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There's a lot of press about the Baby Boomers exiting from the work force, and the many Millennials that are entering. But what does this mean to the accounting industry? How does this change affect our firm and our clients?

Whether you own an accounting firm or small business, or you simply manage or lead a team, you have many different types of people you work with. Though each of the generations certainly has its own style, overgeneralizing can be dangerous—and cause us to overlook great talent.

And that's true with any type of generalization, so let's talk about how the different

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It's these differences that cause people to make misleading and inaccurate judgments.

In my experience, those in the Generation X category are more sticklers for agendas, deadlines and structure, and are more unforgiving of mistakes. Baby Boomers and Millennials, on the other hand, are more optimistic and comfortable with change and often view mistakes as learning experiences, not failures.

So how do you manage your business while keeping your staff happy, regardless of their generation? Here are a few thoughts:

Be aware of how your staff works together. Do you notice any subtle differences in HOW they get their work done? Do you have staff members who prefer to have a set schedule rather than an ambiguous one? Do you have people who blossom when given flexibility? Does it seem that one generation likes a certain style of working better than another, or is it cross-generational?

The bottom line is...are they getting their work done? If they are, does it really matter how they complete it, as long as it's timely, accurate and professionally presented?

I recently chatted with two new employees about this. They both like to arrive to work early, and be done early. This was especially true in the summer months. They weren't call center employees; they were project-based, so they were able to enjoy this flexibility and still be awesome performers.

The issue can sometimes be the feeling they get from others when they leave earlier, as those who arrive later don't see how early these Millennials get to work. This is something you want to pay attention to if it's happening in your business, so you can support all of your staff fairly.

Listen to them as they work together, and with clients. I make a point to walk around the office several times a day to touch base with the different teams. I like

seeing them in their environment, and I like having them see that I care enough to be

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while they're on the phone with our users.

Change things up!!! Don't be afraid to experiment and see what different people on your team like to do. We have barbeque lunches, pot lucks, games and more to mix things up—especially during busy season.

For instance, we recently had an internal Pokémon game contest to see if our teams use our Help & How-To Center. Once again it seemed that the younger group who is comfortable with technology and grew up with Pokémon really embraced this game and got excited. The next thing we roll out might be more targeted to a different type of staff person, but the important element is that we're reaching all of our main generational groups by changing events, meetings and games to ensure we're including everyone.

When you take time to consider your staff and generational differences, I think you'll learn a lot by observing. You'll also increase your appreciation for how these differences enhance your firm, and the overall client experience.

Have you addressed generational differences at your firm? Please comment on this blog and share your observations. I look forward to hearing what you discover.

During more than nine years with Thomson Reuters Training, Consulting & Implementation Services, Jean has overseen a new focus on thought leadership, expanded online offerings, new custom training options, and more. Jean has an Accounting Degree from the University of Toledo and an MBA from Bowling Green State University. She has been at TR for almost 10 years and during this time has implemented a robust mentoring program, has led the innovation initiative for professional, and has grown the educational training group to include not just

training and consulting engagements but a full curriculum of thought leadership

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