

# THE MENTAL MUSINGS

The Psychological Research Newsletter

Welcome to our seventh issue! Today we switch gears to explore communication in an ever-diversifying workspace. Do you find it hard to relate to coworkers of different age groups? If you do, this is the issue for you! Join us as we explore the differences but more importantly, the similarities between the generations in our workforce today.

## INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION AT WORK

If phrases like “that’s so skibidi,” “take a chill pill,” or “you’re basic” confuse you, you’re not alone. Slangs have always been a part of how people communicate, evolving over time as each generation creates their own. With the globalisation and the internet connecting us, new slangs have been rapidly increasing.

**Intergenerational Communication** occurs when individuals with large age differences converse with each other. It is in these conversations where unfamiliar slang can cause confusion. This generational gap in language can create challenges, especially in the age-diversifying group that is Singapore’s workforce. While the retirement age in Singapore is set to increase, the entry age into the workforce remains the same. Workplaces can be expected to grow in diversity, increasing misunderstandings due to slang. Thus, the need for effective communication and collaboration is more important now than ever.

**Skibidi:** has no inherent meaning, a term of expression associated with a carefree or goofy attitude

**Chill pill:** to calm down or relax

**Basic:** mainstream, unoriginal, or typical

**Intergenerational Collaboration** can:

### 1. Promote Individual Wellbeing

Collaboration increases the feeling of being valued and included, increasing self-esteem and reducing social isolation

### 2. Enhance Productivity

Collaboration allows for knowledge transfer and skill sharing, helping teams perform better

### 3. Increase Social Cohesion

Collaboration reduces stereotypes and misconceptions between generations, encouraging common goals to bring individuals together

A **Generation** is a group that shares significant life events at critical development stages. They are defined by how they think and feel, and their experiences.

Each generation is unique with characteristics linked to their behaviour and values. Below, we explore the generations that make up our current workforce in Singapore. With a range of over 60 years, we have span four generations: Baby Boomers, Generation Y, Millennials, and Generation Z.

# THE GENERATIONS AT A GLANCE



## BABY BOOMER BORN 1946-1964

- Grew up post WWII
- Favour face-to-face interaction and phone calls
- Values discipline and respect having been raised in a more conservative, hierarchical society

## GENERATION X BORN 1965-1980

- Grew up witnessing modernisation in Singapore
- Flexible in communication methods with emphasis for professionalism
- Values competence and individuality more over respect for title or rank



## MILLENNIALS BORN 1981-1996

- Grew up during the rise of the internet
- Preference for quick flexible interactions with respect for face-to-face interactions
- Values results, frequent feedback, and rewards they can use



## GENERATION Z BORN 1997-2012

- Grew up with smartphones
- Communicates through short-form content engaging in 'meme' culture
- Values job stability and workplace flexibility, looking for opportunities to grow in their craft



## CHALLENGES TO INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

As seen from above, individuals from different generations may have different preferences and values due to the environment in which they grew up in.

Let's explore some challenges that may arise when collaborating with each other.

### Leadership Styles

- **Older generations** prefer a more hierarchical and authoritative approach
- **Younger generations** prefer a more collaborative and flexible approach, focusing on empowering and transformative leadership

### Technological Adoption

- **Younger generations** tend to be faster and more eager to take on technological advancements than their older counterparts
- **Younger generations** tend to be more immersed in the use of digital tools than their older counterparts

### Communication Styles

- **Older generations** tend to be more reserved in their emotional expressions compared to their younger counterparts
- **Younger generations** tend to value transparency and vulnerability in their communications

### Attitudes & Values

- **Younger generations** tend to be less resistant to change compared to older generations
- **Older generations** place emphasis on hard work and personal responsibility, where **younger generations** look toward work-life balance, social change, and mental health

### Learning & Literacy

- **Older generations** tend to be more comfortable with traditional, structured learning methods
- **Younger generations** tend to take their learning through varied digital sources, formulating their own learning paths

While preferences and values between generations may differ, it's important to remember that no one preference is better than the other. At the end of the day, we all look to be understood and respected when communicating with others. Here are a few practical tips to improve our communication with each other!

### **Peer-to-Peer Communication**

1. **Get to know who you're talking to**
  - Everyone, regardless of their age, is unique in their thoughts and values
2. **Be open to change**
  - Ways of communicating (e.g., lingos, digitalisation) will continue to change
3. **Encourage inclusivity**
  - Including diverse individuals brings new perspectives that might otherwise be unseen
4. **Mix communication methods to interact**
  - Build relationships through multiple communication methods
5. **Provide constructive feedback**
  - If something is not working out for you, share your challenges and look for solutions together

### **Leading Communication in a Team**

1. **Educate and facilitate opportunities for people to understand each other**
  - Act as an agent of change to bring people together
2. **Set mutual expectations**
  - Have open discussions about preferences and find middle ground
3. **Model flexibility**
  - Be open to new systems and encourage your team to do the same
4. **Encourage participation**
  - Look out for minority voices and consider their challenges
5. **Ask for feedback and act on it**
  - Be open to learning from your team, ask and receive their feedback for the betterment of the whole team

Let's look at the application of some of these suggestions!



Shauna, Gen Z

The crowd today was relentless, during my shift I had three separate families come up to me speaking in rude tones, saying that the immigration lines were so long and that we should do a better job. Honestly it was so not a vibe!

I'm sorry to hear that you had to face so many rude individuals during your shift today, Shauna. I also felt like the people were never ending today... What exactly is a 'vibe'?



Adeline, Gen Y

Ah, sorry, I was too frustrated... When someone says that something is a 'vibe' it means it gives off a certain feeling, or energy that is positive in nature. Saying that today was not a vibe means that I feel like my shift was not a positive one.

I see! Thank you for explaining to me. I find that when I'm having a bad shift, I try to remind myself not to take it personally and be grateful for the things that went well.

Thanks for the advice, I have a lot to learn from your professionalism.

And there is a lot that I can learn from you in terms of these lingos that you use! I have to leave though, maybe you can share them with me over text?

I would love to! Would you also be okay sharing with me about how you deal with bad shifts?

That sounds like a *vibe*!



After their shift, Shauna shares with Adeline over instant messaging about some of the difficulties that she faced when talking to the families at immigration, and Adeline offers Shauna advice from her years in service. As they talk, Adeline learns different lingos that Shauna uses, which allows them to communicate smoothly with each other both over text messaging and at work.

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