

V2 Generational Differences at Work

MAZI RAZ: Hello, everyone. My name is Mazi Raz. I am the Director of Learning, Design, and Strategy at the Ivey Academy. Welcome to the Ivey Academy podcast where we discuss current topics in leadership and organizations, unpack the latest research in the field, and look at trends across different settings for insights to share with our audience. The members and staff of the Ivey Academy acknowledge the original caretakers and storytellers of the land on which we are situated. Those are the Anishinaabek, the Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron, and Lunaapeewak peoples. We commit to honoring and celebrating their past, present, and future.

This topic is about generational differences at work. I'm sure many would agree that the workforce is rapidly becoming multigenerational. On a macro level thanks to good health and active lifestyle, and of course second careers, the workforce is seeing high growth in over 55 labor force participation. At the same time many societal factors including rapid technological changes introduce a new waiver of employees who appear to be different. These realities create interpersonal dynamics of the workplace among generations.

Today we want to begin attending to these dynamics and see how they relate to the way we think about management and leadership. About this topic, one of our audience members wrote yesterday, it's the true elephant in the room that nobody in the workplace is talking about. To help us navigate these things, we are joined by three guests today, Nikolina, Dalal, and Santos Lee. Nikolina is the Vice President of Strategy at Montana Steel Group. She's also Research and Intelligent Advisor with the governments of Canada. Nikolina is an Ivey MBA grad of 2020,

Santos is the head of Organizational Design and Effectiveness at Bank of Montreal. Santos is the ID MBA graduate of 2005. And Dalal is the manager at Deloitte Consulting. She's a double graduate HPA 2016 and MBA 2021 just recently I believe. We're also joined by Sean Acklin Grant. Sean is the head of marketing in the Ivey Academy and will be joining us today in this dialogue. Welcome everyone. As I mentioned at the beginning, this is a fairly common topic. I believe many of us have had experiences with a multigenerational workforce as well as the dynamics between generations.

So I actually would like to start by asking you, the audience, to share an experience in which you were the subject to generational differences. I want to ask our panelists a question. Friends, what do you think might be some common themes in the answers that the audience will provide us? Why don't I start with the Nikolina.

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: Yeah, I mean, in my professional life, there have definitely been times when I wondered why as a young woman I may not have immediately been taken seriously or why technology wasn't being embraced by some of my older peers in the ways that I thought it should be. But what I found over time was that these issues tended to be more attributable to attitudes of individuals.

MAZI RAZ: Excellent. Thank you. Dalal, what do you think about some common themes that we may expect the participants providing us?

DALAL ATTA: I think we'll definitely probably hit on some of the key differences we experience, and why that might create barriers, and why those stereotypes exist. But no similar to Nikolina's point, my own similar experiences I'm sure a shared is the credibility associated with age. And so how does it feel for especially in the world of consulting if I'm being very specific to provide advisory to very tenured

leadership. How does that affect your credibility if you come in and you're in your 20s and you're advising someone who's been in the workforce for longer than your age?

And then I think we've even experienced it as we small talk and get to know each other as a group is even just your preferences and interest. So what type of music is your favorite or things like that and you start to realize you get the comments of like, oh, well, this is before your time, but this movie was my favorite or this and that, and I see that come up a lot and ice breakers in this virtual setting. So I'm sure we'll see some themes around that as well.

MAZI RAZ: Dalal, you mentioned an experience that I'm not sure whether you were talking about yourself or someone else and your colleague that you are in front of a seasoned, perhaps a partner at the consulting and you're trying to provide advice to them. Was that your experience?

DALAL ATTA: I would say yes, but more with the client. The way of working is much more focused on capability and what experience do you have versus necessarily how long have you experienced it for. But with clients let's say you've had someone who's been at a firm for over 30 years. Like they really know their business inside out, and so how can someone with under 10 years work experience come in and tell me how to make it better?

MAZI RAZ: How did you feel about that, like when you approached that moment, what were you thinking? How were you feeling?

DALAL ATTA: Yeah, part of it, of course, is you really want to understand how to connect with that person and break down their barriers because at the end of the day, we do just want to help and we do have unique insight. And what people maybe don't understand is it's not just my brain telling you this is what you have to do, it's the resources we have as a consulting firm and all the different conversations, and there's so much being brought to the table outside of 10 year experience. And so I find the first thing you have to think of is it's not personal and you just have to focus on connecting with the individual and breaking down those barriers so you can really focus on the topic of value.

MAZI RAZ: Very interesting. Santos, I'm curious to hear about your thoughts. Either what do you think that the participants might actually tell us in terms of some common themes or your own experiences.

