Managing the Intergenerational Nursing Team

K. Lynn Wieck, PhD, RN, FAAN
Kimberly D. Moss, PhD, RN

Managing the Intergenerational Nursing Team is the nurse leader’s go-to source for understanding and managing nursing teams that include baby boomer, Generation X, and millennial members. You will find everything you need to know about the motivations, perspectives, and values of your diverse staff.

Written by nurses representing the baby boomer and millennial perspectives, and thoroughly vetted by nurses representing Gen X, this lively guide provides an engaging resource packed with action plans, advice, and strategies for defusing intergenerational tension and improving communication and engagement. Chapters address dozens of generational values and priorities, providing each generation’s perspective and offering nurse leaders keen insight into all the people they manage, regardless of age.

Each of the core chapters opens with a scenario as it would be interpreted by staff from the emerging workforce (Gen X and millennials) versus the aging workforce (baby boomers). This helpful workplace context makes it easy to apply the advice presented to the real-life nursing environment.

About the Authors

K. Lynn Wieck, PhD, RN, FAAN, is a professor of nursing at the University of Texas at Tyler with more than 40 years of experience in nursing administration and education. She has conducted research and been a national speaker on managing the intergenerational nursing workforce since the mid-90s.

Kimberly D. Moss, PhD, RN, is a clinical educator at Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center in New Mexico, where she leads staff development initiatives and collaborates to bring innovation to nursing administration. Her doctoral research focused on cohesion among intergenerational nurse educator teams, and one of her goals is to expose and eliminate harassment and abuse of nurses. In this book, she brings the millennial perspective to the development of contemporary nursing leadership solutions.
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Book Resources
Educational Objectives

1. Differentiate between the three generations in the workplace with regard to how to manage for success.
2. Refocus the generational differences to take advantage of the strengths of each group.
3. Distinguish how the manager can use specific generational strengths to build the confidence of the newest nurses in the workplace.
4. Understand that each generation has different needs for a motivating workplace.
5. Understand how feelings about change can promote or inhibit the nurse manager’s ability to introduce new processes into the unit.
6. Identify the nurse manager’s role in gaining technology acceptance from all generations.
7. Apply the generational views of social media to the nursing workplace.
8. Identify the most likely privacy problems the nurse manager will encounter in managing the intergenerational staff.
10. Identify why the nurse manager has difficulty building trust between generations.
11. Discuss the complexity of fairness as applied to groups with different perceptions.
12. Recognize how the manager can have an impact on generational expectations of job satisfaction.
13. Differentiate between older and younger nurses' views of what it means to be reliable.
14. Identify threats to nursing focus over which the nurse manager has some control.
15. Explain the importance of various staff learning styles to tailor professional development opportunities.
16. Identify health perspectives relating to each generation.
17. Describe aspects of professionalism as they pertain to care delivered by three generations of nurses.
18. Discuss the value of effective recognition techniques.
19. Differentiate between different leadership styles to fit the needs of a diverse workforce.
20. Define the manager's role in ensuring competence of all generations on the unit.
21. Explain varying generational perspectives to diversity, tolerance, and acceptance in the workplace.
22. Differentiate between the generations’ approaches to respect.
23. Recognize the implications of loyalty in forming an intergenerational team.
24. Appreciate the importance of appropriate communication across groups.
25. Describe the varying points of view concerning conflict among staff in the workplace.
26. Apply the generational views of rules to the nursing workplace.
27. Identify appropriate management approaches to discipline as it relates to a multigenerational workforce.
28. Differentiate between the values of experience and seniority among the three generations in the workplace.
29. Distinguish among the opposing perspectives of collegiality as it applies to the nursing workplace.
30. Appreciate the methods with which each generation approaches the concept of teamwork.
For my favorite Gen Xers: Joe and Tehra Orr Wieck, Scott Wieck and Haydée Moreno, Doug and Anissa Gonzales Wieck. You have been my harshest critics and biggest supporters. Thanks. K LW

To nurse managers devoted to serving their patients and sustaining the nursing profession. And to my team: my husband, Mike, and my little Gen Z’s, Brooks and Camryn, who give my life wonderful purpose. K DM
We wish to thank Claudette Moore from HCPro for her help and guidance during this project. She had to remind us how to communicate with real people, and we are grateful and relieved. Her input made this book more fun to read. We are also grateful to Michelle Clarke, who got this project started in the first place.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the reviewers who helped us smooth out the rough edges: Angelle Hays Rhemann, MSN, Joe Wieck, MME, and Jean Dols, PhD.

