



ARCHDIOCESE *of*
MILWAUKEE

Managing a Multi-Generational Workplace Without Losing Your Mind (Or Your Mission)

Office of Parish and School Human Resources

Why This Matters Now

- 4-5 generations working together
- Communication options are more numerous and complicated
- Mission remains important



Learning Objectives

- Understand generational dynamics
- Identify common friction points
- Apply practical strategies rooted in Mission



Poll: Which generation are you?



- A. Silent Generation (1928-1945)
- B. Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- C. Generation X (1965-1980)
- D. Millennial/ Gen Y (1981-1996)
- E. Generation Z (1997-2012)
- F. Generation Alpha (2013-2025)

Poll: Which generation are most of your employees?

- A. Silent Generation (1928-1945)
- B. Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- C. Generation X (1965-1980)
- D. Millennial/ Gen Y (1981-1996)
- E. Generation Z (1997-2012)
- F. Generation Alpha (2013-2025)



Understanding the Generations

Generation	Birth Years	Workstyle Preferences	Communication Preferences
Silent Generation	1928-1945	Formal, structured, respect for hierarchy, stability	Face-to-face, written memos, phone calls
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	Team-oriented, hardworking, value job security	Face-to-face, phone calls, emails
Generation X	1965-1980	Independent, adaptable, value work-life balance	Email, phone calls, in-person, text messages
Millennials (Gen Y)	1981-1996	Collaborative, flexible, prefer meaningful work	Text messages, social media, email, video calls
Generation Z	1997-2012	Highly independent, tech-savvy, prefer autonomy	Instant messaging, social media, email, video calls
Generation Alpha	2013-Present	Still developing, likely to prefer digital-first, autonomous work	Likely to prefer text-based and visual communication via apps

Common Tension Points

- Tradition/routine vs. Innovation (Technology, workflow, etc.)
- Scheduling/ flexibility vs. Boundaries
- Collaboration vs. Hierarchical (Leadership expectations)

Always avoid stereotypes!

**Where are you currently
feeling this tension at your
parish/ school?**



Staying Rooted in Mission

The Risk

Losing identity while trying to adapt
Burnout and frustration leading to disengagement

Reframing Through Mission

Mission as the unifier across generations
Shared purpose > personal preference

Practical Application

Use mission as decision filter:
“Does this help us serve better?”
“Does this reflect our values?”



Practical Strategies

- **Communication That Bridges Generations**
 - Set clear norms (email, text, meetings)
 - Over-communicate expectations and be consistent with performance management
 - Match message to medium
- **Leadership Adjustments**
 - Flex your leadership style (situational leadership)
 - Balance authority with collaboration
 - Assign tasks based on strengths
 - Continuously assess staff needs and adapt policies/practices accordingly

Practical Strategies

- **Building Mutual Respect**
 - Create opportunities for mentoring both ways:
 - Reverse mentoring (tech, culture)
 - Wisdom sharing (institutional knowledge)
- **Managing Change Without Chaos**
 - Pace change intentionally
 - Explain the “why” (especially in mission terms)
 - Involve key voices early
- **Boundaries & Burnout Prevention**
 - Normalize healthy work habits
 - Offer flexibility where possible (benefit options, schedule, meeting medium, etc.)
 - Model balance as a leader



Case Study

- **Context:** St. Brigid Parish & School hires Elena (29) to modernize communications.
- **Proposal:**
 - More social media
 - Livestream Mass
 - Shift toward digital communication
- **Staff Reactions:**
 - Linda (58): “Our older parishioners won’t like this.”
 - Mark (45): “Who’s going to manage this?”
 - Fr. Michael (63): “We can’t lose who we are.”
 - Younger staff: supportive but frustrated
- **Outcome:**
 - No decision made
 - Elena feels dismissed
 - Others feel anxious or overwhelmed
 - Tension remains unresolved

Case Study: Resolution

1. Re-anchor in Mission
2. Name the Concerns
3. Slow the Pace—Not the Progress
4. Clarify Roles & Capacity
5. Build Bridges Across Generations
6. Lead with Clarity + Charity

Key Takeaways

- Generational differences are assets if led well
- You don't need to choose between mission and management
- Clarity + charity = effective leadership



Questions? Contact us!

Office of Parish and School Human Resources

ParishandSchoolHR@archmil.org

414-389-88HR(47)