

Case Study for an award-winning
generational training program that sets
the foundation for *culture change*

Generation University™

Implementation at
University of the Pacific

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Designing Modern Organizations for the Future
Inspired by Millennials, Built For Generations To Come

Generation University™ One Page Case Study

What

After just eight weeks using the Generation University™ blended learning program from Invati Consulting, an overwhelming 100% of University of Pacific's participants reported improvements in productivity, engagement and working relationship, signifying an experience that went beyond training, into developing capabilities that drove measurable business impact and culture change!

The Challenge

Multiple generations in the workplace is one of the prime challenges facing organizations in this decade. Due to the high volume of generally stereotypical opinions shared on media, a negative, exclusive culture has formed in cross-generational workplaces.

Yet, very little has been done to help employees develop collaboration capabilities or to refocus the culture positively. The focus has been on content, instead of cultural change. Addressing this challenge is especially important in the university environment where the employee base spans every generation from Traditionalists, who have held long tenured positions, to Generation Z, who serve as student staff.

In evidence, one of Pacific's five strategic goals is to "Develop human capabilities and skills to meet 21st century demands" and is supported by a key initiative called Crossing Boundaries, that centers on building the bridge between students and staff. Generation University™ and Invati's client commitment to serve as a genuine partner, promised to significantly transform the organization.

In 2013, Pacific reviewed the generational distribution of their staff and faculty and found a growing average of 18% Gen Y employees. The remainder of the staff was made up of 40% Gen X, 37% Boomers, and 5% Silent generation. Two key negative business impacts emerged.

The first business impact discovered was significantly increased turnover with younger, new staff. Millennials felt shut down when ideas were voiced and that their talent was not being tapped into. Common responses from more tenured staff included "You're not saying anything new" and "Don't you think we have already thought of that idea?" As stated later by a Gen X participant from the pilot program, "I think there is a lot of prejudice against this generation [Millennials] on campus and it became really evident after I took the class and noticed certain terms and stereotypes in place in my workplace and other spaces on campus."

The second business impact was that more tenured employees had begun to observe and request training to navigate generational differences. More tenured employees saw new hires as 'kids' and not 'real staff'. Others highlighted the need to learn collaboration skills, what motivates Millennials, and how to overcome biases. It became clear that the overall staff perspective undermined a generationally inclusive atmosphere.

An example of the need as detailed by a participant follows:

"Our staff has gone through some significant leadership changes and our office now has at least 3 generations represented within it. While we are friendly to each other, we are

struggling to work effectively as a team due to various communication breakdowns/road blocks/misunderstandings.”

By early 2015, a survey reinforced these two generational challenges: for young Millennials to feel more included and hence, be retained; and for tenured managers to develop new attitudes and Millennial management skills.

In addition to discovering the business need, finding the right training program to close the gap was a challenge. L&D leaders saw that most training centered on information about generations, birth date ranges, and data-unsupported attitudes and values. A new type of training was needed: one that wasn't simply an event or content, but that was the means for a cultural shift. The goal was not to simply train people, but to develop people. While Pacific considered using existing access to Lynda.com and its generational videos, they recognized that content alone would not build long-lasting, culture-changing soft skills.

Instead, Pacific brought in Invati to solve the generational challenges that had emerged, and with the same number of training hours as a Lynda.com might deliver. The goal was to provide an effective foundation, not just informational content. Same time investment, different experience.

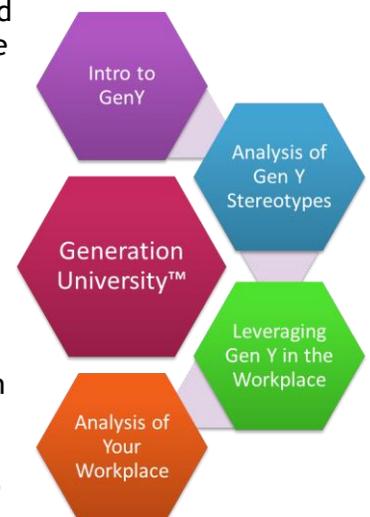
Lastly, Pacific faced two additional challenges: facilitation resources and funding approach. Both were addressed by Invati's effort to design (at Pacific's request) a blended learning package complete with live offline segments and virtual learning environment coursework. While the Lynda.com alternative required Pacific's L&D department resources to pull content, design activities and design an evaluation approach, the partnership with Invati allowed Pacific staff to focus on their core expertise of content curation and facilitation.

Cultural change is a momentous task. Partnering with an authentic expert with a unique, customizable program, was a crucial step to spark Pacific-specific culture change within the resource constraints.

The Approach

To address the complex audience's diverse needs related to working across generations, Invati implemented Generation University, a proprietary, customizable program with highly unique content, exercises, and format designed to create attitudinal and action-oriented behavioral changes. The learning strategies used include intentionally designed curricula, a virtual learning format paired with a blended learning package, a unique adult modern learning approach including social learning, and Level 3 evaluation strategies.