We also thank the numerous nurses of all ages who have participated in our research efforts over the past 15 years and provided the anecdotes and experiences that are the basis for this book. Their lived experiences brought this book to life.
About the Authors

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K. Lynn Wieck, PhD, RN, FAAN, is a Professor of Nursing at the University of Texas at Tyler where she was a founding member of the online nursing PhD program. She has more than 40 years of experience in nursing administration and nursing education. Dr. Wieck is a nurse consultant for health policy and workforce issues relating to the generational needs of nurses, which is her research area. She has conducted research and been a national speaker on managing the intergenerational nursing workforce since the mid-90s.

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Kimberly Moss, PhD, RN

Kimberly Moss, PhD, RN, is a Clinical Educator at Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center in New Mexico where she leads staff development initiatives and collaborates to bring innovation to nursing administration. She has nine years of nursing experience in the acute care setting, including at the nurse manager level, and has also served as academic faculty. Her doctoral research focused on cohesion among intergenerational nurse educator teams, and one of her goals is to expose and eliminate harassment and abuse of nurses. In this book, she brings the Millennial perspective to the development of contemporary nursing leadership solutions.

Dr. Moss supports her active duty husband in his service with the U.S. Air Force and has studied international nursing issues while living in Pyeongtaek, South Korea. Currently, she enjoys exploring the New Mexican desert with her family, who shares her passion for wellness and outdoor adventure.
Introduction

The manager’s job has gotten more complicated over the past few decades. Managing three generations with different and often competing values and goals puts the manager at a real disadvantage. No one knows that more clearly than you do.

No matter what your age, it is a sure bet that you will never have been a member of at least two of the generations you will now be managing, leading, and guiding. How do you gain insight to be a better manager of people whose background and upbringing are so different from yours? You read books like this one, you talk to members of the other generations, and you learn as you go along.

Any book that offers descriptions and characteristics of a group runs the risk of being seen as stereotyping or limiting the group of interest. No matter what trait we describe for a member of any generation, the chances are very good that you will immediately say, “Wait, _____ is in that generation, and that trait does not fit her at all.” We agree. The generational traits described in this book have come from years of study by psychologists, human resources specialists, nurses, and others who have found similarities among generational cohorts. We freely and openly acknowledge that many persons in each generation will not fit every trait.

A lot of people, especially those at the beginning or end of a generational cohort, will swear they have more in common with a different generation or belong to two generations. We do not intend to pigeonhole or limit any single person or group or generation by using general traits. The generational characteristics simply give us a way to discuss the groups with an eye on capitalizing on their strengths and making their work experience more satisfactory and fulfilling. We apologize for any trait that does not describe your generation correctly, and we acknowledge that we probably missed a few of your better traits.

This book is focused on helping the manager bring out the best in staff members, no matter what generation they occupy. What makes us experts, you might ask. I am an expert on the Baby Boomer
Introduction

generation because I have been one for over sixty years. My co-author, Kimberly, is an expert on the Millennial generation because she is a member in good standing of that group. Both of us are RNs, and both of us have experience as nurse managers and as nurse researchers in the area of generational differences in the workplace.

In addition, we had two excellent Gen Xers review our content and tell us how wrong we were about almost everything we said about them—they, too, are a credit to their generation. One of them is a nurse manager and the other is a mechanical engineer who helped add a balanced perspective. So we have made a good-faith effort to provide you with accurate information.

We did not invent generations, and we owe a great debt to those generational researchers and authors who have gone before us and provided so much information. We have tried to keep references to a minimum, and they are found at the end of each chapter. Everything in this book is based on our experiences, readings, and research; if anything is wrong, you may blame our two Gen X consultants.

