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

Four-generation workplace sparks tension as 87% of teams face conflicts over digital tools

LONDON, UK, 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 the UK, US, Canada, Australia, 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 Dr. Eliza Filby, Historian of Generational Evolution.

With nearly half of companies (48%) now employing three or more generations, the study delivers actionable insights for businesses on navigating the multigenerational

Simon Haighton-Williams, CEO of Adaptavist

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.

Dr. Eliza Filby says, "With an aging workforce and up to four generations in today's workplace, managing and leveraging generational differences is essential for any forward-thinking business. Every age group has grown up with tech that feels native, from the gramophone to the telephone to Alexa. But it's also inevitable that every generation struggles with new technologies that can feel alien. Just watch Gen Alpha integrate ChatGPT into their homework and share AI-generated deepfakes, which means they will not trust anything—they'll have habits that make Gen Z feel old."
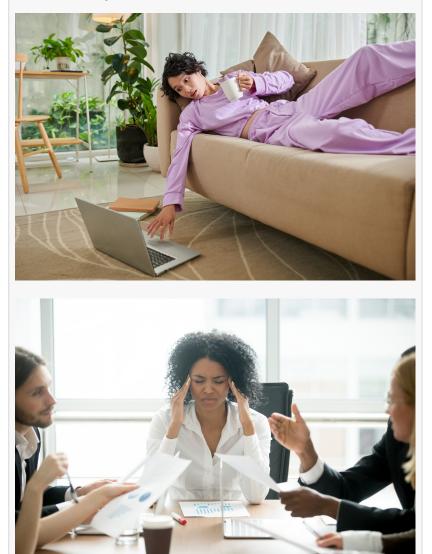
A closer look at the intergenerational workplace

Lost in translation: A staggering 87% of teams report conflicts over digital tools, with 61% acknowledging these disagreements hamper productivity and collaboration. Digital communication is also rife with confusion—misinterpretations of tone or context (45%), mismatched response time expectations (37%), and confusion over digital expressions like emojis (29%) all underline the need for clearer digital communication standards.

Dr. Eliza Filby, Historian of Generational Evolution

Bridging the digital divide: This divide extends to generational working styles. While 47% 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, 60% of Gen Z believe older workers slow things down with dated techniques, and 67% claim

more senior colleagues struggle with technology.

Digital toolbox or bloated tech stack? The digital toolbox keeps expanding, with only [7%] reporting a reduction in tools. Both Gen Z (54%) and older workers (31%) are adopting more tools, signaling 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 70% 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 almost a quarter (21%) of all workers. While Gen Z leads adoption at 29%, 12% 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 - 63% worry AI may widen generational divides, and 72% believe it may accelerate Gen Z's workplace ascendancy.

Dr. Eliza Filby says, "There are some timeless ways to bring us all together. For instance, while face-to-face interaction is a point of anxiety for many, and something we are doing less in a hybrid workplace, we all crave connection, and it can be the best way to alleviate intergenerational conflicts. Managing the multigenerational workforce is more crucial than ever as AI enters our lives and poses a greater risk of driving a technological wedge and dehumanizing interactions between the generations."

The human element prevails: Beneath perceived stereotypes labeling millennials as "lazy" and boomers as "bossy," there's a shared desire among all workers to be seen as individuals. A significant 78% oppose such categorizations, believing workplaces should stop supporting generational stereotypes. The study reveals 46% worry generational labels lead to damaging stereotypes, and 39% fear potential exclusion from being categorized by age. Older workers, in particular, express discomfort with age-based classification - 50% of workers 65+ and 76% of those aged 55-64 say dividing generations is problematic. It's evident that ageism is a major concern, especially for more experienced employees.

Dr. Eliza Filby says, "Often, we deploy stereotyping around age in a way we would never do around sexuality, gender, or race. In this individualistic age, it is not surprising that we are starting to reject such a reductive approach. Instead, understanding and unpicking differences can generate a better workplace if we make an effort to comprehend each other's unique perspectives and understand someone born in a different time."

Simon Haighton-Williams, CEO of The Adaptavist Group, calls for a strategic approach to digital etiquette, emphasizing 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.

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* 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

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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.

Media Contact: adaptavist@wearetfd.com

Mrs A Clementson
Think Feel D
+44 7502 280096
email us here

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