



## The Multigenerational Workplace: How Millennials and Gen Z Are Shifting Office Culture



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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**MAY 26**  
Regional Policy Meeting  
DES MOINES

**JUNE 2-4**  
Taking Care of Business  
Conference  
CORALVILLE & IOWA CITY

**JUNE 2**  
Leadership Iowa Graduation  
IOWA CITY

**JUNE 3**  
Coolest Thing Made in Iowa  
Announcement  
CORALVILLE

**JULY 19-23**  
Business Horizons  
DES MOINES

**AUGUST 2-6**  
Leadership Iowa University  
DES MOINES

**AUGUST 4-5**  
Executive Forum  
OKOBOJI

**AUGUST 24**  
Golf Classic  
WEST DES MOINES

Visit [www.iowaabi.org](http://www.iowaabi.org) and click the "Events" tab for details on upcoming events.

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Visit our newest members' websites, and see how their products and services can benefit you.

Communication Innovators | [www.gotoci.com](http://www.gotoci.com)

First National Bank | [www.fnb247.com](http://www.fnb247.com)

Iowa Brewers Guild | [www.iowabeer.org](http://www.iowabeer.org)

Learn more about how ABI membership could benefit your company by visiting [www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi](http://www.iowaabi.org/membership/why-abi).

FROM THE CHAIR:

# Grateful for the Team

As my term as ABI Board Chair comes to a close, I've spent time reflecting on the experiences, conversations, and partnerships that have defined this past year. What stands out most is something I've said often throughout my time as chair: business is a team sport.

No one organization, leader, or industry succeeds alone. The strength of Iowa's business community comes from the willingness of people to engage, collaborate, and work toward something bigger than themselves. Over the past year, I've seen that spirit firsthand through ABI members who continually step up to share ideas, advocate for progress, support one another, and invest in the future of our state.

Serving as chair has given me an even deeper appreciation for the role

ABI plays in bringing people together and elevating Iowa industry. One example that stands out is the work ABI continues to do to promote manufacturing careers and showcase the companies driving Iowa's economy forward. From the Elevate Iowa Manufacturing Tour to the Iowa Manufacturing Conference, this year's efforts created opportunities to connect students, educators, policy-makers, and business leaders with the incredible innovation and career pathways available in manufacturing today. Those initiatives are helping build awareness, pride, and momentum for the future of Iowa's workforce.

I'm especially grateful to the ABI staff and Board of Directors for their dedication and leadership throughout the year. Their commitment to serving members

and advancing Iowa's business climate is evident in everything they do.

This year also marked the beginning of ABI and the ABI Foundation's strategic planning process — a forward-looking effort that will help guide the organization's priorities and impact in the years ahead. I'm excited about the direction ABI is heading and confident the organization will continue to evolve alongside the needs of Iowa employers.

Most of all, thank you to the members. Thank you for your engagement, your leadership, and your belief in the value of coming together as a business community. It has been a privilege to serve as your chair.

I look forward to continuing to support ABI and cheering on its success in the years ahead. **ABI**



**Kellan Longenecker**  
ABI Chair  
General Mills

## Thank you, Kellan for your time, leadership and dedication to ABI.



## CAPITOL BUSINESS:

# Cast Your Ballot in the June Primary Election

It may seem hard to believe, but we are just a few weeks away from Iowa's Primary Election, which will take place on Tuesday, June 2. There are numerous nominating contests on the ballot, which include County Offices, State Representative, State Senator, U.S. Senate, U.S. House, Governor, Secretary of Agriculture, Attorney General, State Treasurer, State Auditor and Secretary of State. The outcome of those races will determine who the Democrat and Republican nominees are for the November General Election.

2026 will be an extraordinarily important election cycle as we have an open Governor's race for the first time in 20 years. We have an open U.S. Senate race for the first time in 12 years. This is the first time since 1968 that both a U.S. Senate race and the Governor's race are open simultaneously. There are also 100 Iowa House and 25 Iowa Senate seats up for grabs

along with four U.S. House races, three of which are expected to be very competitive.

### There are some key things you should be aware of as you get prepared to vote.

- Iowa is a closed primary state, which means you must be a registered Democrat to vote in the Democrat primary and a registered Republican to vote in the Republican primary. Registered Independents cannot vote in the primary.
- Wednesday, May 13 was the first day you may utilize an absentee ballot to vote. You can find more specific information on this here - <https://voterready.iowa.gov/voting-absentee/>

- You need to be officially registered to vote in Iowa elections. More information is in the link - <https://voterready.iowa.gov/registerstovote/>

ABI will have election resources available as we get closer to the Primary and then once the General Election nears in November. ABI strongly encourages you to be engaged in the civic process as it's critical to cast your vote for pro-growth candidates up and down the ballot in June and also in November. Vote for candidates who are prioritizing economic growth and want to make Iowa a better place for business. **ABI**



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Contact Brad Hartkopf ([bhartkopf@iowaabi.org](mailto:bhartkopf@iowaabi.org)) if you have any questions about the June Primary.