SANTOS LEE: Yeah, no, thanks, Mazi, and I can surely relate to what both Nikolina and Dalal have been sharing as well. What I think might come up and I suppose that's partially what I've experienced is assumptions that people make when they think you're a part of a generation and that you might not be able to relate to their own generation for example. And so it kind of those kinds of differences. I've been in meetings where somebody might relate a story and then they might look at me casually and say, oh, but you know your generation might not understand that or relate to that, which perhaps might be because I look a little bit younger than I really am, but which is ironic because oftentimes I find I'm either at the similar age or perhaps older because I'm pushing 50 in a few years.

So it's certainly more of a micro event, but I think it happens a number of times with different people in the workplace, and it certainly doesn't feel inclusive.

MAZI RAZ: I missed one part of this. When you say you're approaching 50, do you mean that you are staying young or getting older? I've tried to get a sense of what you mean by getting into 50s?

SANTOS LEE: Oh, it's just that I'm literally pushing 50 in a few years literally, but feeling young at heart, and at age, and of course, everything else.

MAZI RAZ: Very well.

SEAN ACKLIN GRANT: We have some really great responses in the chat, too many to read already, but I was pleased to see actually that the first one referenced a positive difference in being able to learn from different generations and understand other perspectives this participant is a journalist in a unionized environment. And so was able to gain a valuable perspective on politics and generational ideas. And then there's another comment here. I'm just going to read it out loud for Maureen. I think there's a heightened awareness of racism, sexism, yet ageism is fine, jokes about old people and professional meetings and ageism in employment hiring. Any reactions to that, Mazi?

MAZI RAZ: I totally agree with everything that people have written here and also with Maureen's point. Ageism and on the flip side youngism appear to be quite prevalent and no one is really publicly talking about it. It appears to be a very, very common form of discrimination. I believe this is what Maureen's point is trying to illustrate. So that is true. What I'm also seeing from looking at the responses of people, which is really fascinating, some are alluding to value differences. For instance, one generation may value work life balance differently than another generation. I'm also recognizing some people are immediately categorizing on dimensions of capability. This was earlier to Dalal's point.

For instance, the younger generations are more tech savvy. Maybe that is not true for the older generation. So they are certain big picture patterns and themes are appearing here based on the responses of people giving. How do we make sense of that folks? Nikolina, what do you think about that?

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: I can speak to that. And I think this alludes to the point that a lot of our respondents are making in the chat is that there seems to be a bit of confusion about the different generations and where the generational distinctions came from in the first place. So there were two things that surprised me when I started to read about the nuances behind the generational distinctions. And the first is that it's not often discussed in the workplace exactly where these stereotypes were from. And that actually is primarily the unique historical context that each generation carries. In other words, the macro events that people are thought to experience directly in their lifetimes.

And we unconsciously rely on these generalizations about attitudes that could have been born from witnessing these macro events when we try to make sense of what we experience into personally on a day to day basis. So that's the first point that I found interesting. And the second one is that there seems to be an imbalance of focus on the different generations. The baby boomers and the millennials for example are oftentimes seen as being philosophically opposed, but gen X and gen Z for example, seem to be a bit more abstract as concepts and command, potentially less attention in management literature. This could be due to a number of things, but I think it could at least in part be due to our tendency to polarize groups of people to craft a narrative. And I don't know how helpful that is at the end of the day. So although certain generations appear to be very dissimilar from others on a superficial level, I'm inclined to think that there's quite a lot more overlap in our collective memory of these macro events than we think, and we could definitely benefit from reflecting on that a bit more.

MAZI RAZ: That's fascinating. Dalal, what do you think about what Nikolina is providing us with?

DALAL ATTA: think it goes back to the whole concept of stereotypes. And I think people forget that there is such a rich history that unfortunately is a race by these stereotypes. So for me even among this topic as we're learning more about it like it was really eye-opening. And I'm reading through the chat and I'm like you see the tension points because these stereotypes have almost like come to life and I know we did. Reading about this and we talked about it in the past around the self-fulfilling prophecy. And like even

just reading the chat you understand that your own unique experience isn't necessarily what's actually happening out there.

So I'm reading all this and it's so true where it's like there is an assumption that you make about a generation, and then it becomes almost self-fulfilling because the way you treat that generation. I think the most obvious what I'm seeing here is around either the value of the older generation, so our boomers are getting ready to retire, and therefore we don't care to listen to their opinions or things like that. And then by default, I would think that in a meeting when you have those two generations coming, they might have their guards up before the conversations even started before they even share ideas because one is assumed to already feel discredited before the other.

