SAFESTART® FORUM

FRANKLIN Tennessee
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2026



GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: NAVIGATING WORKPLACE DYNAMICS

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INTRODUCTIONS

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Christien Renner

-Sales and Safety/Father/Firefighter
-10 years with SafeStart
-Millennial



Teena Blount

-25+ years EHS in Surface Mining
-12 years with Safestart as a Consultant
-Baby Boomer



WHAT GENERATION DO YOU BELONG TO?

Different times. Different experiences. **One workplace.**

1928–1945
Silent Generation



1946–1964
Baby Boomers



1965–1980
Generation X



1981–1996
Generation Y
(Millennial)



1997–2012
Generation Z



2013–2024
Generation Alpha



2025–2039
Generation Beta

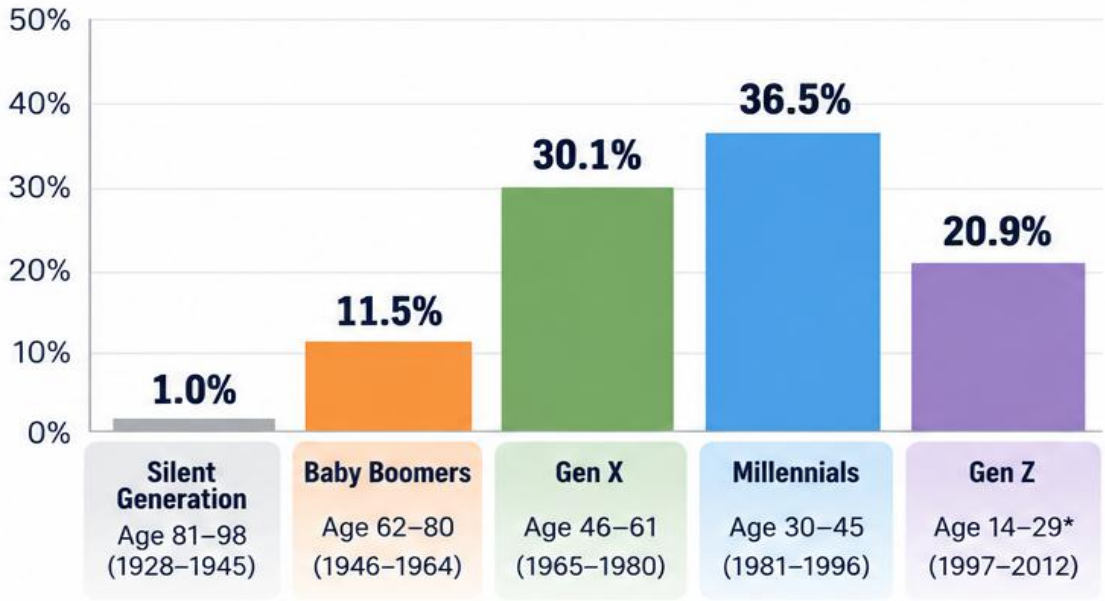


Where do YOU fit?

Every generation brings **unique strengths.** Together, we build a **safer, stronger** future.

U.S. WORKFORCE BY GENERATION (2026)

