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**Effectively Managing Today's New Employee Mix of  
Traditionalists, Boomers, Xers and Millennials**

*CPI Partner and Ties to Tattoos author unveils important tips on  
how to manage four generations in today's economy.*

DATELINE -- While most companies and managers are doing their very best to remain strong and deliver on expectations through the recession, managing a multigenerational workforce just became even harder. Right now another new graduation class enters the job market while at the same time thousands of would-be retirees, their retirement accounts depleted, remain in the ranks of the employed. These factors only add to the complexity of managing a workforce, that for the first time in history, is comprised of four distinct generations – Traditionalists, Boomers, Xers, and Millennials.

Sherri Elliott with Career Partners International ([www.cpiworld.com](http://www.cpiworld.com)) firm Optimance Workforce Strategies in Dallas and the author of the new book *Ties to Tattoos: Turning Generational Differences into a Competitive Advantage*, explains that each group has strong assets that managers can tap into:

- Traditionalists and Boomers bring drive, determination, and vast amounts of knowledge and experience to any company. Boomers, however, are less team-oriented than Millennials. Boomers are used to acquiring information and keeping it to themselves—they feel like knowledge is power. But if they can't effectively communicate with and train younger generations, their employers will lose profitability. Millennials, after all, must be effectively trained.
- Because Xers are fundamentally independent, they are often free-thinkers and can be a valuable source of fresh ideas. Always ask for their input.
- Millennials thrive in team environments and are not shy about putting in their two cents. They are also a fountain of fresh ideas. Additionally, they are excellent multi-taskers and can be highly productive. If a Millennial walks into a Traditionalist's office demanding to know when she is going to get an iPhone, the Traditionalist will instinctively react negatively. The Traditionalist hears "I'm entitled to an iPhone even though I haven't

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worked for it.” The Traditionalist needs to understand that what the Millennial means is “I can be so much more productive for you if you will give me the tools I need to stay in touch with colleagues. After all, I can’t be a valuable member of the team if I can’t communicate with them quickly and easily.”

How can companies successfully manage today’s multigenerational workforce?

Elliott has three tips:

1. When you are trying to get a point across, always keep your audience in mind. Understand generational differences and tailor your communication to speak powerfully to your targeted demographic.
2. Abandon “one-size-fits-all” thinking. Different generations are motivated by different things. Accordingly, use a range of recruiting and incentive strategies to make sure your company appeals to all generations, not just one or two.
3. To make sure incoming employees are properly trained, allow them to choose their own training methods. Whereas a Boomer may learn best by attending a live class, a Millennial may prefer to take a webinar instead. Allow your employees to choose the training methods which work best for them.

One of Elliott’s clients, an independent banking firm, recently increased their training and development budget significantly, with part of their training program dedicated to helping bank managers better understand Traditionalists, Boomers, Xers, and Millennials and their roles in the workplace. The program was rolled out to the entire organization of more than 5,000 employees, and bank executives credit better training as one of the reasons why they were able to double their profits in the last five years.

Right now, Millennials are a hot commodity on the job market, mainly because they are cheap hires. After all, older Xers and Boomers are looking for higher wages and the corner office, and sometimes executives wrongly think it makes sense to lay them off and replace them with cheaper labor.

“The problem is, if there are no Boomers and Xers around to train the Millennials, the company will suffer,” explained Elliott. “Even though it might seem like replacing older employees with lower-paid Millennials makes financial sense, it really doesn’t. Untrained Millennials may take hours to complete tasks a trained Boomer could complete in five minutes, which actually *increases* a company’s cost of doing business. If you are increasing your cost of doing business,

it's going to be increasingly difficult to compete in a down economy. Productivity lags, customer service becomes non-existent, and sales drop like rocks. Therefore, it's now more important than ever to make sure 1) that you are maintaining a good generational mix, and 2) facilitating communication and knowledge transfer across generations.”

And in the long term? “Companies who train employees on inter-generational communication foster strong employee-employer relationships, which in turn minimizes conflicts, boosts company morale, reduces turnover, and improved productivity,” says Elliott. “That, in turn, translates to a long-term competitive advantage.”

*Career Partners International (CPI) is one of the world's largest providers of talent management solutions with more than 160 offices in 20 countries around the world and serving every state in the United States. Established in 1987, CPI focuses on talent management, outplacement and executive coaching services backed by the expertise and experience of more than 1,600 highly trained professionals.*