

## How to Maximize Cross-Generational Working Relations with Conversations Each Generation Wants to Have

As a passionate champion of cross-generational conversation, I am often asked, “Who should start the conversation?” From my experience over many years of working with several generations, there is a hunger for comfortable, safe, effective and profitable intergenerational communication and collaboration at work. Yet people are held back by fears of reaching out beyond their comfort zone. Often, they just don’t know how to initiate and establish deeper conversations and relationships.

One of the things I aim for is to get people curious about each other in a non-threatening environment. It starts and is maintained by establishing *empathy* and *trust*. Next is the desire to understand *perspectives* and typical motivations of different generations. These are three of the essential skills for success I explore through the lenses of five generations in the book “You Can’t Google It!”

Below are seven samples among conversations I have found each generation wants – and needs - to have with each other in my facilitated Cross-Generational Conversation Day and other forums. Anyone can start the cross-generational conversation with these questions:

- Help me understand your perspective on work and the marketplace outside of our firm. What factors influenced your worldview and attitudes you bring to your work and interactions with colleagues?
- What would you say are your core values? Do you think they are significantly different from my generation’s core values? How can we jointly overcome intergenerational tensions?
- What would you like to discuss to get to know better how my peers and I think, what our expectations are, and how you and I can benefit from our differences and diversity?
- What would you like to see changed about how (our) work is done, and how can you help to make it more effective? How important is hierarchy to you? When is years of experience in your role very important, and when are other factors equally or more important?
- What strategies for impact and influence at work can I learn from you and you from me?
- What is getting in the way of a more productive and satisfying working relationship? Would you like to know how best to work with me?
- What can we jointly present to our organization’s decision-makers that will improve (select one or more: recruiting, sales client/customer experiences and relationships, etc.)?

Try these approaches, and see your ability to more comfortably reach across the generations, learn and soar to new heights!

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