

# Chamber Members Seek to Understand Human Diversity in the Workplace

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Employers need to understand diversity in their workforce and how generational changes are affecting their employees, Wayne HealthCare Vice President of Human Resources Peggy Schultz said.

Schultz spoke to Chamber of Commerce members on Friday, November 9, 2018 at Wayne HealthCare about diversity in the workforce. Her presentation focused largely on the differences between generations but also touched on other areas of diversity including religion, age, race, sex, sexual appearance and other characteristics of individuals.

"It is gaining more and more emphasis," Schultz said on the importance of understanding diversity. "As an employer who employs four differing generations, and the older generation is on the cusp of retirement and newer individuals coming in, we have to be attuned to what each group wants, and we have to figure out how we manage that and how we meld the two together to end up with the best end result."

Schultz identified six living generations. The GI Generation is comprised of those who were born from approximately 1901 through 1926 and is no longer working. The Greatest Generation was born from approximately 1927 through 1945 and still has some working.

The Baby Boomers were born from approximately 1946 through 1964 and are nearing retirement age. Generation X was born around 1965 through 1980, the

Millennials were born from approximately 1980 through 1995, and Gen Z was born from approximately 1996 through 2012.

While not everyone in a generation shares the same characteristics, people from the same generation often share many of the same life experiences, attitudes and priorities. But across generations, those can vary greatly.

Schultz told a story about her mother being hospitalized and finding it rude when a nurse in her room answered a cell phone. However, after the nurse explained it was a work phone that was used to pass along important information, her mother understood how technology had become a necessity of modern workers.

"It's important to understand it, it's important to keep your eyes and ears open and do a follow-up with an open conversation with the individual or with a group," Schultz said. "I find that usually after that open conversation, people are OK and they're able to move forward."

Being self-aware about one's own characteristics and biases also is crucial to working across a diverse group, Schultz said. People's views of the world vary greatly, and understanding one's own thoughts can help people find common ground more easily.

"Getting to know individuals is key," she said. "Sitting down, having a conversation, having lunch with a new hire, getting to know who that person is and what their desire is in terms of being a part of the team goes a long way and individuals' better understanding of who others are with the different generations."

Wayne HealthCare constantly is trying to understand its employees and updating its human resources policies to better align with their needs.

While she'd love to live in a world where no one was ever labeled, Schultz said, that's not realistic. Though labels don't need to be emphasized, they need to be understood so businesses can cater to their employees needs, she said.



Peggy Schultz, Vice President Human Resources, Wayne HealthCare, spoke about how generational changes are affecting the workforce during a workshop on Friday, November 9, 2018 hosted by the Chamber Human Resources Council.

*Article Courtesy of Kyle Shaner, Editor, The Daily Advocate*

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This free workshop was hosted by the Chamber Human Resources Council and made possible through the generous support from Phelan Insurance Agency, Inc. and Wayne HealthCare.

