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Communication Between Generation - Conflict Prevention and Management

Ballyhoura Development CLG

Identity and Value based conflict in the workplace



**Co-funded by
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Identity and Value based conflict in the workplace

Introduction

In order to pre-empt conflict, employers need to be aware of the issues most likely to cause conflict and the relevant strategies and tools to resolve conflict when it arises. The results of our survey show that workers across all generations were in broad agreement around the most frequent causes of conflict in the workplace, ranking potential sources of discord as below

1. Identity based conflict
2. Value Based Conflict
3. Behaviour Based Conflict
4. Organisational Culture

Identity Based Conflicts

As workplaces become more diverse in ethnicity, culture and age the risk of identity and value-based conflict increases. Our survey shows that these two factors are rated by each of the four generations as the most likely causes of disagreement in the workplace. Examples from our survey include:

Cultural Identity Conflict

In multicultural European workplaces, employees from minority backgrounds may experience alienation or exclusion due to differing cultural norms or communication styles. For instance, a worker from a minority ethnic group may struggle to connect with colleagues who share different cultural references, leading to feelings of isolation and reduced participation

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Conflict

Conflicts can arise when employees face intolerance or discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. In some European contexts, despite legal protections, LGBTQ+ employees may encounter microaggressions, exclusion from informal networks, or inappropriate jokes, creating a hostile work environment

Generational Identity Conflict

Workplaces with diverse age groups often experience tension due to differing values and work styles. For example, younger employees may prioritize flexibility and digital communication, while older colleagues may value traditional hierarchies and face-to-face interaction. These differences can lead to misunderstandings and reduced collaboration

Professional vs. Personal Identity Conflict



Employees may feel pressured to conform to organizational norms that conflict with their personal values. For example, someone who values ethical transparency may feel conflicted working in a sales-driven culture that emphasizes aggressive tactics.

Value Based Conflicts

Ethical disagreements – For example, one employee may believe in strict adherence to rules, while another prioritizes flexibility or personal judgment, leading to conflict over decision-making.

Work-life balance vs. productivity – A team member who values personal time may clash with a colleague who prioritizes long hours and constant availability.

Diversity and inclusion perspectives – Differences in views on cultural sensitivity, gender roles, or inclusion practices can lead to tension, especially if one person feels their values are being dismissed or undermined.

Approach to leadership or teamwork – Some employees may value hierarchical structures and clear authority, while others prefer collaborative or flat team dynamics.

Environmental or social responsibility – Conflicts may arise when employees disagree on the importance of sustainability or corporate social responsibility in business decisions.

Innovation vs. tradition – A younger employee may push for new technologies or methods, while a more experienced colleague may value established practices and caution.

Research shows that open communication channels enable individuals to express concerns constructively and listen actively, which helps de-escalate the tensions described before they evolve into deeper conflicts. This correlates with our research outlined above where open dialogue was rated as the most important tool for conflict prevention and management. Moreover, communication strategies such as active listening, feedback mechanisms, and mediation contribute to stronger interpersonal relationships and team cohesion, ultimately enhancing organizational performance. When organizations prioritize these tools and strategies as a cornerstone of their conflict resolution framework, they not only mitigate identify and value-based clashes but also cultivate a more harmonious and productive work environment.



Generational cards



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Identity and Value Based Conflict

Generation: Gen Z

The Stereotype

Gen Z do not hold traditional values like loyalty, long term commitment and respect for authority.
Idealistic and socially conscious.
Passionate about diversity and inclusion, gender equality and climate change.

Research Findings

Gen Z seek meaning and flexibility rather than security or status.
Value autonomy, work life balance , innovation , change and technology.
Sensitive to cultural differences and discrimination around gender, ethnicity and bodily characteristics.

Strategies and Practical Advice

Create opportunities for intergenerational team work
Consider how Gen Z employees can inform and participate in EDI and CSR initiatives
Encourage informal intergenerational meetings





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Generation: Millennials

The Stereotype

Millennials are seen as lacking loyalty and work ethic.

Low level of respect for authority.

Value work life balance and are adaptable.

Research Findings

They value social impact , innovation and inclusion.

Consider a lack of intercultural training as a significant barrier to intergenerational cooperation.

Have witnessed ethnicity and nationality as significant factors contributing to discrimination.

Strategies and Practical Advice

Consider hybrid and flexible working to align with the need for work life balance

Provide intercultural awareness training





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Generation: **Gen X**

The Stereotype

Gen X are seen as loyal employees

Value long term commitment and personal relationships.

Less innovative and change oriented than younger co-workers.

Research Findings

Gen X see themselves as stable and independent but with a respect for hierarchy.

Witnessed disability, gender and ethnicity as major factors in workplace discrimination.

Not as culturally sensitive as younger colleagues

Strategies and Practical Advice

Do not micromanage

Respect their experience

Promote dialogue on cultural sensitivity and inclusion





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Generation: Babyboomers

The Stereotype

Boomers uphold traditional values such as loyalty and respect for authority.

Value long term commitment and hardwork.

Do not value social impact

Research Findings

Baby Boomers bring a wealth of experience and a strong work ethic.

Value loyalty ,commitment and personal relationships.

Respect authority.

Attribute less importance to innovation , change and social impact.

Lower sensitivity or less pronounced perception of intergenerational discrimination in the workplace.

Strategies and Practical Advice

Recognise the stability, experience and relationship network of older colleagues as an asset to the business.

Encourage innovation within this age group by involving them in multi generation teams.

Provide regular updates on EDI inititaives.





Key takeaways

Effective communication is a cornerstone of conflict prevention and resolution. Clear, respectful, and timely communication fosters mutual understanding, reduces misinterpretations, and promotes a culture of transparency and trust among employees.

Managing intergenerational workplace conflict involves

- providing clarity about appropriate communication channels
- agreeing appropriate response times
- identifying sources of conflict particularly identity and value-based conflict
- promoting open dialogue as a means of conflict prevention

Generational differences in preferred communication methods—such as Gen Z's reliance on instant messaging versus Boomers' preference for face-to-face interaction—can lead to misunderstandings, impact negatively on team dynamics and create operational inefficiencies.

Conflict stemming from cultural, generational, and ethical differences, are common in diverse teams and require proactive strategies to address. Across all generations, open dialogue and regular social interaction emerged as the most effective tools for conflict prevention, while formal policies were seen as less impactful. The research underscores the importance of fostering inclusive direct and indirect communication practices, encouraging mentorship across age groups, and promoting open dialogue.

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[3 Types of Value-Based Conflicts in the Workplace | JAMS Pathways](#)