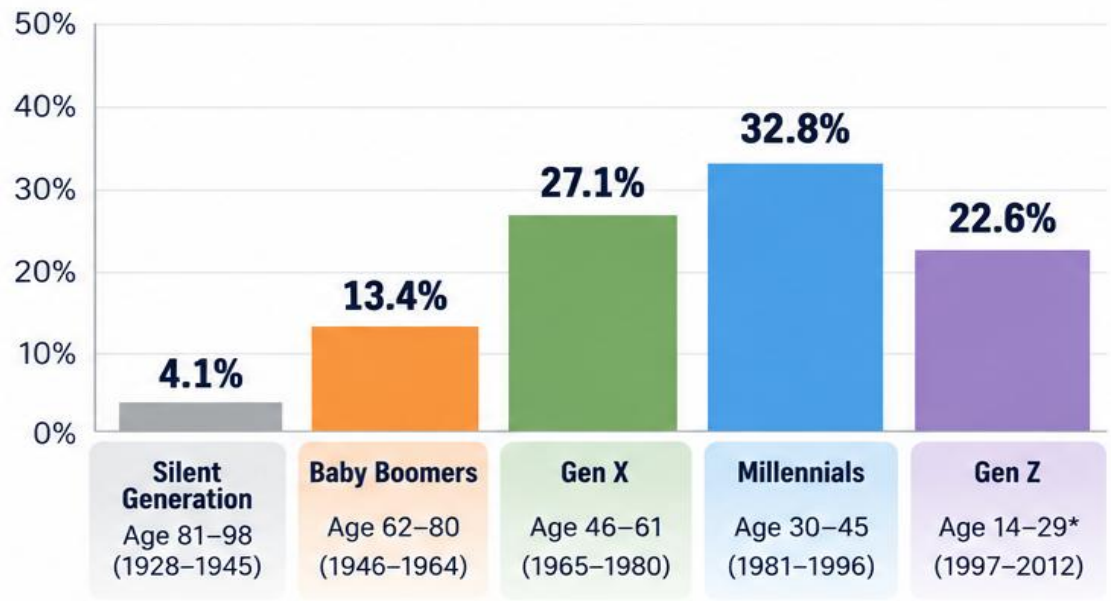
SHARE OF THE U.S. CIVILIAN LABOR FORCE



~57% of the U.S. workforce is Gen Z or Millennial.

GLOBAL WORKFORCE BY GENERATION (2026)

SHARE OF THE GLOBAL LABOR FORCE



~55% of the global workforce is Gen Z or Millennial.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

A YOUNGER GLOBAL WORKFORCE

Gen Z and Millennials make up ~55% of the global labor force, driven by younger populations in many regions.

DIFFERENT SPEEDS OF CHANGE

The U.S. and other high-income economies are aging faster, while emerging economies have a larger pipeline of younger workers.

A MORE GENERATIONALLY DIVERSE WORLD

Leaders increasingly need to bridge generational, cultural and geographic differences.

Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025 annual averages (U.S. civilian labor force ≈ 170.8 million); International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT, 2025 (global labor force ≈ 3.47 billion). Generational cohorts based on Pew Research Center definitions. Percentages are approximate as labor force data is reported by age groups, not generations.
***Note:** Gen Z percentages include working-age population (16+) only.

COMMON GROUND
STRONGER WORKPLACES. BRIGHTER FUTURES.

CHALLENGES → IMPACT

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Generational Challenges

Talent & Capability

Attracting and retaining talent • Upskilling workers

Technology & Governance

Managing AI integration • Compliance and data management

Work Design & Well-Being

Hybrid and remote work • Employee well-being and caregiving

Culture & Leadership

Employee engagement and manager effectiveness • Psychological safety

Organizational Impact

- Communication friction
- Lower training attention and knowledge retention
- Higher retention risk
- Reduced fulfillment and well-being
- Greater pressure on leadership

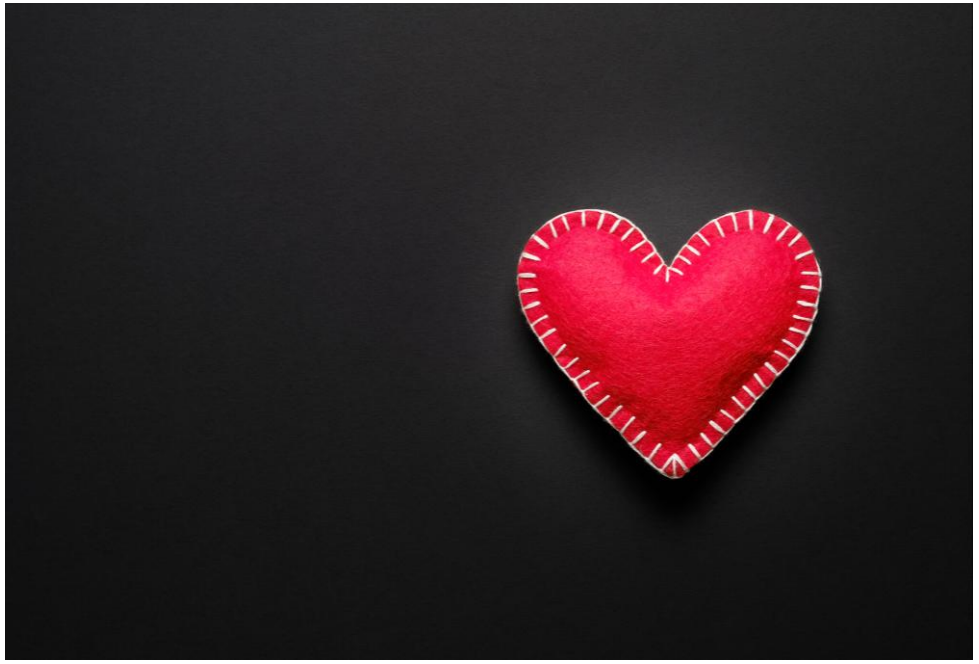
Which generation is the hardest working?