This morning while I was making my latté, I dropped a piece of bread in the toaster as I was grinding the coffee beans with my left hand and refilling the water reservoir on the machine with my right hand. Let’s just say that no matter what you are told or what you read in this book, multitasking is a gift, and not everyone has it. That is why we had two authors from both ends of the age spectrum plus consultants from those in the middle to develop this book.

Please use the examples provided to see how you might defuse generational tension and bring out the best in your staff. Use the generational perspectives to help you understand how your staff members in that age cohort might be looking at a situation. Use the action plans as strategies that might work for you to lighten your managerial load. And use the strengths chapter as a source of positive ways to bring out the best in every generation.

This book is built on the experiences and input of numerous nurses who have participated in our research efforts over the past fifteen years and provided anecdotes and ideas which are the basis for this project. Their lived experiences brought this book to life. Our wish is that your consideration of the generational differences in your nursing team will help you manage with confidence and recapture the joy of successful leadership.

*K. Lynn Wieck and Kimberly D. Moss*
Part One

A Foundation of Understanding
Chapter 1

Meet the Generations

Learning Objective

After reading this chapter, the learner will be able to differentiate between the three generations in the workplace with regard to how to manage for success.

A huge part of your time and energy goes into understanding and leading your generationally blended work team. A generation is a group identified by age parameters who have similar life events and common characteristics, traits, and values. In this chapter, we’ll introduce you to the three largest generations: the Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000), the Gen Xers (born between 1965 and 1979), and the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964). Chances are you have some of each on your staff.

Economic factors have forced many nurses to remain in the workforce longer than they anticipated; as a result, these three very different generations actively participate in the nursing workplace at the same time. But who are they, and what do they need from their managers? Learning what makes each generation “tick” will help you manage this diverse workplace environment, increase productivity and satisfaction in your staff, and maintain your sanity and happy outlook on life.

A word of caution: Anytime you talk about a group in general, you are asking for trouble. In any given group, no one will have all the traits, and some folks will have none of the traits. Almost everyone thinks that the flattering traits accurately describe them and the less-than-flattering traits are obviously a mistake. We acknowledge up front that these descriptions are general and are not meant to promote generational stereotyping, but they do provide mental images that can help you understand the needs and expectations of staff of all ages.
We also want to point out that there are no firm boundaries between the age groups, and many of us demonstrate the values of more than one generation. Likewise, many things influence how we form values, so it’s best to approach each of your staff members as distinct individuals who happen to be members of a generation. Our goal is not to pigeon-hole anyone with these generalizations but to provide a starting place for managers to understand generational diversity and implications for the workplace. So, let’s meet the generations.

**Millennials**

Millennials are the youngest group in today’s workplace. Also called the “Nexters,” “Millennial,” or the “Net Generation,” Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) are the largest age cohort in history, with more than 75 million members. They comprise the majority of the incoming workforce and are confident, curious, technologically savvy individuals.

Because they grew up in the age of computers, cell phones, and the Internet, Millennials expect instant feedback in the workplace and may become frustrated with communication delays. Communication with this group is most effective via instant message, social network, email, or chat room. You’ll often see them texting on their cell phones at the ticket counter and consulting a device to set a dinner date. They love their gadgets.

Millennials also love their grandparents and have great respect for the older generation. In fact, they have been compared to the over-70-year-old generation in terms of their family values and work ethic. They work well in teams, which is a real plus for a team-based nursing unit. We have all heard how they spent their youth shielded from a chaotic and dangerous world by having most of their formative experiences in groups with other people. They enjoy strong peer relationships and take a collaborative approach to their work. They want to contribute to your team.

One of the primary goals of Millennials is to make a difference in this world. They have a global conscience and want to do something important and good with their lives. To accomplish great things, they demand extensive training, direction, and step-by-step guidance via mentorship and coaching. They value the knowledge of older, more experienced nurses and are eager to get help to reinforce their ability to contribute. Internships and formalized clinical coaching and mentoring programs are highly valued by this generation.

