



# INTERGENERATIONAL DIVES

By *Daniela Campos*

The promotion of intergenerational practices and laboratories was strongly on the agenda of companies. With the increase in productive longevity, the fact that we have baby boomers and professionals from generations X, Y and Z sharing the work environment caught the attention of organizations. In addition, as it is known that intergenerational environments are more innovative, productive and creative, the race to make relationships stand has intensified.

Despite seeing a great opportunity there, much of what I have seen is not working. Forming teams with different age groups does not mean sharing knowledge. Promoting workshops does not change the way people interact on a daily basis. Creating junior and senior

positions does not guarantee an inclusive environment. To really transform and take advantage of the reach that this diversity can represent socially and economically, a deeper dive and a more comprehensive action are needed. But before we dive in, I'd like to deconstruct the concept of generations.

I do not rule out that there is much scientific basis for defining generational intervals and correlating their characteristics, but can we really look at an age group as a single mass of identical behaviors and tastes? There will always be what they have in common, but also what makes them different.

Does a 25-year-old millennial have the same behaviors as those who have just turned 40? Do people from economically antagonistic countries or realities have

the same yearnings just because they are the same age? It is necessary to remember that the social and historical context are fundamental markers of the construction of generations in each society.

To generalize is to stereotype, and stereotypes make relationships difficult. By sorting groups by age (or by hierarchy, place, or any other indicator) we separate people, and then need to create programs to connect them back together. Before coexistence between generations, we are talking about coexistence between people.

With that said, let's get back to our dive. Consistent intergenerational programs need to go beyond specific actions and analyze the context, reflect the culture and focus on knowledge.

## CONTEXT

The first step is to map the company's degree of ageism, with internal surveys and measurement of factors such as investments in professional qualification, admission and dismissal policies, equity in promotion opportunities, decision-making process and presence of intergenerational teams.

The term ageism, it is worth remembering, although commonly related to the elderly, refers to prejudice against any age, which is why it is important to analyze how the company relates to different age groups, especially with two groups, which I call the "too young to age" and "too old for", both often at a disadvantage in the workplace, according to a report released by the UN (United Nations Organizations) in Geneva, 2021.

Once these diagnoses are made, the second step is to plan the transformation.

## CULTURE

I always say that in order to transform, change needs to be lived more than thought. And, for that, the discourse often needs to revisit the practices and what the examples communicate, because the contradiction between guideline and action buries any possibility of success of programs like this. There is no point in setting up an intergenerational laboratory if the messages passed on day by day are that there is less recognition, opportunities and investments in the development of older people. Or, on the other hand, that there is less information sharing strategic and decision-making with younger teams.

Many of the contemporary themes of equity are dealt with in superficially, with specific actions or an endo(marketing) campaign. To transform, you need consistency. Culture must be the mirror that reflects the experience of intergenerational teams with projects in common, in a space for conviviality and appreciation of diverse knowledge, where ownership and sharing are two sides of the same coin.

## KNOWLEDGE

Intergenerational programs must have knowledge as their central axis, not

generations, because what each person can add is not determined in their IDs. Ideas spring from repertoires, so the more diversified, better. We need the knowledge that underlies the pillars of organizational knowledge combined with others that help project the future, in a continuous and fluid overlapping of times, where everyone feels visible and belonging.

The generational issue can be addressed with the aim of deconstructing stereotypes, since prejudice is fought with information, but once this stage is overcome, it will be people who learn about people, learn from people, and teach for people. What unites them? The presence of common interests and complementary knowledge, to be shared in an environment that promotes mutual trust, respect and collaboration,

connecting each other in a genuine relationship that sees exchange as a learning possibility, fostering a process of co-education and bonding.



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