Through eight weeks, the sequence and content covers an approach that is unlike any other approach currently available for building an effective cross-generational culture. Each week focuses on building deep capability to meet generational challenges, instead of simply informing the participants about various generations in brief segments. Consider the standard generational training of displaying a chart of each generation birth years, formative events, and corresponding attitudes and values. Most do not know what to do with the information provided as a result. In comparison, Generation University, through careful, deep



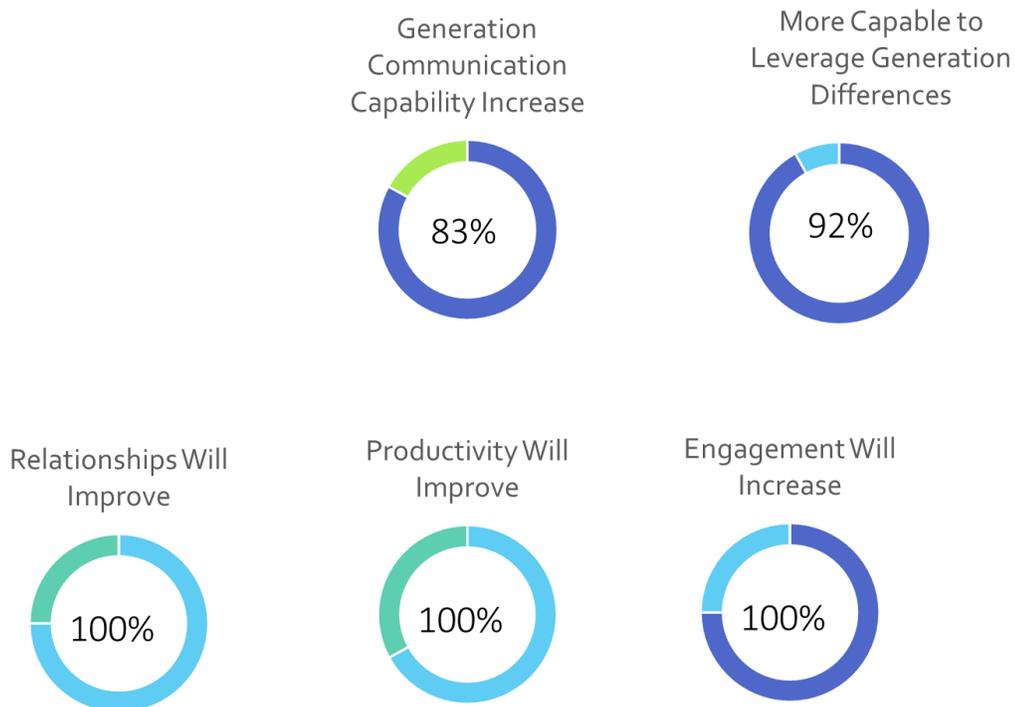
understanding of the learners and business needs, intentionally meets learners where they are at and takes them step-by-step on a journey to become more capable, inclusive employees, managers, and leaders, *regardless of generation*.

The pace and design of the program also intuitively aligns to NeuroLeadership's new learning model, AGES (Attention, Generation, Emotion, and Spacing). The ability to view content, internalize, create content, discuss with other learners, and then apply before starting the next step significantly increased training effectiveness and learner engagement.

The Outcome

The impact began with the participants, but ultimately has snowballed into their departments. They are now generational champions and have implemented significant changes across their teams. Based on this extraordinary success, expansion plans are in the works to directly impact the remainder of the staff!

The post-program evaluations reported that **100% of participants said they are more capable at working teams and managing different generations**. 92% said they are more capable to identify ways to leverage generational differences. 75% said their working relationships will significantly improve. 67% said their productivity will significantly improve. 75% said their engagement will significantly increase. 100% said there will be an improvement period in all three areas.



The final evaluation assignments were very rewarding to review. There are not many training programs, especially generational programs, that show such a high degree of internalization and impact. Consider the following evidence:

“When I see a Gen Y concentrating on their smartphone, my first thought used to be that they were playing video games or conversing with friends. Knowing now that technology plays a larger role in a Gen Y’s life than my own Boomer life, I recognize that such technology helps a Gen Y participate and communicate at work.”

“As a millennial, this course has opened my eyes to how some of my co-workers may view me. Now that I am aware of it, I feel better equipped to handle their needs.”

“I will define the different modes of business communication available. For example, discuss when texting is an appropriate mode of communication. When change is directed, try to include as many generational stakeholders as is reasonably possible. For new Gen Y employees, include as part of the on-boarding process, a startup mentor from a different generation.”

“From the course work, I have learned that many of the assumptions our society makes about generations are based on fiction, not facts. Instead, people are likely to act the way they do because of environmental factors. For this reason, it is important that we know persons on an individual level instead of relying on stereotypes.”

As is evident from this small slice of feedback, personal action plans spanned a wide variety of generational interactions, from day-to-day communication to change management. In addition, attitudinal changes shared were in many cases, showcasing a complete transformation from the starting point of the program.

Finally, we did a check in with participants one year later. **100% of respondents indicated that they had followed through on their behavioral and attitudinal commitments made.** There has been a clear impact to productivity and engagement as is evidenced by the following examples:

“I have definitely reached out to my co-workers on more projects. For example, I have been working with a graphic designer from ASUOP (Gen Y) for all of my graphic design. I’ve been working with the Alumni House Events Coordinator (Boomer) for wine and food pairings assistance when I’m working with caterers. This has saved me A LOT of time and energy that I can focus on other aspects that I’m better suited for or are a higher priority.” - A Usually Independent Gen Xer

“I have improved my relationship with our Executive Director. In the past, we clashed like oil and water regularly. So, learning more about each of our generations in the class directly impacted how I’m able to relate to her and I think she is also more open to my point of view because I changed my communication style based on what I learned about Boomers.”

“While trying to explain to a slightly older coworker in a different generation how to improve their reconciliations by using simple formulas in excel, I could feel the relief and excitement with my new style. Everyone works differently and the generation university course helped me to understand just how important it is to be open and understanding of other generations.”

The partnership between Invati and Pacific to implement Generation University™ surpassed the initial goals of creating an environment that retained, managed, and included Millennials. It addressed a controversial topic and helped participants acknowledge and leverage

generational differences. The program helped manage discussion and exploration of unspoken rules in a safe way. The program allowed people to spark learning in non-participants and have an on-going community. Furthermore, the program developed capability, not just for managing generations, but diversity in general.

The program and partnership was a complete success in transforming from informing through training content to building capability and positive culture change!