practical techniques and strategies for leading and communicating across generations.
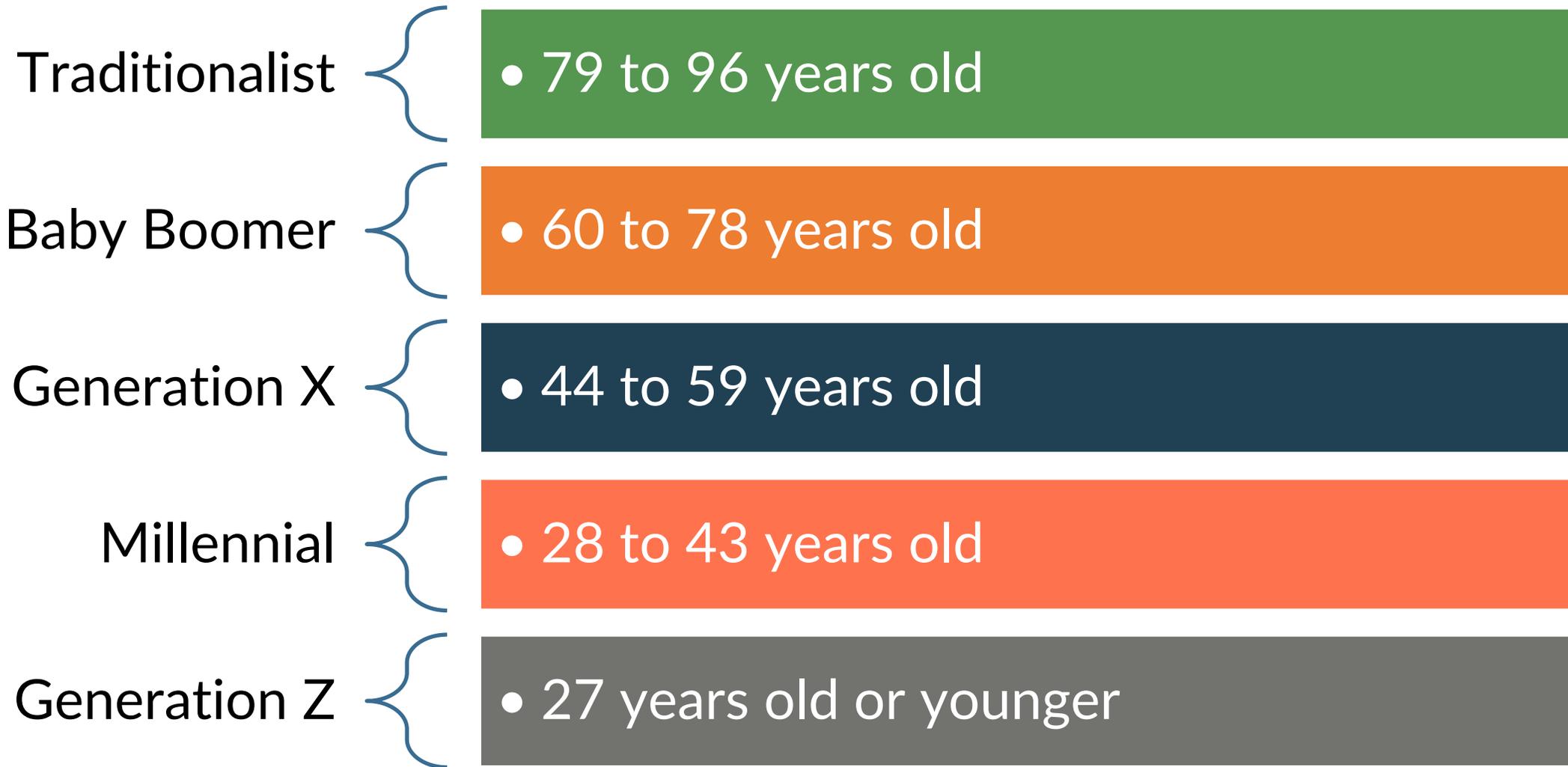
WORKFORCE IS THE FUEL

A health center with a full tank identifies workforce as an essential organizational issue, invests in appropriate operational and staffing resources.