No proven winner but Boomers often score higher on traditional work attachment and engagement measures.



Which generation is the unhealthiest?

No scientifically valid overall winner.



Which generation has the highest I.Q. or deemed the most intelligent?

No defensible generational winner.



Which generation has the highest burnout/stress?

Gen Z is a strong candidate for highest reported stress & Millennials are also very high.



Which generation quits the most?

Younger workers. Currently Gen Z has the greatest job-changing tendency.

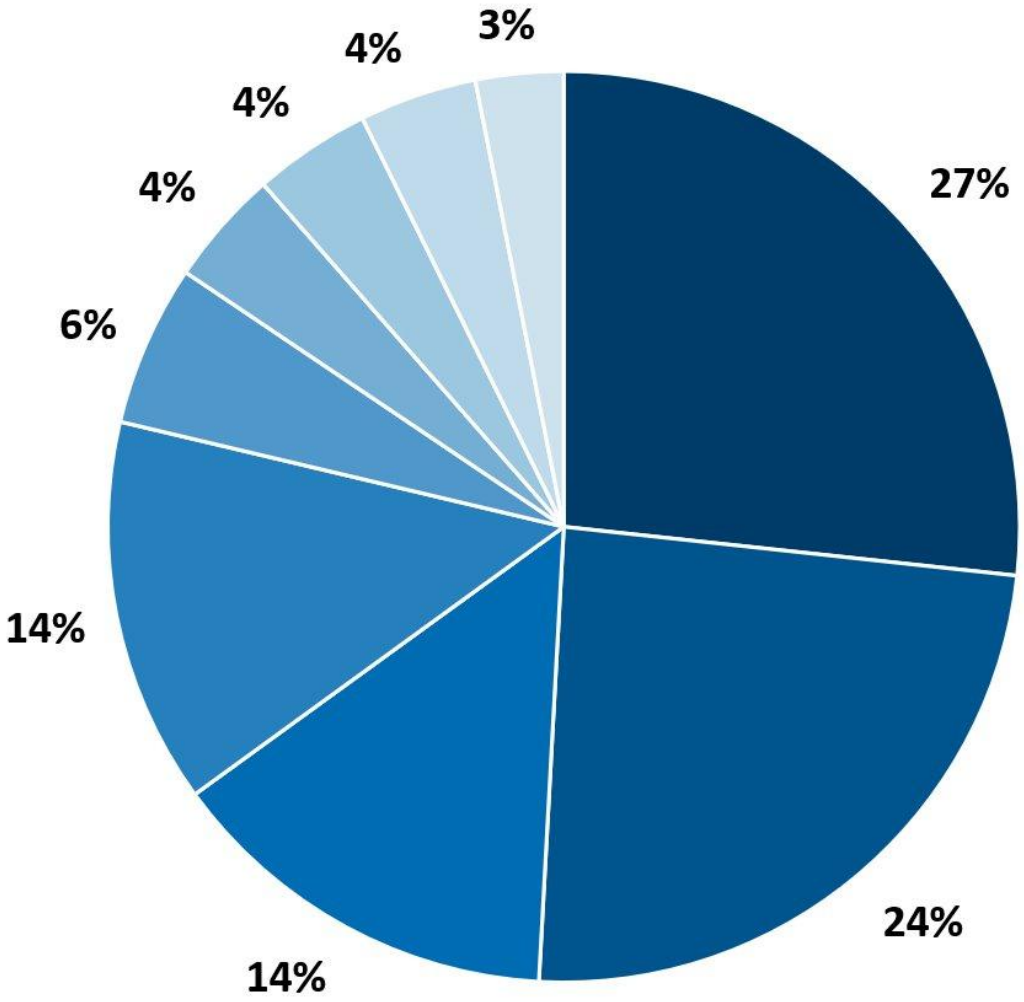


Which generation is the most educated?