Or when it comes to technology, I think I was reading one where it's like, oh, yeah, the debate between who learns faster because our generation is used to a faster pace, and therefore we're smarter. But you can't necessarily imply that an entire group of people and not expect them to eventually start to take it personally or maybe even believe that and then that it gets ingrained in organizational culture. And then all the sudden, we see this self-fulfilling prophecy where generations really are working differently within the same organization and it's creating a divide.

MAZI RAZ: I'm curious about a question that it's coming up as I'm listening to you. We have asked or we are at least trying to address other stereotypes. Men are from Mars and women are from Venus, and we've really been trying to overcome this large categorical differences, these stereotypes. Why do you think that we haven't been addressing stereotypes around generations at work?

SANTOS LEE: I think my initial thoughts on that Mazi is I guess a couple of things. One is that there might be other and I think somebody mentioned in the comments earlier, there might be other types of, quote unquote, "differences" that seem to get more attention. And so sometimes the concern and the issue with if we call it like stereotypes with generations or ageism doesn't get the attention that it needs and it tends to be more subtle. It's the urgent and important things that get the attention, but I think to me something like generations is perhaps not urgent but highly important. And so it tends to fly under the radar. But I find often the not urgent but important things are things that definitely drive long term value.

MAZI RAZ: Nikolina.

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: I was actually just going to say it's simply like easier to place people into a certain demographic group. But I think what we need to start to understand is that in certain instances that might be effective, but in other instances, it could be very damaging. And I think that's just a summary of what we've been discussing so far. It can be damaging and it can be hurtful. You can see on the chat there's a lot of people with a lot of hurt here. I can see like over the years they've started to gather experiences and piece them together and they're really trying to make sense of this. So I think as a solution for leaders who might have previously been very focused on generational differences.

Maybe we can instead create ways to recognize individuals as more complex and more fluid agents with their own unique sets of values and preferences. Many tensions at work seem to stem from individuals feeling like they don't belong or they don't have agency, and we can address this by making sure employees really feel seen and embraced in organizations. So across public and private sectors, we use employee psychometric tools to measure personality, aptitude, and progress. A couple of them are the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, highlight the ability battery, but there are so many of them that exist now. And also individual development assessments that prioritize how the organizations themselves can help individuals meet their goals versus the more conventional perspective that individuals should be working

just to meet the organization's goals. So flipping that on its head a little bit would be helpful. And one more extension of this concept is what Deloitte has called treating employees as customers, which in this context means making the employee experience as data driven as the customer experience. So we can do this by developing more robust analytic capabilities to capture employee attitudes by fostering more transparent talent networks for people at every level and by offering employees more opportunities to engage in cross-functional partnerships.

So with these types of strategies, we're not leaving anyone feeling like they're not seeing, and this is just one approach. Like I said, a lot of people would argue that grouping people together into certain demographic categories is useful for certain applications.

MAZI RAZ: But you know there's something really peculiar about this. That is that from research we know that as individuals we have ways of making sense of ourselves, and we try to get a set of ideas of what it means to identify as a specific person. Apparently, as research is suggesting, age is actually quite a strong indicator of my sense of self and my definition of self. I'm the same age as you Santos, I am someone who is in his mid life and is 50 to be precise. And that means a lot to me, that means a lot to who I am. So I get that. I get that we're actually trying to recognize that age and categories matters to how people make sense of themselves. But then the whole irony is that I'm not going to stay forever.

I once was a youngster. And I am, God willing, if I have a healthy life, I'm going to get into sunset years of my life. So it's not a stable category for who I am. And if I want to interact with scientists, can I truly really think of Santos as someone who is 50 and ignore the fact that he once was in his 20s. He once was someone quite fresh out of school and in the organization. I can't. Do you see the dilemma that I'm trying to put together here? Go on.

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: On the other side for the young people where they may be lacking or light in certain life experiences, they bring a whole sense of creativity and openness in a lot of instances that comes with just not having experienced certain events in life. So I think there are arguments for both sides.

MAZI RAZ: Yeah, Nikolina, I'm glad that you raised that because that's a very common myth in fact. There was a very large research done at academic publication in the Journal of organizational behavior that actually did a study on this and they realized that older people at work are far more receptive to change than young people. If the opposite of would be fake, we think do we think that like the fresh young workforce is all about change and innovation. So it doesn't quite match the reality, some of the stereotypes that we're holding onto. Santos, I have a question to ask you because you are a guru in organizational design and matters of dynamics inside the organizations.