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GENERATIONS IN THE WORKFORCE

GENERATIONS IN THE WORKFORCE

Traditionalist
- 79 to 96 years old

Baby Boomer
- 60 to 78 years old

Generation X
- 44 to 59 years old

Millennial
- 28 to 43 years old

Generation Z
- 27 years old or younger

What are some stereotypes you have heard about your generation?

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE
What Informs Our Beliefs?

Observable Data

Data is **selected**

Meaning and motives are assigned

Assumptions are made

Conclusions are drawn

Action is taken
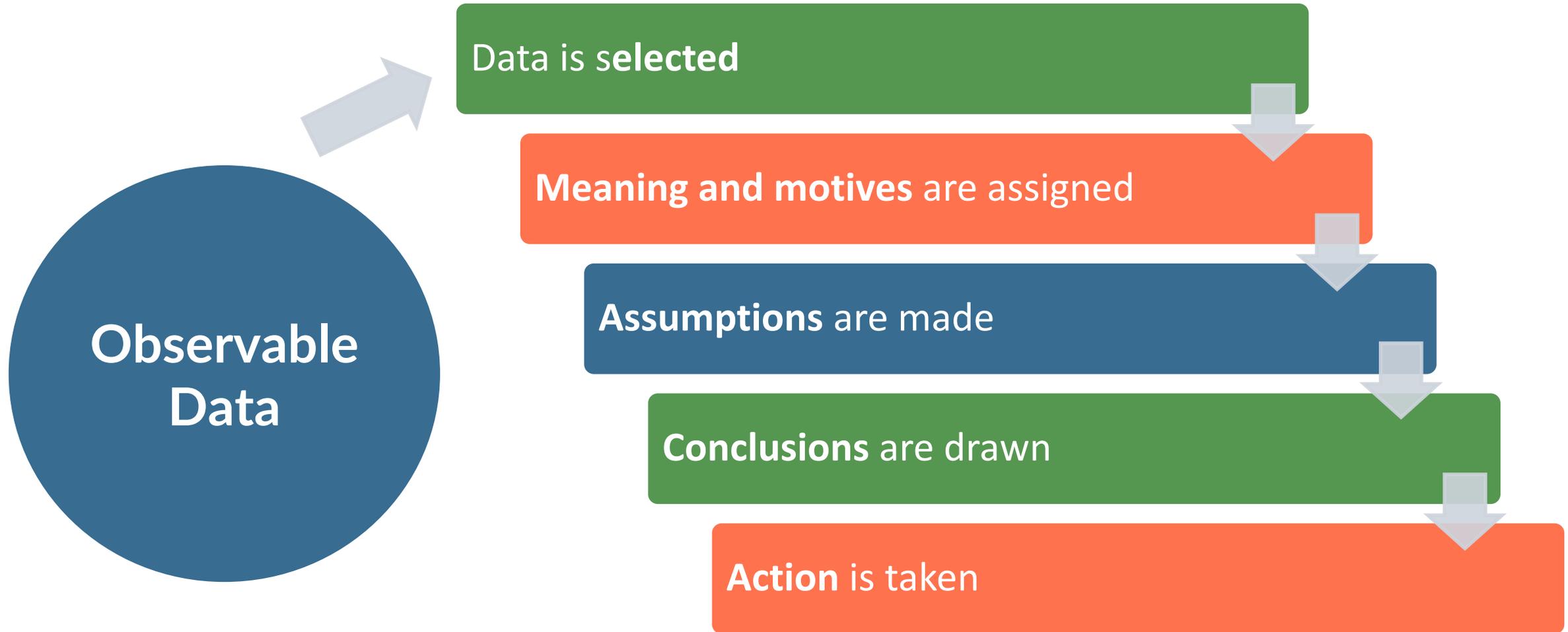
From Argyris, C., 'Overcoming Organizational Defenses: Facilitating Organizational Learning,' 1st Edition, © 1990.

Generational divides are more manufactured than real

"**Companies invest millions of dollars in training and development because of their beliefs about generational differences … They do it because they believe it's true, even though the evidence doesn't support those beliefs**."

-**Jennifer C. Deal**, senior research scientist at the Center for Creative Leadership

https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/how-to-manage-intergenerational-conflict-in-the-workplace.aspx

"We need to be careful about generational research because it puts people in a box."