Among generations with completed educational histories, Millennials are the most educated.
Gen Z may ultimately surpass them.







- Employees influencing others for better performance in safety, quality and production - **429**
- Increased trust, communication and engagement between managers, supervisors, employees and their representatives - **388**
- Anticipating/preventing undesired outcomes from human factors - **227**
- Development of a more positive safety culture anchored in a no-blame mindset - **220**
- Better safety communication and workplace communication skills - **92**
- Increased quantity and quality of safety reporting and communication, potential incidents, near misses - **66**
- Improving long-term safety metrics - **67**
- Increases in performance and production: such as reduced scrap, re-work, lost production, property/vehicle/equipment damage - **67**
- Increased participation and engagement during safety meetings and training - **50**

HOW WE ADAPT - COMMUNICATION STYLES

Boomers

- Direct face to face communication, phone calls and emails, in person meetings, pen and paper
- Value clear processes over digital methods
- Directness, background information



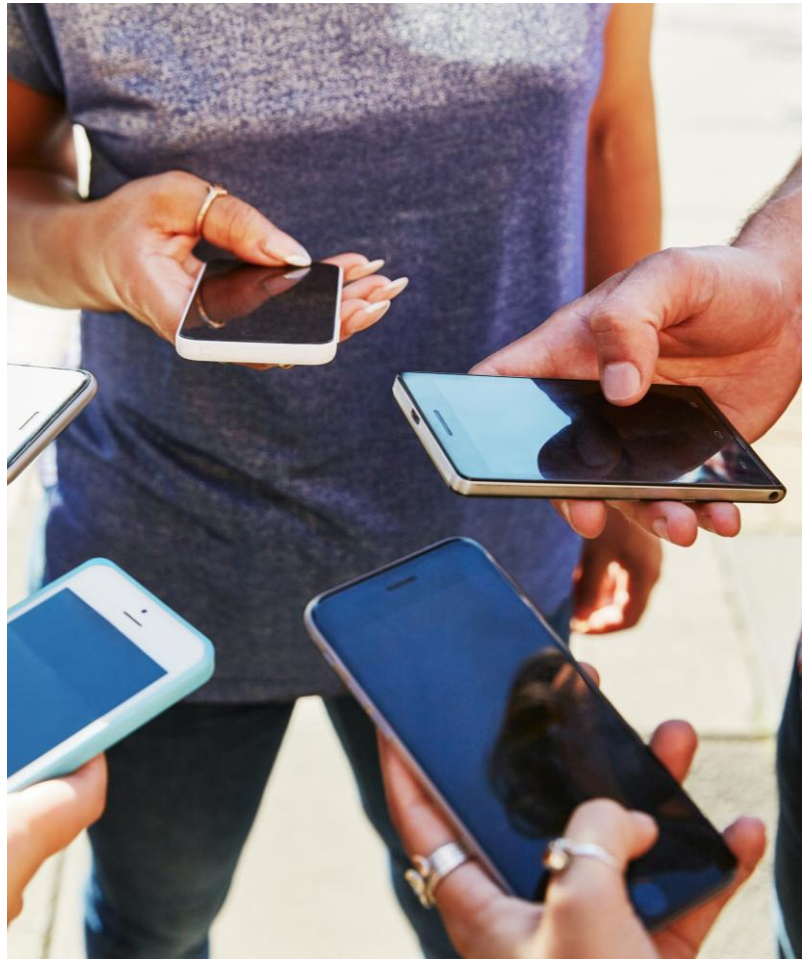
Gen X

- Emails, phone calls, face to face interactions
- Adaptable to different technologies
- Direct, efficient and concise communication

HOW WE ADAPT - COMMUNICATION STYLES

Gen Y (Millennials)

- Prefer digital communication: texting, social media, and IM
- Value open, honest communication with real-time feedback-informal style.
- Comfortable multitasking and prefer reading information.



