Digital Etiquette: Mind the generational gap study dissects the divide across intergenerational workplaces

Four-generation workplace sparks tension as 92% of teams face conflicts over digital tools

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, March 14, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For the fourth consecutive year, The Adaptavist Group, a group of leading global digital transformation experts, has conducted its Digital Etiquette research exploring attitudes shaping the new world of work.

This year's study, Mind the Generational Gap, surveyed 4,000 knowledge workers* across Australia (500 respondents), the UK, US, Canada, and Germany to examine the impact of up to four generations collaborating in the workplace. To help dissect the findings, the Group has partnered with Australian social researcher Claire Madden, an expert in interpreting social trends and implications of generational change who recently completed her PhD exploring what motivates Gen Z in the workplace.

Simon Haighton-Williams, CEO of Adaptavist

With 43% of Australian companies now employing three or more generations, the study delivers actionable insights for businesses on navigating the multigenerational workplace. This year's results reveal the pressing need for clear digital communication guidelines to support effective collaboration and workplace efficiency among diverse age groups. While highlighting areas of intergenerational friction, it also revealed

large areas of mutual understanding and cooperation.

Claire Madden says, "Gen Z workers place a high priority on relationships and value approachable leaders. Sure, they want the flexibility to work remotely, but they also want opportunities to build those important relationships that will help them as they progress their careers. I'm a big advocate for cross-generational mentoring because different generations have much to offer one another. This Mind the Generational Gap research reveals the opportunity for workers to build on one another's strengths. This can be a strategic advantage for the organisation, but such rapport must be encouraged and supported with technology and tools, and with opportunities for face-to-face collaboration."

A closer look at the intergenerational workplace

Lost in translation: A staggering 92% of teams report conflicts over digital tools, with 63% acknowledging these disagreements hamper productivity and collaboration. Digital communication is also rife with confusion—misinterpretations of tone or context [42%], mismatched response time expectations [35%], and confusion over digital expressions like emojis [33%] all underline the need for clearer digital communication standards.

Bridging the digital divide: This divide extends to generational working styles. While 46% of Gen Z envy older colleagues' phone confidence, half of workers over 50 years old are annoyed by younger colleagues' lack of traditional tools like pens. Additionally, 53% of Gen Z believe older workers slow things down with dated techniques, and 63% claim more senior colleagues struggle with technology.

Digital toolbox or bloated tech stack? The digital toolbox keeps expanding, with only 6% reporting a reduction in tools. Both Gen Z [52%] and older workers [45%] are adopting more tools, signalling an across-the-board increase in engagement. This rise could represent increased innovation or a bloated tech stack from adding new tools faster than needed. However, one sign

of a quality tool is longevity—email remains the number one application for 67% of all workers across generations.

AI: digital gift and generational rift: AI is the tech on everyone's lips, and the hype is real. AI is now the most used tool for one third [33%] of all workers. While Gen Z leads adoption at 39%, 13% of workers over 50 years old are leveraging AI platforms like ChatGPT and Claude more than any other tool. However, underlying this growing usage is deep concern - 70% worry AI may widen generational divides, and 73% believe it may accelerate Gen Z's workplace ascendancy.

Claire Madden says, "In a multi-generational workplace you're working within the same organisational constructs, contributing to the same KPIs, sharing the same digital toolboxes. This should provide motivation for bridging generational gaps. Common ground should be identified and differences should be harnessed. Gen Z and their Millennial counterparts consider making a phone call a stressful situation, but screens are a social risk reducer behind which they are willing to innovate and show their creativity. Harnessed properly, this creativity has many workplace applications. Yes, older colleagues can help the younger generations develop corporate communication skills they may not use in their own social spheres, but they should also be open to different ways of working, communicating and using collaboration tools."

The human element prevails: Beneath perceived stereotypes labelling millennials as "lazy" and boomers as "bossy," there's a shared desire among all workers to be seen as individuals. A significant 82% oppose such categorisations, believing workplaces should stop supporting generational stereotypes. The study reveals 38% worry generational labels lead to damaging stereotypes, and 36% fear potential exclusion from being categorised by age. Older workers, in particular, express discomfort with age-based classification. According to the Mind the Generational Gap report, 60% of workers 65+ and 78% of those aged 55-64 say dividing generations is problematic. Ageism is a major concern, especially for more experienced employees.

Claire Madden says, "Different generations were raised in different social contexts. Generational groupings can be useful in providing an understanding of how social, technological and global events may have influenced the worldview of different cohorts. However, getting to know an individual's capabilities and contribution means going beyond superficial, sweeping assumptions that cause communication barriers and make a workplace much less pleasant. Humans need to connect. Leaders that wish to facilitate strong work outcomes could explore some of the findings of this research within their own organisations and encourage connection rather than fall prey to stereotypes that divide."

Simon Haighton-Williams, CEO of The Adaptavist Group, calls for a strategic approach to digital etiquette, emphasising the importance of fostering environments that respect generational differences while promoting unity and collaboration. "The challenge for employers is threefold: to create a culture that values individual contributions, encourages cohesive teamwork, and respects generational diversity without resorting to stereotypes. This demands agile and

enlightened leadership committed to bridging the digital divide," he states.

To read the full data analysis, follow this [link](#).

* Knowledge workers are defined as workers whose main capital is knowledge. Examples include ICT Professionals, physicians, pharmacists, architects, engineers, scientists, design thinkers, public accountants, lawyers, editors, and academics, whose job is to 'think for a living'.

An online survey was conducted by Attest from 3 January to 22 January, producing a total of 4,000 responses. The sample was distributed among the following countries:
United Kingdom: n=1,000
United States: n=1,000
Canada: n=500
Australia: n=500
Germany: n=1000

Results have been analysed with numbers rounded up to the nearest whole number.

About The Adaptavist Group

The Adaptavist Group is a global family of companies with one common goal: to make business work better. We combine the best talent, technology, and processes to make it easier for our customers to excel–today and tomorrow.

We are experts at delivering innovative software, tailored solutions, and quality services across some of the world's most trusted technology ecosystems, including Atlassian, AWS, Slack, monday.com, GitLab, and many more.

The Adaptavist Group exists to support clients' day-to-day workflows, business transformation, and high-growth strategies. We offer a comprehensive but always evolving range of services across five key practices: agile, DevOps, work management, ITSM, and cloud. Our depth of knowledge across these practices unites us in our mission to help businesses embrace continuous transformation and make it their competitive advantage.

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