



Belonging and Excellence for All (BE4ALL) is a joint effort by SMART, SMACNA, and the ITI to create an industry-wide culture where everyone is welcome and belongs, including those from historically underrepresented groups, and where we all strive for the highest standards of performance and professionalism, resulting in a thriving unionized sheet metal industry that affirms the dignity and worth of us all. These Toolbox Talks are in support of this mission.

BE4ALL Toolbox Talk Embracing Generational Diversity

An age diverse team is one that is made up of people spanning many different generations. Generations are usually separated by periods of history that were characterized by distinct or significant events and developments. These collective experiences within a generation naturally lead to people of a certain age sharing general behaviors, opinions, and beliefs. Sometimes this can cause misunderstandings and tension when people of different generations interact, especially when it is due to preconceived notions about the other generations' work style, abilities, and values. Learning to overcome these differences will allow for greater cohesion and an increased level of respect among members and co-workers. **Bridging generational gaps will bring out each team member's different strengths by bringing together everyone's complementary abilities, skills, and information - which makes a team stronger.**

How can you be part of bridging the gap?

- **The first and most important step is to increase your understanding and empathy towards other generations.** If you don't know why someone acts and thinks the way they do, you are more likely to get frustrated when you don't align. Consider learning about the different generations and the eras they have lived through. This can help you understand the experiences that shaped them and what their motivations may be. Here is a brief overview of the generations you may encounter in your workplace:



- **Avoid making assumptions or playing into stereotypes.** You have heard the negative stereotypes before – that certain generations are set in their ways, don't understand technology, need "participation trophies", or are lazy/don't want to work. Discriminating against others based on their age undermines collaboration, trust, and respect. Challenge these assumptions by seeking out the things you have in common with other generations – for example, everyone wants to return home safely from the jobsite and be treated with respect. You might find that people are far more adaptable and capable than you have been led to believe if you open your mind and are willing to listen to ideas that are different than yours.
- **Think of ways that you can connect with your coworkers of a different generation.** One way is to forge a mentor/mentee relationship. Younger generations can learn from the lifelong experiences of older generations; meanwhile people of older generations can be given a new outlook on how things can be done when a younger person helps change their perspective. Interacting with people who are different from us is beneficial in many ways. See the next page for our "Conversation Toolkit" and challenge yourself to use one of the ice breakers to start a conversation with someone new!



Welcome everyone as they are and embrace individual strengths to open the doors to success.

Multi-generational teams have many advantages, which we can get the most out of when we make an effort to connect with fellow members from different generations. We will also find that we often have more in common than not.

Conversation Toolkit



- What got you into the trade?
- What is your favorite hobby?
- What are your future career goals?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- What was your most memorable job or project?
- What is your biggest motivation in life and/or work?

Staff Conversation & Notes:

Name one common trait that you admire in the generation either directly before or after your own:

What is one thing that workers of all generations have in common?



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