Gen Z

- Favor informal, brief communication
- Value authenticity, transparency, and concise messaging
- Prefer speed, efficiency, and one-on-one digital interactions.
- Often using slang, memes, and GIFs.

COMMUNICATION

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It doesn't always matter how we communicate if we make it easy and safe for people to voice their concerns.

"and when we speak we are afraid

our words will not be heard

nor welcomed

but when we are silent

we are still afraid"

– Audre Lorde (A Litany for Survival)

"Our lives begin to end

the day we become silent

about things that matter"

- Martin Luther King

SAME TECH – DIFFERENT STARTING POINTS

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Gen X + Baby Boomers

"cautious or resistant"

Older U.S. workers report lower AI adoption and are less likely to recognize significant productivity benefits.

Millennials + Gen Z

"rapid adopters and integrators"

74% of both Gen Z and Millennials report using AI to some extent in their daily work

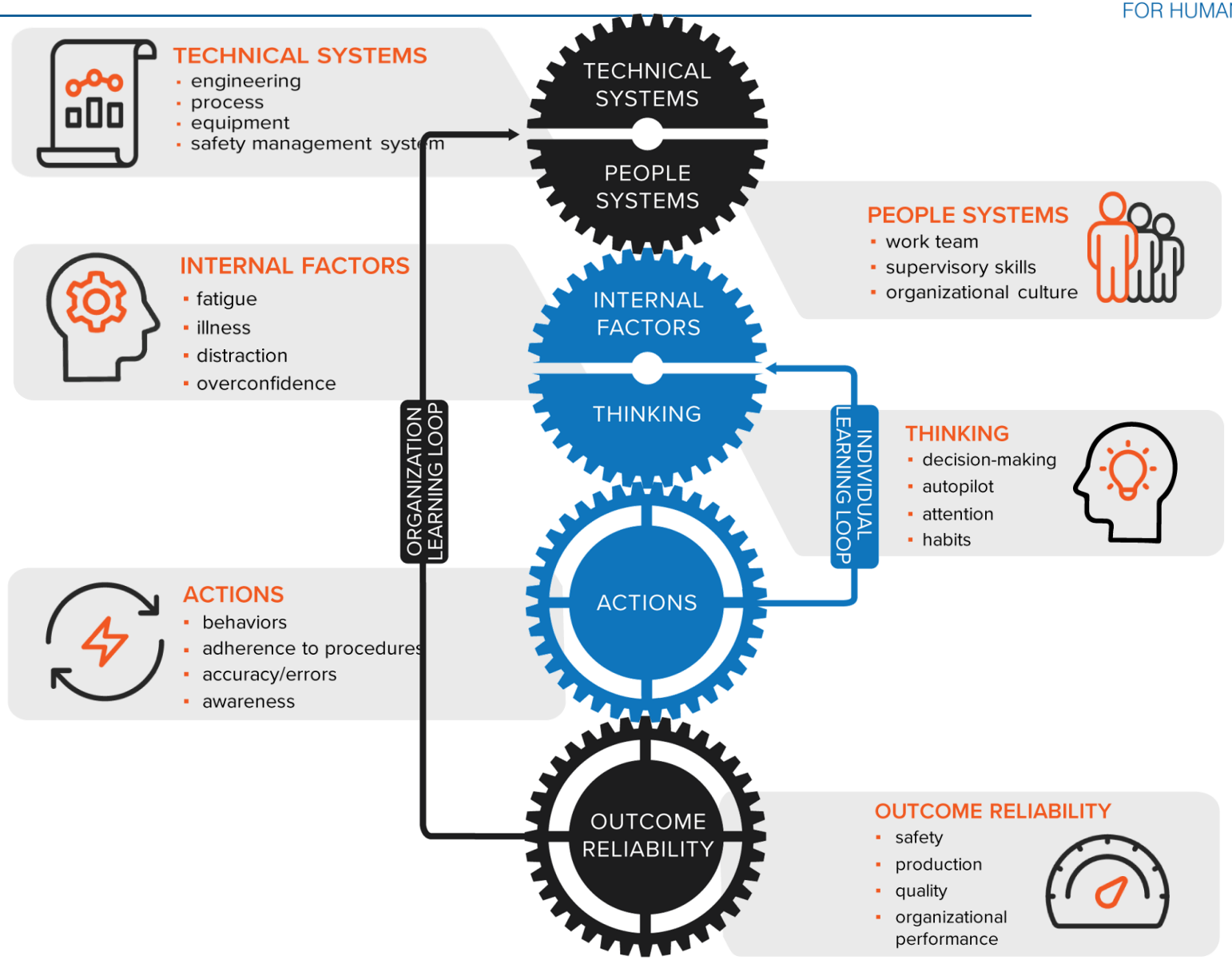
Are older workers resistant to AI, or have they had fewer opportunities to experience its value?

