

Bridging the Generation Gap with Unified Communications

By VONAGE STAFF



Are the twenty-somethings in your office puzzled by their older colleagues who tend to leave long voicemail messages, seldom text, and never tweet? Do the aging baby boomers look skeptically at the Millennials who always seem to be poking their smartphones, posting to social media, and looking for constant feedback?

People are staying in the workforce well past the time that used to be considered retirement age. Today's offices are truly multi-generational, which can highlight some interesting differences in working styles and office dynamics.

In fact, by 2020, five generations will be working alongside each other—Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. Mixing these age groups can create good synergy by bringing together varied insights and attitudes. But their different modes of working and communicating can present challenges to maintaining a smoothly functioning office.

Millennials Demand the Latest and Greatest

Boomers and older workers are comfortable with email and voicemail, while Millennials tend to gravitate toward texting and instant messaging. A recent Microsoft® survey of 1,000 Millennials found that the vast majority (93 percent) believe that having the latest technology in the workplace is crucial—so much so that companies that don't invest in business technology are risking losing Millennial workers to other firms.

Millennials tend to keep their own schedules, deciding how to most efficiently allot their time to accomplish their assignments. They want to complete jobs quickly and move on to their next task.

These preferences and working styles may not always sit well with older colleagues, especially those who report to younger managers. On the other hand, Boomers and older generations may strike Millennials as resistant to change and slow to embrace new technology.

The Millennials surveyed said that their most effective tools were mobile apps for company-to-employee messages (90 percent), social media for company branding and news (64 percent), and text messaging for emergency communication (61 percent). While they certainly used email, Millennials are gravitating to mobile tools that allow them to communicate instantaneously and often set the expectation for a quick response.

Unifying the Office with Unified Communications

So how can you bridge the communications gap between multi-tasking nomadic Millennials and older, more traditional employees? Unified communications can help diverse employees communicate better.

Unified communications are cloud-based, and provide a wide range of tools that make it simple to work anywhere, anytime, from any device. Examples include simple-to-schedule conference calling, instant messaging, VoIP calling, unified messaging (think voicemails to text, or online faxing), pervasive presence (for visibility into colleagues' availability), video and web conferencing, and collaboration tools. All these applications are delivered as part of a common environment, shared among multiple devices and operating systems.

Whether an employee prefers to work on a Windows® desktop or an iPhone® 7, he or she can access the same tools using a common interface that makes apps easy to learn and use. Both Traditionalists and Millennials can conduct business on their personal schedules and maintain a business presence (or flag themselves as unavailable) even when taking the train home or an afternoon off at the beach.

Communication Tools for Every Generation

No matter which generation you belong to, you want to use the tools you prefer and the devices you're most comfortable with. Because unified communications systems are device agnostic, including Microsoft® Windows®, Mac OS™, iOS and Android™, employees can use their preferred platform and be as mobile or deskbound as they like...while using the same contact lists, log-in credentials and conferencing bridges as their colleagues.

A single phone number follows employees wherever they go and on whichever device they choose to use. Everyone communicates in the manner and style they prefer. The benefits? More job satisfaction, better performance, and increased engagement.

With cloud-based unified communications as a service (UCaaS), advanced voice and data tools are combined in a single easily-administered package with no maintenance or equipment overhead. Applications are updated and rolled out automatically, with little or no downtime. There's no need to buy or maintain expensive PBX equipment, so a UC solution is also economical to operate.

But the greatest advantage of unified communications is the productivity and flexibility it provides. Mobile Millennials and their less technological colleagues can collaborate in the personal style that suits them. And as workers communicate more efficiently, organizations perform better and improve business outcomes.

Whether at the desk or on the road, working together more productively is a good thing for any generation, whether they tweet or prefer a good, old-fashioned phone call.

Looking to bring unified communications benefits to your organization? A Vonage representative can help.