"The key to understanding someone's behavior is to look at the individual, and the best way to find out how to motivate and engage is to ask them what matters to them."

https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/how-to-manage-intergenerational-conflict-in-the-workplace.aspx

Differences

- Nuanced
- Acknowledges and respects individuals
- Driven by more objective thinking

Stereotypes

- Harmful
- Generalizing
- Used to alienate and promote division
- All or nothing thinking

DEFINING GENERATIONAL EXPERIENCES

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Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	• Postwar suburban boom and consumer culture • Economic prosperity and Space Race
Generation X (1965-1980)	• Working parents and "latchkey" kids • Rise of cable TV, video games, personal computers
Millennials (1981-1996)	• 9/11 and ensuing wars • Pervasiveness of internet, social media, smartphones
Generation Z (1997-2010)	• Digital Natives • Growing awareness of mental health and self-care

Center for Creative Leadership: Generational Differences in Leadership, 2024, www.ccl.org

"What Is Gen Z?" *McKinsey & Company*, McKinsey & Company, 28 Aug. 2024, www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-gen-z.

GENERATION OR CONTEXT?

The reality is that everyone wants pretty much the same thing, which is for their organizations to cultivate respect...some would argue this is really the secret to teamwork and leading across generations.
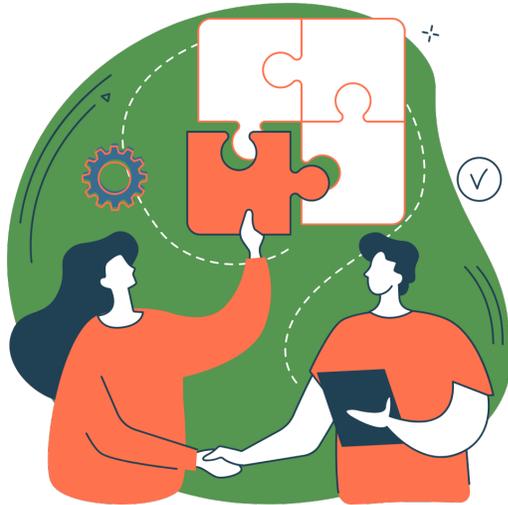
https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/the-secret-to-leading-across-generations/
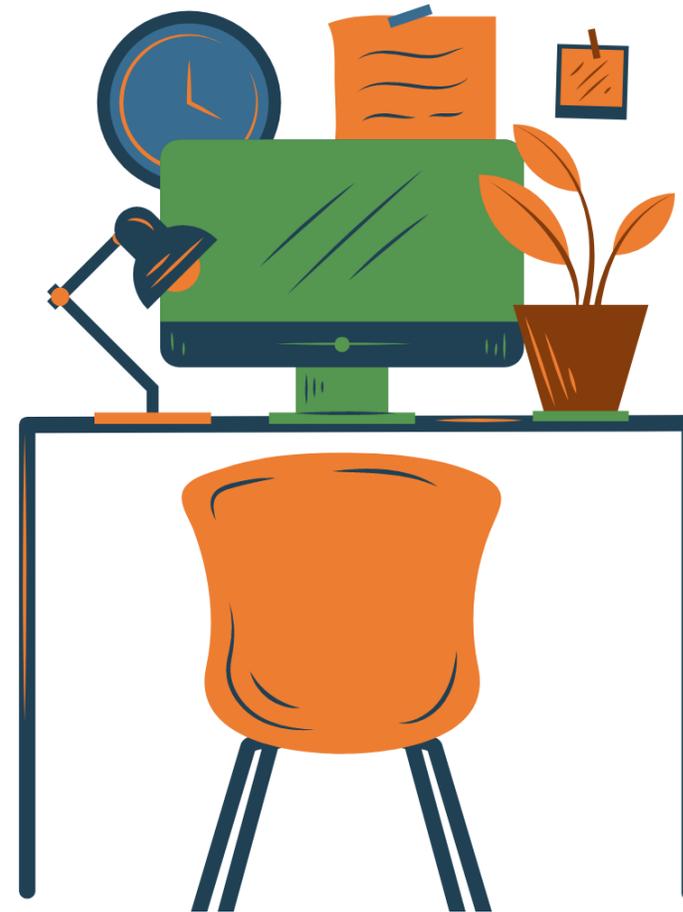
TODAY'S INTERGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE HAS FAR MORE IN COMMON THAN NOT