Pew Research Center, 2025–2026

Deloitte – 2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey

HUMAN FACTORS FRAMEWORK

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LET'S CHALLENGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

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“They’re out the door at five.”

Scenario: An employee consistently leaves at their scheduled finishing time, even when colleagues stay late. Someone comments, “They don’t seem very committed.”

Get into table groups and review:

- **What’s my first interpretation?** What do I think this behavior says about the person? Did I picture someone younger or older and why?
- **What am I missing?** What do I actually know? What would I need to ask before drawing a conclusion?

You have 10 minutes

LET'S CHALLENGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

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“They’re out the door at five.”

Scenario 1: An employee consistently leaves at their scheduled finishing time, even when colleagues stay late. Someone comments, “They don’t seem very committed.”



What if you learned:

The employee is 56 and cares for a parent each evening. They plan their work carefully to meet their responsibilities within working hours.

OR

The employee is 23 and has two jobs to support his stay at home wife and children.

LET'S CHALLENGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

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“They won’t use the new system.”

Scenario 2: A employee that's been with the company 3 years continues using Google because it's a familiar process after Microsoft is introduced. Their teammate says, “Some people just can’t adapt.”



What if you learned: The employee is 24. At their previous workplace, a poorly managed rollout caused lost work, and employees were blamed. They’re hesitant because they don’t understand the safeguards or available support thoroughly.

LET'S CHALLENGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

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“This guy questions everything.”

Scenario 3: An employee regularly asks why the team follows certain procedures and suggests alternatives. A colleague feels they should learn the job before challenging it.

What if you learned: The employee is 59 and recently joined from another industry. Their questions come from seeing similar work done differently, and wanting to understand which practices are essential.



LET'S CHALLENGE OUR ASSUMPTIONS

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“They need constant feedback.”

Scenario 4: An employee frequently asks their manager, “Am I on the right track?” The manager begins to see them as overly dependent.



What if you learned: The employee is 43. Their previous manager rarely clarified expectations, then criticized completed work.
They now check frequently to avoid another surprise.

What if you learned: clear expectations have not been communicated nor has constructive or supportive feedback been given.

BRIDGING THE GAP

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- Foster mutual respect
- Communication
- Promote open dialogue
- Focus on common goals
- Create diverse teams
- Leverage technology wisely



TAKE AWAY TOOLS!

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PAUSE BEFORE YOU LABEL

- **P** - Pause your first interpretation
  Notice the story you are telling yourself.
- **A** - Ask what you know versus assume
  Separate observed behaviour from your judgment of it.
- **U** - Understand their context
  Experience, role, personality, and circumstances matter too.
- **S** - Seek their preference
  Ask how they prefer to communicate, contribute, and receive feedback.
- **E** - Engage the person, not the demographic
  Respond to the individual in front of you.

ASK, DON'T ASSUME

Before reacting, ask yourself:

- What did I actually observe?
- What assumption am I making?
- What else could explain their behaviour?
- What question could I ask to understand them better?
- Would I interpret this differently from someone in my own demographic?

NAVIGATING WORKPLACE DYNAMICS

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It's not about eliminating differences

It's about understanding, respecting, and leveraging these differences to create a more dynamic and effective workplace



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THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

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