

## **Tips for Working *with* or as a Younger Boss**

### **A Guide to Harmonious Relationships When Older Workers Report to Younger Managers**

I'm sure you've noticed: Boomers generally seem in no hurry to leave the workforce for both personal and economic reasons. And the younger generations are trying to position themselves for greater responsibility. The result? Older workers reporting to younger ones is a growing phenomenon - and will continue for some time. That could bring tensions and professionalism issues as reporting relationships deviate from the usual order... but it doesn't have to.

See this content in [video format](#).

It's not a widespread problem yet, but this atypical reporting situation can create challenges. Here are some frustrations or resentments shared by Career Builders study respondents who have trouble working with their younger bosses. I quote:

- \* "They act like they know more than I do, but they don't."
- \* "They act like they are entitled – but they didn't earn their position."
- \* "They micro-manage."
- \* "They don't give me enough direction."
- \* "They play favorites with younger workers."

So, a variety of somewhat *contradictory* complaints!

Interestingly, data from the Career Builders study seem to suggest that it is easier for Boomers to work for younger managers than it is for the younger generations X and Gen Y/Millennials to do so, and it is hardest for the latter.

So here are my tips for you for succeeding in these increasingly *common* reporting and team relationships, many of which apply whether you are the older or younger person.

#### **DOs:**

- The keys are mutual respect and credibility. Support and show respect for the manager.
- Build credibility with substantive knowledge, skills and trustworthiness.
- Learn the manager's communication style. – and flex yours if necessary.
- Use personal style similarities or complementary styles to collaborate.
- Learn how to "manage up" so you will be valued.
- Be willing to stretch your comfort zone and be flexible.
- Be open to new ideas, even if untested.
- Tech savvy (or not) doesn't have to be an obstacle. The more knowledgeable person should offer to teach the other.
- Regard unfamiliar or challenging situations as opportunities for mutual education and mentoring.
- Be tactful and sensitive in making constructive suggestions for

improvement.

Keep a respectful dialogue going.

And what not to do:

**DON'Ts:**

Don't - Talk about how things used to be, "the good old days."

Don't - Put down ideas or a person's age (like calling them kids/geezers).

Don't - Adapt a communication style or interests that seem inauthentic just to seem cool.

Don't - Overvalue years of experience.

Don't - Withhold information that will help the manager succeed, &

Don't - Reject a collaborative style.

You'll find these tips help navigate the slippery shoals of upside down reporting relationships. Put them to work for you, and you will leverage generational differences for you and your team and enjoy work more.

To get more tips to navigate inter-generational challenges, email us at [pwhaserot@pdcounsel.com](mailto:pwhaserot@pdcounsel.com). And share your additional tips about what has worked for you. Send them directly to me or post on my Cross-Generational Conversation group on LinkedIn. Let's keep the conversation going!

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