

## ◆ *The Changing Workplace: Considering Personal Work Styles, the Global Office, and Building a Team*

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Journals and their workplaces are evolving with technology and the globalization of publishing. Telecommuting, teleconferencing, flexible schedules, subcontracting, and outsourcing are increasingly common. Job satisfaction depends on the expectations of specific generations and cultures.

Patty Baskin noted that generational workplace differences are often overlooked. “Veterans”, “Baby Boomers”, “Generation Xers”, and “Generation Yers” display different age-specific value sets with respect to how they view authority, how they handle flexibility, how they prefer to be trained, and how they view their work and home lives. Generally, Veterans are uncomfortable with technology and believe in hierarchic organization; Baby Boomers like to work in teams and are concerned about workplace equality; Generation Xers are comfortable with nontraditional work

schedules, tend to multitask well, are technologically savvy, dress and act more casually, and want “balance” in their lives; and Generation Yers grew up in a digital world and expect formal training on the job. Employers can accommodate those differences by offering a nontraditional work environment with such choices as flexible schedules and dress codes. A diverse work team can lead to more creativity, but if problems arise, managers should focus on results. Understanding generational diversity can equip employers to work with diverse groups.

Kenneth Heideman discussed his experiences with an age-diverse group of more than 35 employees, including part-time and remote workers. Staff members have come to the organization with different knowledge sets; younger copyeditors may have degrees in journalism or English, and older technical editors have backgrounds in meteorology. Such diversity in staff requires a manager to use different management tools for each staff member; a manager needs to be “*n* different managers for *n* different staff”.

How does older age matter in the workplace? Older workers are more fearful of technology and change in general, but they have more experience with different workplaces and supervisors and can look at the workplace with a larger perspective. Generations differ in inner motivation. Older staff may work “by choice” after retirement age. Age differences matter more than age. Stay flexible; the best work environment is one in which there is a mix of generations, sex, and race.

Nancy Devaux noted that her organization has more than 180 associates, including in-house staff, telecommuters, and freelancers based all over the United States. In addition, there are more than

150 employees working for overseas partners in India and Asia.

Although telecommuting offers flexibility, the company and the employee both have responsibilities for helping to make the partnership work. The company may provide equipment, maintenance, technology and workflow support; reimbursement for office expenses; and training to remote workers. Employees are responsible for getting the job done; making sure they are fully trained, technologically savvy, and able to troubleshoot problems; and creating an ergonomically sound workplace. Telecommuters must also have several backup plans, they should participate in meetings via teleconferencing, and they should communicate regularly with their supervisors.

Communication is key when the use of remote workers is considered. In addition, there are legal, financial, and tax implications; concerns about coverage when the remote worker is not available; and the need for accountability metrics. To achieve success, there should be clear and comprehensive written expectations for both staff and company. Be flexible, maintain best practices to protect against “island” evolution, promote participation in company projects and events, and screen potential candidates carefully to make sure they will fit in.

Finally, some considerations in working with global partners include communication, differing views on job ownership, concepts of “time”, and cultural differences. Cross-cultural training and reciprocal visits help to relieve some of the conflicts that may arise. 