Generally speaking, employees want:

- **Effective** compensation

- **Meaningful**, mission-driven work

- **Reliable and supportive** colleagues

- Career development **opportunities**

- Workplace **connections**

- **Secure** work environments

Guggenberger, P., Maor, D., Park, M., & Simon, P. (2023, April 26). The state of organizations 2023: Ten shifts transforming organizations. McKinsey & Company.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AT WORK

Our generational differences at work tend to emerge most often around:

- Use of **technology**

- **Communication** (styles and modalities)

- Giving and receiving **feedback**

- **Time** management

- Work/life **balance**

- Organizational **structure**

https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/how-to-manage-intergenerational-conflict-in-the-workplace.aspx

- **Multi-generational staff** – understand the various needs

  - Succession planning

  - Retirement/individuals leaving the field of healthcare

- **Effective Compensation** – assessing compensation

  - Pay audits, salary ranges

- **Comprehensive Benefits** – be creative and consider the needs of your staff

  - Medical care, paid family leave, continuing education, policies

- **Work/Life Balance** – essential for all staff

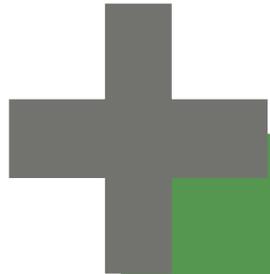 - Scheduling, paid time off (PTO)

And, so much more...

SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

What are your greatest communication challenges at work?

COMMON COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Siloed teams or sites

Infrequent or unclear messaging

Lack of structured feedback

Overreliance on top-down communication

Lack of communication

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

What channels, systems, and pathways exist at your organization to facilitate effective communication?

- ☑ Staff Meetings
- ☑ Team Huddles
- ☑ 1:1 Conversations
- ☑ Newsletters
- ☑ Slack/Teams Messenger
- ☑ Emails
- ☑ Zoom/Video Calls
- ☑ Texts
- ☑ Phone Calls

Leadership needs to **reflect** the organization's goals in its day-to-day actions

Alignment of a health center's mission statement with the needs of its workforce is **critical**

STRENGTHENING PERSONAL CAPACITIES TO SUPPORT INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Is conflict a generational or age-related trait? What about good or bad communication?
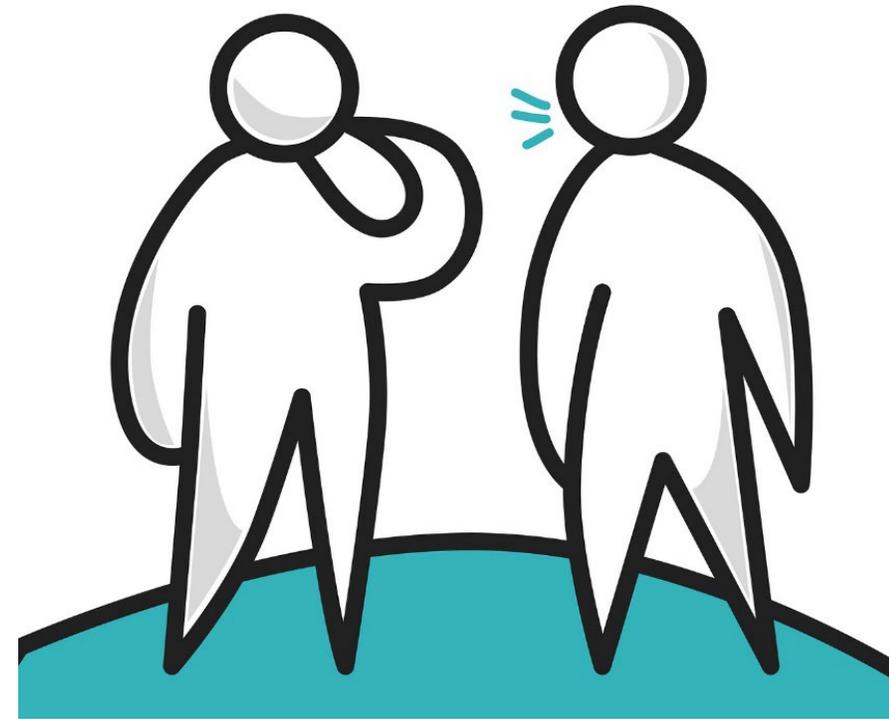
Your teammates have their own challenges.