What risks can you anticipate if we do not pay attention to generational differences or generational dynamics at work?

SANTOS LEE: Now great question Mazi. I think in a nutshell, one of the key risks is that it Hinders organization's ability to achieve their business strategy. And I'll elaborate on that a bit. I think from what I'm seeing and I think I'm sure a lot of us are seeing is that organizations are moving away from their traditional functional pillars to focus more on networks and cross-functional teams. So we're seeing more expectations and more organizational designs focused on not just vertical collaboration but there's horizontal collaboration. There's diagonal collaboration in all sorts of directions and I talked about networks just kind of multi-directional.

And that to me, a key enabler of that is almost a multi-generational workforce. That to me almost just implies that you need to have a multi-generational workforce to ensure you have that kind of collaboration. So if we say ignore generational dynamics don't pay attention to them, I think one of the key risks is the organizations that we design do not perform as intended. And that will in turn hinder the ability of a group to achieve their business strategy, and that of course will have a ton of financial, operational, reputational risks.

MAZI RAZ: It's a very interesting phenomena that you're pointing out to. Dalal, I'll have-- I'm curious to hear your experience because you come from an environment, a consulting environment that by nature it is actually quite diverse generationally speaking. What do you think are some of the pitfalls or maybe some of the risks of falling into the trap of stereotyping?

DALAL ATTA: So the biggest thing I can think of is when we do an implementation let's say a technology program. One thing I've seen over and over again that we really advise our clients on is taking a very tailored approach. It's almost similar to simply treating your employees like customers.

So instead of just rolling out a training program that's a one size fits all and just get everybody on this, one example of things that we've done in the past is you actually look at capability. You don't look at OK well, who's been here for 30 years and who's been here for 10 years and give them different programs. That would be a very unwise thing to do. But equally unwise to just paint the same experience across the board because of how diverse our people are in the workforce.

And so there's ways to look at it from a capability perspective where we'll look at let's say tech savviness and tech neediness, like is kind of how we coined it to say from either self-assessments, a lot of the work we do on the ground is how do we actually match people by capability, and then based on that and where or how large their gap is to where we need them to be with this new technology or the new business strategy. What very tailored change and training can we provide that person so that they're experiencing it based on their needs and preferences versus a one size fits all or to our discussion here do stereotypes based on their age or their tenure with the firm?

And so that's one pitfall we see where they just assume force the technology out, they'll figure it out or so and so is like retiring in so many years. And so a lot of the themes are seeing in the chat of the old age are just going to get pushed out anyway so why invest in them? Or the stereotype of, oh, yeah, we can invent new technologies because the new people or the young folks they learn so fast and they're going to be with us the longest.

And all these horrible assumptions come into play when really at the end of the day, every generation and every employee has value to add. And so why would you not set them up for success in any type of change, whether it's technology, or strategy, or just ways of working with you go through for network-based model versus a very hierarchical model? There is a value in bringing each of those different experiences and diverse employees together and giving them an experience that makes sense to their capability not their age.

MAZI RAZ: Thank you, Dalal. What I would like to encourage us to do is that eventually as this livestream goes forward, as the dialogue goes forward, I would like us to start thinking about all right, so now that we're understanding what the phenomenon is, what the issue is, that how do we get out of it? What can we do differently in order to not fall into the trap of stereotypes or to Nikolina's point at some point that actually might be useful for us to acknowledge some differences? So let's eventually get there. But for

now, let's stay with this idea. Let's stay with this idea that what are some of the other perhaps negative consequences of neglecting these generational dynamics?

What I recall when we were having a child a couple of weeks ago about this topic amongst ourselves, Dalal, you brought up the idea that well, it's about capability matching. But I can't remember whether it was Santos or Nikolina, but the idea was that it's not enough. We also need to think about how to even trust. It's not just a matter of capabilities of how we can actually engender trust between generations. That resonates with the question that one of our audience members is asking. Andy is asking that what advice would you give to a senior leader who's struggling to understand how to effectively connect and building trusting relationships with a multi-generational workforce. So this notion of trust is important for us as well. How can we see the idea or the phenomenon of multigenerational differences from an angle of trust?

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: I have one immediate thought which is removing this thing of competition. So feeling like you're having to compete for either the best idea or to prove your value. So there's this competition of proving value amongst the generations if whether you feel challenged because you are older and you feel like you're being pushed out by the new creativity. When I saw in the comments it's true, creativity is ageless. And so I think number one is, yeah, how do you take down that maybe element of competition or that need to have to prove yourself compared to other generations?

MAZI RAZ: So to lessen or to remove competition at work? OK, very good.

