

# From Textbooks to Texting: Finding Solutions to Intergenerational Conflict in the Nursing Workforce

Arlene Wortsman and Amanda Crupi

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# ***Overview***

1. Context
2. Project Objectives
3. Generational Characteristics
4. Issues
5. Strategies and Solutions



# ***Context***

- 4 generations in nursing workplace
- Each generation has different values, attitudes, work habits and expectations
- Increased conflict in the workplace at a time of nursing shortages



# ***Context***

- 80% of nurses are unionized
- Present challenges for employees, managers, employers and unions
- Little research from the union perspective



# ***Project Objectives***

- To obtain a better understanding as to how generational diversity impacts the workplace including workplace behaviour, career expectations and interpersonal climate in nursing workplaces



# ***Project Objectives***

- To identify the implications of generational diversity on current and future collective bargaining and suggest strategies



# ***Research Methodology***

- Literature review
- Consultations with experts in a) managing generational diversity and b) collective bargaining
- 14 Focus groups with nurses who work in acute care, community care, long term care, home care and public health
- Web based survey of follow up questions with focus group participants ( n=175)

# ***Veterans/ Traditionalists*** ***(1925-1945)***

- Expect hierarchical workplaces, clear division of labour, clear rules
- Respectful of authority, disciplined in their work habits
- Expect to be respected,
- Do not like to be challenged
- Strong ethos of institutional loyalty



# ***Baby Boomers 1946-1964***

- Largest cohort in the nursing workforce (54%)
- Do what is asked of them without refusing
- Work long hours
- Comfortable with hierarchy, value promotions and respect titles



## ***Gen X/Nexus 1965-1980***

- entered the labour market at a time of significant hospital restructuring and large-scale layoffs of nurses.
- unable to find full-time employment
- Feel interests and needs are ignored

# ***Gen Y/Millennials***

## ***1981-2000***

- self- confident, highly educated and technologically savvy,
- value greater work flexibility, want to be challenged
- likely to change careers or professions five to eight times in their lifetime.
- assume technology will be assimilated into work practices.
- expect a collaborative team approach with constant positive reinforcement.



# ***Issues: Work Hours/ Working Conditions***

- seniority determines prime positions, assignments, creates tensions re: hours of work, full-time and part-time positions, scheduling and vacations.
- Younger nurses expect to have more control over hours of work, schedules etc.

# ***Issues: Work-Life and Well-Being***

- Millennials and Gen X want greater work-life balance and increased well-being
- Look for employers who will support this
- Expect measure in collective agreement to support this



# ***Issues: Workplace Culture***

- Want an environment that emphasizes teamwork and a collaborative approach.
- intergenerational irritants stemming from differences in professional demeanour and attire.
- Value ongoing professional and career development in many forms



# ***Communication Styles***

- different work and communications styles create tension in a workplace culture.
- Millennial and the Gen X nurses prefer technology (i.e. texting)
- the Boomer and the Veteran prefer face to face interaction, communication by paper



# ***Strategies and Solutions: Issues for bargaining***

- access to professional development and education
- opportunities for self scheduling for shifts / vacation.
- individualized medical/benefit plans.



# *Issues for bargaining*

- support for new nurses- i.e. mentorship programs
- Support for innovative workplace programs



# ***Strategies for the Union***

- Establishing Mentorship programs within the union,
- Providing longer union orientation for nurses



# ***Joint approaches for the Union and Employer***

Workshops to be developed:

- To provide training for all groups on how to communicate across generations,
- for managers on collective agreements,
- A workshop for educators, and
- Workshops on improving workplace culture.



# ***Concluding Comments***

- How to retain Boomers and Gen X'ers in the workforce and attract the Millennials.
- study points to the importance of:
  - benefit plans that are flexible, customizable and portable.
  - Comprehensive work-life quality strategies that are sensitive to multi-generational interest
  - Awareness of work expectations and styles of different groups