Millennials will give a lot, but they expect a lot in return. They value personal feedback and want to be told often how well they are doing and what they can do to be better. They crave opportunities for self-development and evidence of increased competence, like certifications. Millennials are an empowered generation and expect to contribute quickly to the success of their workgroup. They are impatient when they feel they are not making progress, so you will need to work to make them feel important and challenged. A study of nurses from 843 hospitals found the highest levels of agitation, burnout, and attrition from staff nurse positions were reported by nurses under the age of 30 (Erickson & Grove, 2008).
Millennial nurses make a strong emotional commitment to their work, so they’re susceptible to a high degree of emotional stress that reportedly drains their inner resources. Feeling tired and emotionally spent may even infringe on their leisure time. They want balance between work and home life, so work that upsets that balance will not be tolerated for very long. They will either resign and move to a different hospital or they will leave nursing altogether. To combat burnout and to promote nurse retention of this group, you might consider pairing novice nurses with nurses more experienced in coping with emotional demands in the workplace. This may boost the professional resilience of Millennial staff nurses.

Millennials are one of the most optimistic and happy generations in history. They will work hard, but they want to be treated well. Their parents spent their childhood telling them they were special, and the Millennials believed them. Now they come into the workplace knowing they are special and expecting to be treated that way. Ignoring their need for attention is a mistake, because if they do not get it from you, they will find someone who understands them. Yes, it takes a bit more time, but in return you are getting an optimistic, eager young nurse who wants to save the world. Take advantage of their enthusiasm by attending to their needs for attention and feedback. It is a small investment that will pay huge dividends.

**Generation X**

Generation X is the next generation of interest. They have gotten pretty negative press throughout their lives, most of it undeserved. The “Whatever!” generation, they were given the name Gen X because they were characterized as just not caring about what people thought about them. They have grown into a highly productive, creative generation that will make significant contributions to your work team and your hospital, as long as it’s on their terms.

Your Generation X team members are the self-confident, nonconformists that Baby Boomers wanted to be. Those hailing from entrepreneurial Generation X (1960 to 1979) are regarded as innovative, creative, and highly independent, with a tendency to challenge authority. They were the latch-key kids who walked themselves home while their parents worked late; subsequently, they lost interest in a life dominated by work as its own reward. They unabashedly and consistently require a balance of work and play. Even though hospitals are serious places where life-and-death dramas play out daily, the Xers will be unimpressed if you try to negate their need for balance in their lives. When they work, they work hard; but when they rest and play, they are uncompromising.

As the result of growing up during the age of rampant divorce and recurrent corporate layoffs, this group values self-reliance and is less loyal to an organization than previous generational cohorts. They prefer peer-to-peer coaching in the workplace and thrive under leadership styles that allow them as much autonomy as possible. Their contemporaries are Bill Gates and other tech billionaires, so they value entrepreneurship and see starting their own business as a viable option if working for you does not meet their needs.
This cohort believes in being recognized for the contributions they make, not how long they have been employed. They value raises and reward based on merit, not seniority. They appreciate and expect swift advancement toward personal and career goals. Though Gen Xers can communicate effectively using written or face-to-face methods, they prefer communication styles that utilize technology. They will be your go-to people for new projects, but they expect their input to be valued, by both recognition and compensation.

Priorities of this highly independent cohort include having a clear view of the desired outcome and receiving acknowledgment for their contributions to achieve that outcome. They have little tolerance for the process; therefore, they see meeting to discuss “how” to do something as a waste of their precious time. Additionally, traditional organizational rewards may not be highly regarded by this generational cohort that tends to prefer financial compensation and the opportunity to advance their careers and demonstrate innovative abilities.

This group will respond to your leadership if they can clearly see your vision in the form of an outcome they can respect. They are more focused on themselves than anyone else, so you must frame your requests in a way that helps or rewards them. Their childhood experiences with parents being laid off after years of dedicated work to a single employer has jaded their view of commitment and loyalty to a corporation or job. Instead of commitment to their jobs, they are more likely to feel a commitment to their own career progress. They take pride in their individualism and ownership of their personal time; they will be very reluctant to give up a Saturday off just because the unit is short-staffed.