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# The Multigenerational Workplace: How Millennials and Gen Z Are Shifting Office Culture

BY CHELSEA KEENAN PRIEST



With multiple generations now working side by side — including Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z — companies are being forced to rethink traditional workplace norms. Millennials and Gen Z workers now make up the majority of the labor force, which means workplace culture is evolving rapidly.

“Those two generations are really changing conversations around leadership, culture and benefits,” said Michele Farrell, chief revenue officer for Connectify HR. The Des Moines-based professional employer organization works with small- to mid-sized companies to manage payroll, taxes, employee benefits, HR technology, compliance and risk management. “It’s not work-life balance they’re looking for. It’s work-life integration.”

According to U.S. Department of Labor statistics, Millennials and Gen X continue to make up the largest portion of the workforce, comprising 36% and 31%, respectively. This has remained consistent over the past several years. However, fewer and fewer Baby Boomers are remaining in the workforce while the portion of Gen Z workers continues to grow.

Baby Boomers, which made up 25% of the work-

force in 2018, only accounted for 15% in 2024. Gen Z, meanwhile, surpassed Baby Boomers for the first time, making up 18% or almost one-fifth of the total workforce that year.

Millennials and Gen Z entered the workforce during extreme digital expansion, globalization, and social change. This has resulted in younger generations prioritizing flexibility, meaningful work, mental health and opportunities for personal growth, said Melissa Ness, CEO and president of Connectify HR.

“Employers need to meet employees where they’re at,” Ms. Ness said. “Leaders of our organizations are responsible for that. It’s as simple as talking to employees and asking what’s important to them.”

Something as simple as asking employees during one-on-one conversations and conducting a survey can go a long way, she added.

“At our company, people feel seen and loved if there’s a lot of cold Diet Coke in the fridge,” she said. “They also want to work at home more than the office. If outcomes are met and clients are happy, we’re OK with that. You can find the most simple and easy things.”

The COVID-19 pandemic also brought about dra-

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matic changes in workers' attitudes toward remote work. Professional, scientific, and technical services, information, finance and insurance, and management of companies and enterprises had more than 39% of their workforce working remotely in 2021 compared with less than 17% in 2019, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Younger workers now expect employers to provide flexible schedules, remote work opportunities and better integration between professional and personal life.

"Some organizations will say 'We can't do that' (remote work)," Ms. Ness said. "I think it's more about focusing on what you can do – could it be starting at a different time, ending at a different time, flexing more for kids appointments and activities or caring for aging parents? It doesn't have to be the same for every organization."

Younger generations are also more interested in emotional well-being, experts said — things like mental health benefits, wellness programs, flexible time off and supportive management practices are becoming more and more important.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) have also become a huge selling point, Ms. Farrell said. EAPs can provide employees help around work-related stress, mental well-being and even financial stress, she explained. What's more, employers can see if EAPs are being used but not who is using them – so it's important that employees are educated on how the benefit works.

Other fringe benefits like no-meeting Fridays or four-day work weeks during the summer can also be hugely successful. It's all about being creative, Ms. Ness said.

"Even as I've been interviewing people for sales roles at Connectify, some of these 'perks' have become almost as important as compensation," Ms. Farrell said. "Culture and flexibility — people will take a little less pay if they can get that." ABI

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## ABI FOUNDATION:

# Generation Z, Workplace Culture, and the Power of Early Career Exposure

Generation Z is often described as the work-life balance generation. They value flexibility, purpose, and the ability to build a life that aligns with their goals.

Some view this mindset as a challenge for employers. In reality, it represents a powerful opportunity.

Gen Z does not see work as the ultimate goal of adulthood. Instead, they see work as a tool to create the life they want. When young people can connect effort with opportunity, they become more motivated to develop the skills needed to succeed.

This shift is not just changing how young people approach careers. It is reshaping what they expect from the workplace itself.

Today's emerging workforce is looking for environments that prioritize:

- **Flexibility** in how and where work gets done
- **Clear purpose** and understanding of how their work contributes to something bigger
- **Growth and development**, not just a job
- **Authentic leadership and communication**

- **Inclusive and supportive cultures** where they feel valued early on

For businesses, this means culture can no longer be static. Companies that want to attract and retain Gen Z talent must intentionally evolve. This includes creating pathways for advancement, encouraging continuous learning, offering mentorship, and building workplaces where employees feel connected to both their work and their future.

One of the most effective ways to begin building this connection is through early exposure to the workplace.

This is where work-based learning plays a crucial role.

