

**Tailoring Your Workplace to Attract and Retain
The Very Best People**

**The
Great
Workplace
Revolution**

Twelve Essential Strategies

For Creating a Great Place to Work

By Thomas S. Klobucher

An Executive Summary

“The Great Workplace Revolution”

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A Great Place to Work is made up of many characteristics and personalities. Some have to do with the physical place, furnishings and décor, but most of the high impact elements center around the human interaction components that are more complex and dynamic.

The following is a summary of just a few of these important elements.

The 21st Century knowledge worker is awash in a changing landscape, consisting of five very different generations of people working side by side. These workers are surrounded by economic, social, political and of course, generational change.

The book *The Great Workplace Revolution*, which is scheduled to be published in the Fall of 2011, provides a detailed roadmap for navigating through the next decade, which will be some of the most exciting years in recent history.

THE FIVE WORKPLACE GENERATIONS

As the economy improves, competition for the most creative workers (the ones that everybody wants) will become more demanding than ever. These innovative knowledge workers will determine the fates of whole companies – and whole industries! Regardless of what is happening in the rest of the job market, these workers will always have attractive options before them. The question is ... will you be ready to do what it takes to attract and retain them?

To do that, you must move beyond some conventional assumptions about the design, look, and feel of your workplace. For most of our history, workplace designers have assumed that all or most organizations and employees are essentially identical. Designing a working space for one person in a given department meant designing the workplace for the entire department. This book, as I have said, charts a very different approach: one of tailoring the workplace to the needs of the knowledge workers.

If you think the idea of matching tools and workspaces to individual employee needs sounds troublesome, expensive, or time-consuming, you are certainly not alone. Yet, before you opt to make the same decisions (and get the same results) that most organizations do when addressing these questions, consider the AGES of the various people who now work for your organization by conducting a workplace generational survey.

If your company is like most of those we work with, there are no fewer than four distinct generations operating in your workplace at the same time. Each of these four generations has its own priorities, its own distinct world-view, its own communication preferences and its own attitudes towards technology. Also a fifth generation is now preparing to enter the workforce, making for unprecedented generational diversity in the workplace, starting around the year 2020.

If you, like me, are planning to be a part of the workforce in that year, it is up to you to learn the workplace languages of the five very different demographic groups. All of us, regardless of our age, now have a remarkable and unprecedented, “cross-pollination” opportunity to interact with FIVE working generations at the same time, each speaking its own distinctive language and each having unique needs and work styles.

Treating these five groups as identical as you plan or upgrade your organizations workspaces would be a major strategic mistake, one that can cost you and your enterprise dearly in terms of employee attraction, retention, productivity, and competitive advantage.

- As a starting point in any discussion about workplace planning, you should know which of the following groups any given employee on your team belongs to.

TRADITIONALISTS (born before 1946): These workers – many of whom are working into their seventies and eighties – lived through the Great Depression, World War II, and the Korean War. Their primary values are **DEPENDABILITY** and **SACRIFICE**. They are willing to put aside individual goals and aspirations for the good of the group. They are big on discipline, team play, and respect for authority. They tend to be conservative or even pessimistic, and strive to think long term. They are the most resistant of the five generations to new forms of communication technology. **To work effectively with Traditionalists, you should be prepared to appeal to the common good.**

BABY BOOMERS (1946-1964): This large group includes most of the major decision makers who will be “calling the shots” between now and 2030. Their primary values are to **CHALLENGE LIMITS** and **QUESTION EVERYTHING**. They are willing to confront authority when circumstances require, and they tend to have a stronger sense of social responsibility and reform than the Traditionalists. They are, as a rule, profoundly optimistic and willing to believe that any worthy goal can be achieved. They’re generally less formal than Traditionalists, and more likely to focus on their own individual career goals than on team initiatives. They are generally receptive to new communication technologies, although they did not grow up in a “wired” environment, and may even be perceived as “out of touch” in comparison with younger workers in relation to certain technologies. The Baby Boomers like the Traditionalists are often seen by younger workers as “digital immigrants” because they did not grow up speaking the language of the digital world. To offer only the most obvious example, many Baby Boomers (like the majority of Traditionalists) took their time embracing twenty-first century social media forums. A few Boomers are still holding out against this powerful medium, which is second nature to younger workers. **To work effectively with Baby Boomers, you should be prepared to identify a new and exciting goal that has not been attained before.**

GENERATION X (1965-1976): More cynical than any of the other four groups, these workers are likely to have little or no initial loyalty to the company they work for. Their primary value is **INDEPENDENCE**. More than any other modern generation, their world is likely to be built around the concept of “looking out for number one.” They expect to change jobs frequently and are deeply wary of promises made by authority figures. They are comfortable with multiple communication technologies, and they adapt to new media platforms fairly easily. In any situation, they likely want to know “what’s in it for me?” They are much more interested in short-term outcomes than in long-term outcomes. **To work effectively with members of this group, you must be able to prove to each individual Gen-Xer that you are worth his/her valuable time, attention and/or money.**