Your Generation X team members will like to set their own time frames with little supervision, so give them a goal, and they will work hard to reach it on their own terms. They are comfortable with ambiguous situations and will not respond well to rigidly imposed rules or managers who try to micromanage them. Give them as much control as possible while ensuring that they know the boundaries. They will work hard for you if you just stay out of their way.

**Baby Boomers**

The stability of your nursing team probably depends on a few Baby Boomers who have been there a long time and have seen it all. You shiver to think that they may be contemplating retirement, and you know you can count on them through thick and thin. With a few exceptions, the eldest members of your nursing workforce are these Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964).

This generation was raised by strict parents who experienced extreme economic instability during The Great Depression and weathered numerous social upheavals. They are the children of cautious, conservative, hard-working parents who were loyal to their organization and family. Boomers have developed into competitive and dedicated workers who trust the corporation to take care of them and in return are loyal and dedicated workers until retirement. They are often the bedrock of your staff and a valued asset.
Boomer employees cut their teeth on the right to question authority. They were anti-establishment hippies in the 60s who took pride in their rebellious ways. Of course, questioning authority was more acceptable before they became the ones in authority. Now they are more likely to go along and not rock the boat. They value health and wellness, personal growth and gratification, and work involvement. They are familiar with or at least tolerate technology, but they do not feel dependent on it to be proficient in the workplace. They are a creative crowd that values loyalty and a strong work ethic.

Life-long learning is a value of this cohort, whose members prefer to be coached in peer-to-peer activities, preferably by colleagues they know and trust. Baby Boomers value teamwork and often feel that they should be the leaders of the team. They prefer open, direct, and informal communication, and they like face-to-face interaction. They can and will use email if comfortable with it, and some of them will text. They like texting for the convenience, not the spontaneity. They make excellent mentors and coaches for your younger nurses who are just gaining confidence and competence, but if the new program involves technology, they will need to be the ones coached by the younger staff.

Boomers like attention and are motivated by personal recognition from management. They often respond to nonmonetary incentives, such as designated parking areas and professional accolades. Boomers grew up in a time of great economic prosperity and believe they have a certain entitlement to rewards and incentives. They are loyal and dedicated workers who have often put work before everything: their own health, leisure time, and even family. They are highly competitive and like to win, and you can use this spirit to your advantage by winning them over to your ideas.

**Management Considerations**

Because of the stark differences between the generations, you can expect a measure of curiosity, impatience, and probably some conflict among them. For example, as the population of younger nurses continues to grow and as older nurses enter or reenter the profession as the result of economic downturn, the result is competition for prime shifts and leadership roles that can increase intergenerational tension. For you as the nurse manager, this means understanding what makes each generation tick and keeping abreast of all the issues between your staff that may threaten the productivity, commitment, and engagement of your unit. Your job is to lead, so you will focus on harmony and outcomes.

You should also be clear that you expect tolerance and collegiality from your intergenerational team. People rise up to or down to your expectations. If you expect the generations to distrust or dislike each other, they will likely not let you down. So, expect the best.

Be open about generational preferences, and discuss them in meetings and gatherings. Something like this can be a good ice breaker:

*Manager: Look, I have studied the books on generations, and I see that problems arise when we ignore or fail to talk openly about our differences. Let’s acknowledge that each*
of us is a product of the parents who raised us and the generation we share. Let’s look at our differences in a positive way and see how we can make our unit a place that welcomes everyone, whether you are a Baby Boomer, a Gen Xer, or a Millennial.

By naming the generations out loud and by setting the stage for a positive outcome, you can defuse some of the animosity and open the dialogue. Keep the discussion light and nonjudgmental; strive to have all the age groups give a little so everyone feels valued and benevolent.

**Leadership in an Age-Diverse Nursing Workplace**

Your challenge is to keep all generations engaged, motivated, and satisfied in their jobs in order to increase productivity, morale, and job satisfaction. It is expensive to replace a nurse employee, so you also must find ways to decrease attrition and turnover. You are going to need to build more personal relationships with your staff nurses to increase team morale and make them feel needed and wanted.