When students experience the workplace early, they begin to understand how professional skills translate into real opportunities. They see how:

- Communication leads to leadership
- Adaptability leads to advancement
- Collaboration leads to innovation

At the same time, businesses gain valuable insight into the next generation. They learn what motivates young people, how they think, and what kind of

environments help them thrive. Early engagement allows employers to begin shaping a culture that resonates with future talent — before those students even enter the workforce full-time.

These insights help students make informed decisions about their education and career pathways long before graduation, while also helping employers build stronger, more future-ready organizations.

In Iowa, more schools are embracing this approach. Participation in work-based learning continues to grow across the state, reflecting a strong commitment to preparing students for both careers and postsecondary education.

ABI is proud to partner with iJAG (Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates) and Kuder through our iJAG Connect program to support work-based learning. We invite businesses to speak to a classroom, host a job shadow, offer an internship, or mentor a student.

When employers engage in work-based learning, they help shape the talent they need — and strengthen Iowa's future. Learn more: <https://www.iowaabi.org/elevate-iowa/get-involved/> ABI



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## WHAT'S TRENDING:

# Leading the Multigenerational Workforce

Regardless of where you live and what industry to work in, we are all experiencing a dramatic generational shift in today's workplace, which is growing older and younger at the same time.

Each generation is entering a transformational moment in its career. Today, Baby Boomers, born between 1945 and 1964, are moving into retirement. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, are taking over leadership roles. Millennials, born between 1981 and 1995, have become the largest workforce demographic, and Generation Z, born 1996-2012, is beginning its professional journey.

Significant benefits for employers of a multigenerational workforce include the following:

- **Multiple perspectives** – Different generations can have distinctive ways of viewing job responsibilities and completing job duties.
- **Learning/mentoring opportunities** – The more diverse a team is, the

more ways people have to interact and learn from each other's insights. Those with more experience can advise younger employees and those more junior employees can educate mature workers on current trends and technology.

- **Knowledge transfer and retention** – The awareness and strengths that each generation offers better prepare the business to meet its future leadership needs.

Along with the benefits of a multigenerational workforce comes workforce challenges including:

- **Communication issues** – There are differences in preferred communication styles and interpretation of tone between generations. Boomers prefer in person where Gen Z'ers prefer electronic.
- **Negative stereotypes** – As with any type of diversity, people have

preconceived notions about those in a different age group.

How do employers bridge the gap between generations in the workforce? Here are some important practices for leading a multigenerational workforce:

- ✓ **Audit your inclusive hiring practices** – strive to eliminate age bias when recruiting.
- ✓ **Cater to different communication styles** – ensure the same information is accessible to everyone.
- ✓ **Clarify and reiterate expectations** – a common purpose unites people and minimizes differences.
- ✓ **Accommodate diverse working styles and needs.**
- ✓ **Nurture an inclusive environment at work.**

Leveraging the age-related differences among your workforce provides a sound talent pipeline to support the sustainability of your business.



**Danielle Smid**

Member  
BrownWinick Law

**EXPERT ADVICE:**

# The Next Generation Workplace: Evolving Culture for a Changing Workforce

Workplace culture is often described as “how we do things here,” but employees experience culture through systems that affect them every day – pay, benefits, flexibility, and opportunity. As expectations evolve, total rewards have become one of the most visible ways organizations signal what they value effectively.

Globalization, technological change, remote work and return-to-office initiatives have reshaped how employees define an attractive workplace. For upper-middle market companies competing for skilled talent, culture is no longer defined solely by purpose statements or flexibility policies, but by how intentionally compensation and benefits programs are designed and communicated. In practice, these programs often communicate culture more clearly than mission statements.

Historically, compensation plans aligned performance with long-term value creation, reinforcing desired behaviors. Increasingly, companies use incentives and benefits to support priorities such as employee well-being, charitable

involvement, continuing education, and peer recognition. At the same time, organizations use compensation structures to reinforce expectations around technology adoption, remote work norms, and in-office requirements. Together, these choices signal what the organization measures, rewards, and consistently invests in.

From a tax perspective, these arrangements require attention to exemption rules, timing, reporting obligations, and employee experience. Remote and hybrid work models can create differing tax outcomes based on employee location, influencing perceptions of fairness and trust. For taxable benefits, employers may choose to cover employees’ tax obligations so benefits are delivered on a net basis regardless of where work is performed. Clear communication and thoughtful tax planning can reinforce trust while reducing compliance risk.

Beyond base pay, benefits programs have become a cultural differentiator. Organizations are expanding offerings related to wellness, caregiving support, student loan assistance, and financial

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planning. The scope and consistency of these benefits influence engagement, retention, and perceptions of equity.

Many emerging benefits also carry unique tax considerations as temporary relief measures expire and new fringe benefits emerge. While tax is not traditionally viewed as a culture driver, it

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increasingly shapes recruiting, mobility, compensation design, and employee confidence.

Organizations that collaborate across HR, finance, and tax functions are best positioned to design compensation and benefits programs that guide and support company culture.



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