- **Reflect** on how your work and actions affect theirs.

- Use **active listening** and **paraphrasing** as tools for a better conversation.

- If you feel "challenged," before assuming intent was aimed at you, **inquire to learn.**

- **Ask questions** to learn more about the "why."

LEADING ACROSS GENERATIONS
10 Tactics

|			
Learn from one another	Foster well-being	Share values and show respect	Be a trustworthy leader
Promote a supportive workplace	Communicate change	Break down silos	Do the right things to retain talent
	Create a place for learning	Build teaching skills	

Source: Center for Creative Leadership

NAVIGATING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Acknowledge

Appreciate

Flex

Leverage

Resolve
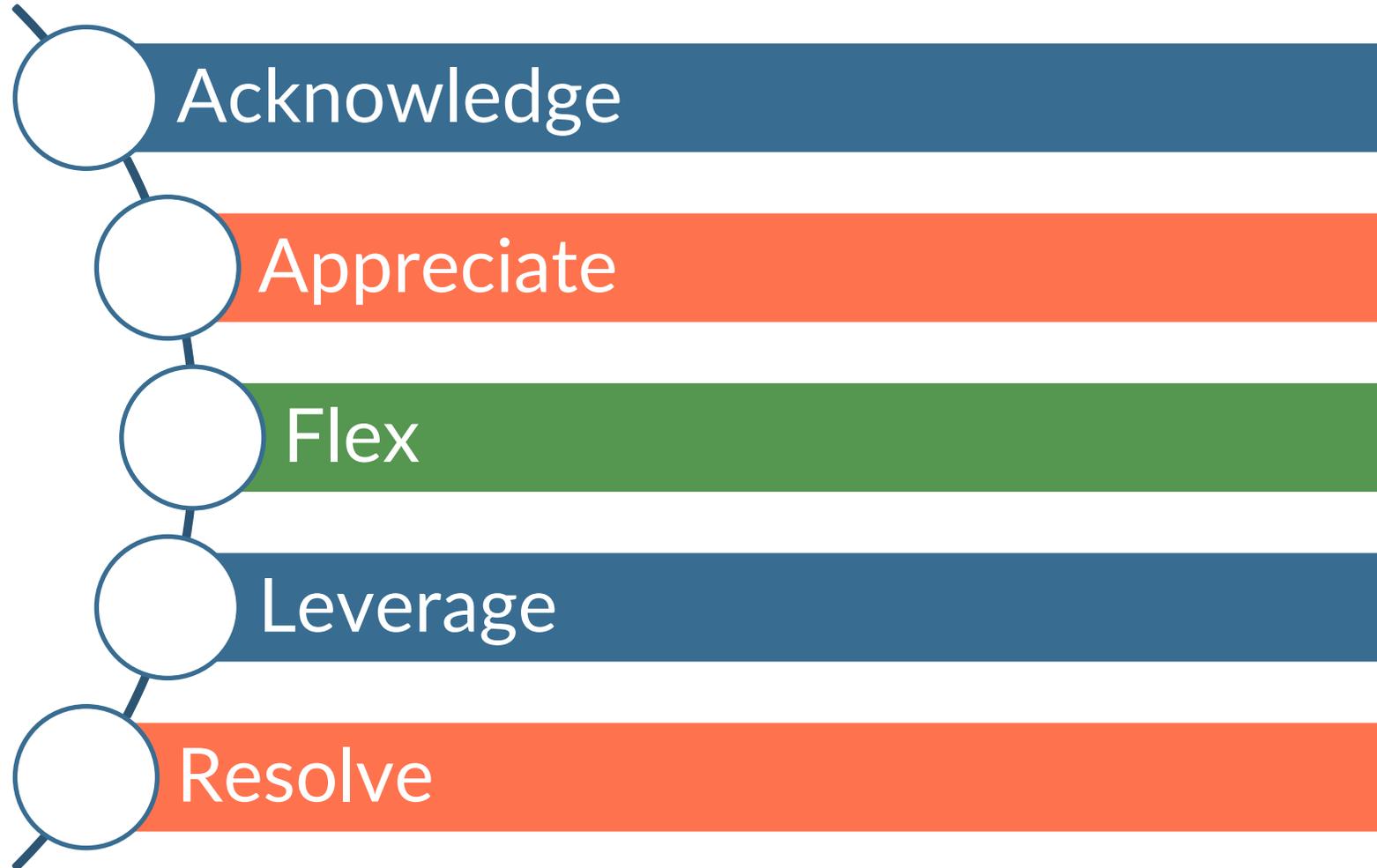
Haydn Shaw, author of *Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart* (Tyndale Momentum, 2013). https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employee-relations/pages/how-to-manage-intergenerational-conflict-in-the-workplace.aspx

COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL
Words and Actions Matter

- What you say and what you do matters

- How you say it and the actions you take matter

- Practice bi-directional communication

  - Create a dialogue

  - Don't be dismissive

  - Be open – listen, learn, adapt

- Take a strengths-based perspective
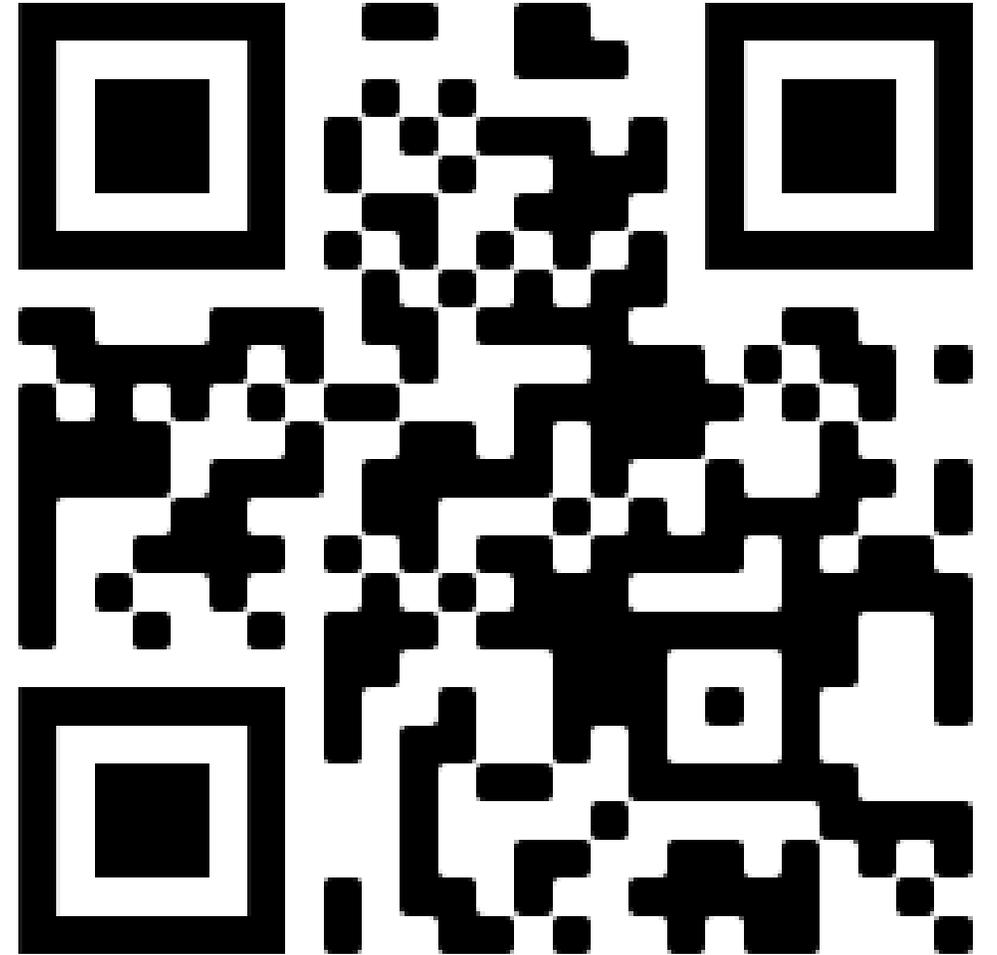
- Appreciation goes a long way!

QUESTIONS

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