Great leaders have a vision of the future that they can sell to others to get their buy-in. Your managerial style will benefit from having a vision of the future that your staff will support. Then you can persuade them to join as a team to bring that vision into reality. Your job is sales—selling your vision. Your job is production—giving them the tools to do the job right. And your job is cheerleader—motivating and supporting them in their efforts.

Successful and fair management of an age-diverse group begins with an open discussion of the differences between the generational cohorts while you maintain a positive attitude. Generational stereotyping can be a risky practice, so look at the needs of your diverse team in the context of their generation with caution. It would be a mistake to assume that everyone in that generation thinks the same or wants the same things. You will need to tailor your leadership techniques accordingly, including communication styles, conflict resolution, coaching, and motivating. Some of your staff will eagerly follow your leadership. Some of them will question and even dismiss your efforts. Knowing the preferences for each generation can provide insight to help motivate and affirm yourself during the rough times.

Generational considerations can also show you the path to solidify your work team and bring out the potential in every individual. When the team wins, you win, so set them and yourself up with every advantage to be a productive and effective work team by attending to their generational needs. It will be time and energy well spent.

**Reference**

Chapter 2
Leveraging Generational Strengths

Learning Objective
After reading this chapter, the learner will be able to refocus the generational differences to take advantage of the strengths of each group.

Strategies for a Harmonious Workplace

You have two choices as a manager of a multigenerational staff: You can see them either as a problem you have to solve or as an opportunity you get to cultivate. If you expect to have problems and difficulties with your blended staff, you will not be disappointed. People generally seem to sense our low expectations. However, if you see the diversity of your staff as an opportunity, you can create a satisfying and exceptional work environment for your team members and for yourself as well.

One way to focus on the opportunities involved in managing an intergenerational staff is to look at their strengths instead of their weaknesses. Instead of complaining about the Millennial’s need for constant praise and affirmation, focus on their amazing technology proficiency. When you look at the Gen Xer, do not see a job-hopper but see the entrepreneur who can bring a new point of view to your challenges. Your Boomers’ eagerness for retirement is certainly offset by the stability and loyalty they have shown over the years.

Changing your expectations of each generation to focus on their strengths may be easier than you think and will help make your management effort a more positive and rewarding experience.
**A Strengths Model for the Workplace**

“Strengths” is the longest word in the English language containing only one vowel. That fact alone makes it special. Strength is defined as great physical power or capability to withstand opposing forces. It brings to mind impregnability, durability, and power.

We traditionally focus on employee deficits and what we need to do to help them overcome and improve as managers. However, refocusing on the employees’ strengths might change the whole dynamic on your nursing unit to something much more positive. Figure 2.1 shows the differences between the traditional management model and the strengths management model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>**Figure 2.1</th>
<th>Traditional management vs. strengths management model**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Management Model</strong></td>
<td><strong>Strengths Management Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the problem and find a magic bullet solution</td>
<td>Focus on strengths of each generation and design care delivery around optimizing strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff is dependent on manager to find solutions</td>
<td>Manager is dependent on staff to find solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are employees who are paid to deliver</td>
<td>Staff are inherently integrated into the fabric of the unit working in tandem with employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge actions</td>
<td>Acknowledge strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss-to-employee relationship</td>
<td>Human-to-human relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fosters dependence</td>
<td>Fosters independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager-driven</td>
<td>Staff-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spotlight deficits</td>
<td>Spotlight strengths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Strengths Management Model (Figure 2.2) moves through a process where employee strengths are the centerpiece of the employment contract. The idea of focusing on strengths instead of deficits holds promise as an approach to getting the most from your generationally diverse staff. It takes the focus off how each generation is different and places it on the strengths that each generation brings to the workplace.

