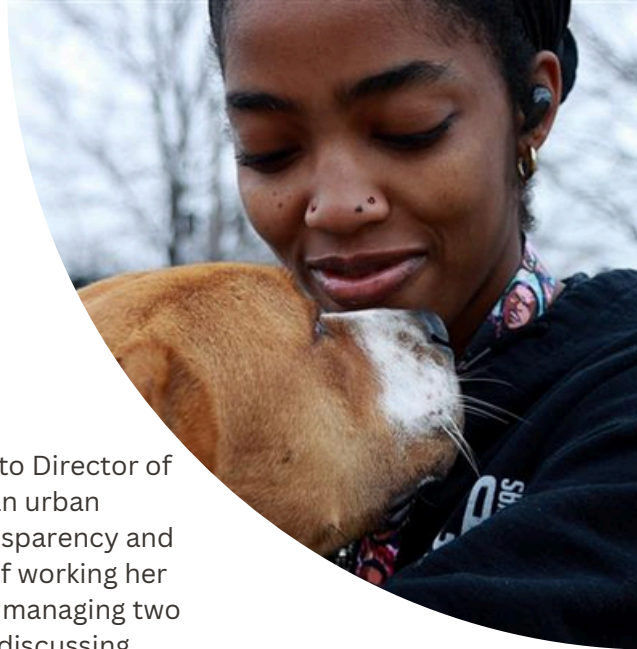


GENERATIONS AT WORK CASE STUDY



From Happy Hour to Hard Conversations

Meet Jordan, a 34-year-old Millennial, who has just been promoted to Director of Operations at a mid-sized nonprofit animal welfare organization in an urban setting. Jordan is collaborative, relationship-driven, and values transparency and team cohesion. Jordan earned an internal promotion after 5 years of working her way up and is well-liked across departments. Now, she finds herself managing two very different—and challenging—management situations. Join us in discussing what Jordan might do. Lessons in humility, consistency, creativity, and ingenuity ensue. This is a case for managing your pack - and valuing it along the way.

Managing a Former Peer

Here's the Situation:

One of Jordan's direct reports is Alex, a fellow Millennial in his early 30s. Jordan and Alex worked side-by-side for years, and they have always been each other's safe place to vent. They've gone to happy hours together. They've complained about leadership in the past. They've had a friendly, informal relationship, and now it's all different.

Since Jordan's promotion, Alex's performance has declined. Alex is missing deadlines, pushing back on directives and action items that are being delegated to him in meetings, making comments like, "I don't see how this aligns with who we are. This feels like unnecessary busy work." He is treating Jordan more like a peer than a supervisor.

After multiple informal conversations, the behavior hasn't improved. Jordan now needs to formally document a performance issue—something she's never had to do with someone she considers a friend. She's feeling uncomfortable, worried about damaging the relationship, and concerned about how the team will perceive her.

Discussion Questions

- What are the risks if Jordan avoids formal accountability with Alex?
- How should Jordan acknowledge their past relationship while setting new expectations?
- What tone should she take in a write-up to balance professionalism and respect?
- What boundaries need to change moving forward?

Reflections Questions:

- **Is this about generations? Or is this about leadership skills? How do you balance power versus experience?**
- **What would poor handling of these situations look like? How could this damage a changing relationship?**
- **What would excellent leadership look like? How do leaders adjust their style to meet people where they are?**

The Long-Tenured Employee

Here's the Situation:

Jordan inherited supervising Betty, a Baby Boomer who has worked with the organization for 28 years. Betty has deep institutional knowledge, is highly committed and dependable, and she is known for her strong work ethic and long hours. As Jordan moved into her new role, she observed Betty showing signs of resistance to new systems and processes, being reluctant to adopt updated communication tools, and has gathered feedback from others that she can be "dismissive" of new ideas. Co-workers are sharing that Betty is making statements like, "We've tried that before—it didn't work then and it won't work now."

Jordan needs to give Betty constructive feedback to support growth, without undermining her tenure, coming across as inexperience, and damaging trust. She really looks up to Betty, and she wants to have her back. Jordan is wondering how she can provide feedback to someone who's been here since she's been in kindergarten. Her worst fear is that she will come across as dismissive and disrespectful.

Discussion Questions

- What strengths should Jordan lead with when approaching Betty?
- How can she frame feedback in a way that honors experience but encourages change?
- What assumptions might Jordan need to check about generational differences?
- How can she avoid making this feel like a "generational conflict"?

GENERATIONS AT WORK

LET'S LUNCH & LET'S LEARN

Let's Break Ice Across Generations...

The Name Game

- Name a song that captures your generation's vibe
- Name a phrase/saying that your generation created
- Name a *THE* toy that everyone had to have growing up

Raise Your Hand If...

- I remember life before the internet
- I think it's rude to text someone before calling them
- I have trained someone older than me
- I've been trained by someone younger than me
- I check my chats before emails in the morning

Tell Us About Your World View

- Tell us one news story that changed how you viewed the world around you as a child.
- Tell us about one invention that came to be when you were growing up that changed the world as we knew it.
- Tell us about a trend in popular culture that you were obsessed with when you were growing up.
- Tell us about your first job. How much were you paid?
- Tell us about something your generation gets wrong about others.
- Tell us about what you think others get wrong about your generation.

Let's Take a Look at our Generational Snapshots...

Cohort	Born	Workplace Tendencies	Communication Style
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	Loyal, Strong Work Ethic, Stable	Face-to-face & Phone
Gen X	1965-1980	Independent, Efficient, Self-Reliant	Direct & Email
Millenials	1981-1996	Collaborative, Purposeful, Teamwork	Text, Chat, Feedback Rich
Gen Z	1997-2012	Flexible, Authentic, Adaptive	Fast, Visual, Short-form
Gen Alpha	2012-2027	Personalized, Always Connected, Fast	Interactive, Visual-first

Let's Have Some Real Talk...

Where do generational tensions show up most at work?

What is underneath that tension?

Let's Build Some Bridges...

Key Bridge Building Skills

- **Assume Positive Intent**
 - Instead of "They don't care"
 - Consider "They might prioritize differently"
- **Ask, Don't Assume**
 - Instead of assuming how they want feedback, ask what works for them.
 - Ask "How do you prefer feedback? How about Communication?"
- **Flex Your Style**
 - If you love email, try quick Slack/text
 - If you love speed, slow down for context
 - If you love structure, allow flexibility

Commitment Activity

Write down one thing you are willing to START doing to work better across generations:

Every role here – regardless of generation – contributes to creating a brighter future for animals. The better we understand each other, the better we serve the animals."

GENERATIONAL BINGO

Interact with your co-workers, and complete this for a prize.
This isn't about labels. This is about laughs. Have fun.

Does not have Teams or Slack downloaded on their smart phone	Uses emojis at work more than letters	Actually prints out emails	Says "let's hop on a call" a lot.	Uses keyboard shortcuts like nobody's business
Learned how to fix something at home or with office equipment by using YouTube	Has taught someone older than them how to use technology	Thinks owning a digital camera is retro	Likes very clear and structured routines	Checks emails after hours and across the weekends
Actually leaves voicemails when a call is missed	Values		Prefers to express their feelings through a meme instead of words	Had a flip phone - and maybe still does
Prefers flexibility in the workplace	Enjoys and prefers working and learning in groups	Uses AI before starting on their own first draft	Is here for the snacks.	Asks "why" before doing something that is asked of them
Buys their coffee everyday instead of making it at home	Giant Animal Lover!	Came home from school with no parents at home until after dark	Has never plugged in their headphones to listen to music	Uses fidget toys to sit through a series of meetings