Millennials (1977-1997): The Millennials are well educated (roughly 60% are college graduates). Their primary values are **FUN** and **CONNECTION**. Many of them received significantly more parental attention and support in their youth than the Generation X workers did. This generation grew up with computer games, cell phones, and the World

Wide Web. They are not just comfortable with communications technology; communications technology is an important part of their identity. They are tolerant, energetic, and demanding. They have extremely short attention spans, thrive on visuals, prefer collaborative give-and-take to long lectures, and expect to see results more or less instantly. Millennials will make up roughly 50% of the workforce in the year 2020, which means that ignoring their priorities and communication preferences is a big, and potentially fatal mistake for any business interested in retaining the most creative people. **To work effectively with them, you must be prepared to entertain them and provide social stimulation because their whole life is about having fun and interacting with others.**

And coming soon

GENERATION 2020. This highly educated generation, born around or shortly before the year 2000, will enter the workforce by the end of the present decade, during a period when many Traditionalists will likely still be quite active. Analysts are still working out what to expect from this group. Words being used now to describe their values include:

- **Connected.** Expect this group to be even more “wired” than the Millennials, because their entire lives have been spent under the powerful influence of the Internet, on-line video games, social media, and virtual worlds like Second Life. As you read these words, they are updating their Facebook statuses.
- **Concerned.** Members of Generation 2020 appear to be the most sensitive of all the five groups to environmental problems and related social issues.
- **Careful.** The recommendations of peers will carry enormous weight with this group. Expect these workers to think twice before making big purchase decisions. Unlike the Millennials, they are coming of age during a time of economic austerity. They are likely to seek value and be much more cautious with economic and career decisions, and thus share some important values with Traditionalists.
- **Collaborative.** Like the Millennials, they are likely to be quite comfortable with collaborative endeavors, either face-to-face or virtual.

To work effectively with these young workers, you will have to be prepared to understand, and become part of, their network.

You’ve now met the five workplace generations with whom each and every organization must come to terms if it intends to be competitive in the coming years. To retain the best, most creative, most mission-critical workers within each of these groups, you must be willing to tailor your workspace in five different ways at the same time. Fortunately, this is easier, and more enjoyable, than it sounds! We will share more ideas on how to do this in the book.

Twelve Essential Strategies for Creating a Great Place to Work

- 1. Core Values:**

Identifying the organizations' core values, and talking about those values frequently with customers and employees. These are the customer-focused values you will hire employees for . . . and fire employees for, if they consistently deviate from those values.
- 2. Creative Work Place:**

Designing and refining a creative work space. This attracts and retains creative problem solvers and people who care.
- 3. Human Resource Right Fit:**

Putting the right person in the right job. Kolbe.com personality tests can be a great resource for this.
- 4. Understanding your employees:**

Giving constant attention and understanding of the needs of the whole employee. Being intentional about learning their hopes and future career aspirations. The result: Greater buy-in to the mission, deeper loyalty, and more intense commitment to the Customer. Other needs could include: flex time, shift swapping and extended leave when necessary.
- 5. Awards and Recognition:**

Building public recognition for a job well done into the culture. Thank you cards and e-mails for colleagues (as well as for customers and vendors) need to become a part of daily life. These should reflect authentic gratitude for any and every job well done. "Most Valuable Player" Awards promote an "all crew and no passenger" workplace philosophy, which ultimately serves the customer.
- 6. Collaborative Environment.**

Supporting a truly collaborative workplace, both physically and emotionally. This kind of workplace design and interpersonal support promotes: problem solving, quality improvement, brainstorming, think tanks, and effective post-mortems when a project concludes.
- 7. Director of Fun:**

Appointing someone Director of Fun. Whether it's a full-time position or an addition to someone's current list of responsibilities isn't as important as whether your team members see, and experience first-hand, the positive experience they are supposed to deliver to the customer. Find new reasons to celebrate and new ways to enhance enjoyment of the job!

8. Creative after-work events:

Creative after-work events that involve direct personal contact with customers. These kinds of events amount to a fun, collaborative team effort that improves all aspects of customer service. Bulls, Hawks, Cubs and Kane County Cougar games, as well as small group activities like golf, table games and picnics.

9. Community Service Events:

Giving something back to the community. Doing this as a group improves team cohesion, gives you a great P.R. opportunity, and helps customers understand your values. Helping out with local homeless support groups, food pantries, PADS and adopting a needy family each Holiday Season.

10. A Healthy Ergonomics Workplace:

Ensuring that each employee's work space makes good ergonomic sense. This reduces stress, improves morale, and improves the quality of our interactions with customers (and everyone else)!

11. A Learning Organization:

Investing in ongoing education and personal development for all employees. This pays off for everyone. Thomas University, Learning vs. Training.

12. Employee Feedback and Evaluation:

Giving employees regular feedback. Recommended evaluation/review time: Every six months. Evaluate them against your organization's core value first, and against performance metrics second.

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