The model calls for three distinct actions:

1. **Strengths engagement**: Early engagement of new staff through relationships based on strengths acknowledgment
2. **Strengths assessment**: Assess individual strengths and identify generational strengths
3. **Strengths affirmation**: Focus reviews and counselling on strengths improvement
**Figure 2.2 | Strengths management model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths Engagement</th>
<th>Strengths Assessment</th>
<th>Strengths Affirmation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce strengths focus early</td>
<td>Employees identify own strengths</td>
<td>Focus evaluation on strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal and visible support of strengths</td>
<td>Have each employee do strengths survey</td>
<td>Praise progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim to help staff improve current strengths and develop new ones</td>
<td>Manager offers observed strengths</td>
<td>Identify opportunity and areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Strengths engagement:* Be vocal and visible about your approach to using strengths as a basis for your unit activities. Talk to your applicants about how much you value what they can and will bring to the table, and reassure them that you will help them reinforce and improve their strengths. Ask them to tell you what strengths they bring, and share ways that you can help them expand on those strengths. Begin your relationship on this positive win-win trajectory.

*Strengths assessment:* Have each member of your staff take one of the strengths identification assessment surveys that are available online. Most are free. They generally give the person a list of their top strengths based on their responses to a survey. Some that are available are WorkUno (http://freestrengthstest.workuno.com/free-strengths-test.html) and VIA (www.viacharacter.org). Others are available for a nominal fee, which might be worthwhile for your hospital to provide. The Generational Strengths Model can help you set up your staff members to be their personal best.

*Strengths affirmation:* Use the top strengths of each person during the employee evaluation process. Start with strengths, ask how the employee thinks that strength is developing, and also ask about their needs and concerns. After you focus on the strengths, you can then move into areas of opportunity or improvement.

Combine the individual’s strengths with a focus on the strengths of the person’s generational cohort (Figure 2.3). Acknowledge that not everyone in an identified generation has all, or perhaps any, of the strengths commonly associated with that group. However, the chart does set the tone for a positive view of the generations instead of all the things that are wrong.
Figure 2.3 | Generational strengths compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generational strengths</th>
<th>Gen Xers</th>
<th>Baby boomers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Millennials</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work well in teams</td>
<td>Self-starters</td>
<td>Loyal to their employer and their manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confident and fearless</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Experienced and competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology natives</td>
<td>Eager to learn and improve</td>
<td>Can handle chaos and crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow schedules and structure</td>
<td>Good short-term problem solvers</td>
<td>Good writing and communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept diversity as natural</td>
<td>Multitaskers</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>Highly flexible</td>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal to peers</td>
<td>Technology proficient</td>
<td>Accept responsibility and are used to being accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect manager and see boss as the expert</td>
<td>Value work/life balance</td>
<td>Process oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable, make workplace friends</td>
<td>Relish meaningful work and innovation</td>
<td>Attentive to details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experts at social media</td>
<td>Outcomes oriented</td>
<td>Competitive and strive to do their best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager for responsibility</td>
<td>Open to change</td>
<td>Able to see “big picture”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal oriented</td>
<td>Highly ethical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crave and use feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An action plan for using the strengths model

1. When first meeting employees, talk about the strengths model and how your unit is set up to help them gain proficiency and skills to build strengths. Focus feedback on the strengths they bring.

2. Use identified strengths. Ask the employees to tell you their top five strengths in an early encounter. Then ask them to do one of the online strengths assessments to compare their self-identified strengths with the ones identified by the survey. Do the survey yourself, and share your strengths with them. Ask how you can help them improve their current strengths and gain new ones. Make their goals related to their strengths, and use them in their next evaluation to discuss progress.

3. Find frequent opportunities to affirm strengths and offer positive feedback and praise. All employees crave personal attention and positive feedback. Show your pride in your staff and the strengths they bring to the workplace. Make the multigenerational makeup of your unit one of your strengths.

4. Identify your own strengths and work to capitalize on them. Volunteer for opportunities that allow you to demonstrate your strengths. Identify areas that you want to strengthen, and take action to improve.

Many times, our employees, especially the new and inexperienced ones, see only their weaknesses when they come into the healthcare setting. They want to excel and develop confidence, but they
need help. Your ability to see their potential by pointing out their strengths is a tremendous boost to their initial efforts to develop competence and comfort as a productive member of the team. Your confidence in them helps them build confidence in themselves. The following is a scenario that demonstrates how to use a strengths focus to set the stage for a successful employer/employee relationship.

Manager Scenario

Today, you are interviewing an applicant for your busy medical-surgical unit. His name is Pablo Ortiz, and he has been a nurse in Laredo, Texas, for two years since receiving his associate degree. His application says that he wants to move to a bigger city and get experience at a large hospital. You are going to apply your new strengths program to Pablo and see how it works.

You write up a short note page to use during your interview with Pablo. It looks like this:

1. What do you see as your top three strengths?
2. What I see as some of your strengths:
   - Multilingual—speak English, Spanish, and Portuguese
   - Recent clinical experience
   - Experience with immigrant health
3. Tell me your goals—where do you want to be in your career in the future?

Using this page to take notes during the interview, you work up the following plan for Pablo, which you will give him during his orientation period.

Pablo’s strengths: Career success plan

Based on the VIA strengths assessment, what are your top three strengths? How do they match the strengths you and I described?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-identified strengths</th>
<th>VIA strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like to work on a team</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get along well with everyone</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like a challenge</td>
<td>Innovative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilingual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good clinical experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience with immigrant health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strengths-based work plan

1. Get involved in group projects on the unit to improve care and environment; I suggest you start with Discharge Planning Taskforce, since they are looking at adding health literacy to the discharge instructions. This fits your strength of teamwork and your experience in care delivery to persons with communication challenges.

2. Enter into mentoring compact with Sonia Smith, who has worked here for more than 25 years. She will show you the ropes and help you gain confidence and competence in our policies, protocols, and equipment. In return, you can provide Sonia and some of her other long-term colleagues with a class in social media; they all want to get on Facebook but do not understand exactly how it works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional goals and goal achievement plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete BSN in 2 to 3 years, then MSN and DNP as family nurse practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to border and set up health clinic focusing on immigrant health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get involved in health policy at state and national level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get certifications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reevaluation plan: Will review again in six months on _________________ (date).

This plan is just an example of what an initial performance review might look like. Of course, you probably have specific forms from Human Resources that are required. Much of your evaluation may be online, requiring more structure. And writing out a one-page review like the one shown above takes time, something you do not really have. But think about what this page says to your employee. It says, “I care about you—I see you—I hear you—I am someone who can and will help you.” This is what every employee wants.

Every generation wants to succeed. When you provide a pathway to success, you transcend the generational boundaries and set them up to succeed. Their strengths become your strengths, and labels become meaningless. Managing from a position of strength is just as effective as allowing your staff to work from a position of strength. It sets everyone up to succeed and is a win-win for your unit, your hospital, your employees, and yourself.
Managing the Intergenerational Nursing Team
K. Lynn Wieck, PhD, RN, FAAN
Kimberly D. Moss, PhD, RN

Managing the Intergenerational Nursing Team is the nurse leader’s go-to source for understanding and managing nursing teams that include baby boomer, Generation X, and millennial members. You will find everything you need to know about the motivations, perspectives, and values of your diverse staff.

Written by nurses representing the baby boomer and millennial perspectives, and thoroughly vetted by nurses representing Gen X, this lively guide provides an engaging resource packed with action plans, advice, and strategies for defusing intergenerational tension and improving communication and engagement. Chapters address dozens of generational values and priorities, providing each generation’s perspective and offering nurse leaders keen insight into all the people they manage, regardless of age.

Each of the core chapters opens with a scenario as it would be interpreted by staff from the emerging workforce (Gen X and millennials) versus the aging workforce (baby boomers). This helpful workplace context makes it easy to apply the advice presented to the real-life nursing environment.

About the Authors
K. Lynn Wieck, PhD, RN, FAAN, is a professor of nursing at the University of Texas at Tyler with more than 40 years of experience in nursing administration and education. She has conducted research and been a national speaker on managing the intergenerational nursing workforce since the mid-90s.

Kimberly D. Moss, PhD, RN, is a clinical educator at Gerald Champion Regional Medical Center in New Mexico, where she leads staff development initiatives and collaborates to bring innovation to nursing administration. Her doctoral research focused on cohesion among intergenerational nurse educator teams, and one of her goals is to expose and eliminate harassment and abuse of nurses. In this book, she brings the millennial perspective to the development of contemporary nursing leadership solutions.