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: And Mazi there was a great point by Leanne in the chat simply said understand our biases, address them, and then challenge them. So that could be as simple as holding workshops, team building workshops, which we often participate in as part of our organization where we do chat. We do identify what our biases are, and there's something called a cognitive bias codex that I can share with you guys afterwards, but it's this huge diagram of all the different types of biases. And it might be a fun activity to refer to a diagram of biases, really call out what those are as it relates to our team specifically in context, and then challenge them, have a creative activity around challenging the biases and developing sort of courses of action when we do encounter these biases. So thank you to Leanne for that comment.

MAZI RAZ: Thank you, Nikolina, for putting that out and weaving it into the dialogue, that was very nicely done. Santos, a little earlier you were talking about the concept of organizational design that how we are-- our mindset about the way that organization's structure and function is evolving. You're mentioning that we no longer can see these vertical silos. Good organizations are no longer strictly these vertical and silos. And then they're also trying to figure out a way of having a much more horizontal then you also mentioned a diagonal way of working with one another. How does trust come into play specifically around generational differences when we are thinking about setting up an organization?

SANTOS LEE: Sure. And one thing if I might add Mazi in terms of the functional pillars or the silos, one edit I might add is not that we won't see that at all in the future. I think that'll still form an element for some areas where they still need that, but I think we're going to see a lot more cross-functional collaboration. In terms of building trust as organizations evolve, I think a lot of the fundamentals still apply in terms of building trust.

And to me, a lot of that is just about having an open and honest collaborative environment where people have the ability to speak up, the ability to share, and that there is no feeling of repercussion around it. And to me that is-- those kinds of that foundational principle is irrespective of whether you are structured in a

functional structure as a matrix, as an agile teams, like I think it really is about really being able to have those open and honest conversations with the team and just addressing things upfront and being upfront about it.

MAZI RAZ: And to your good point Santos, that resonates with the work that one management scholar is doing, Amy Edmondson, on the concept of psychological safety. And that is something that actually one of our audience members you and I just brought up in the chat. Yes, if we can engender psychological safety at work, we can eventually get into agreeing that we're all humans and we all experiment, that we all make errors, and then that we all actually are just learning creatures going forward. That makes sense. That's very big picture, that's true, and it's lovely for every single organization.

The challenge I am facing or I faced when I think about organizational dynamics from the point of view of generational difference is that I often want the other person to change their mind about myself. I want the youngster to change their mind about the middle aged man, or someone season to think of me as someone who is capable of taking on complex challenges. And I have yet to come across dialogues or concepts that how I can change the way that I think about myself. That the stereotypes that I apply to myself, I'm curious have any of you ever encountered this or have you been curious about this?

SANTOS LEE: In terms of, Mazi, about--

MAZI RAZ: About the biases that I carry about myself, not just about the other generations or others at work, but about myself.

SANTOS LEE: Yeah, certainly, and I find sometimes these biases I care about myself could become self-fulfilling prophecies. And I think to some earlier points write about really not letting this carry on because this really promotes further ageism. And not having that mental voice in my head to say that say if I forget my keys or something not to say to myself, oh my gosh, I just had a senior moment, which is really just again just making that cycle worse and worse because I probably forgot my keys when I was in my teens as well. And so that had nothing to do with age.

So things become self-fulfilling prophecies and I think to your point about what we can do as individuals internally, I think a lot of it is to about just being curious. Like not judging what we're thinking necessarily, just being curious and then peeling the onion a bit right, and then really exploring ourselves internally, and then exploring externally as well.

MAZI RAZ: Thank you. Dalal and Nikolina, anything you would like to add to this concept or any examples that scientists use?

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: I think further to Santos's point, the first thing to do and this Harvard Business Review article on generational differences did cite this as a concept of meta stereotypes. So that's the idea that there are times when we think we're being stereotyped when we're actually not. And in doing so, we start creating these self-fulfilling prophecies and a lot of unnecessary anxiety. So first thing we minimize that wherever possible and the next thing which we could all become better at I think is knowing how to advocate for ourselves, and trying to challenge our own biases that we have about ourselves.

So if I have an insecurity perhaps that I am seen as young or inexperienced or that my skill set isn't obvious, it's my job, then it's my responsibility to find ways to advocate for myself and my skill set obviously in a way that helps other people understand how I can be of service to them within the organization in a way that helps other people understand how we can help meet the customer's goals at the end of the day or the client's goals at the end of the day. And this could be as simple as identifying

your skills early on in a project, talking about your work in previous professional contexts. And I think a lot of people are really, really insecure, myself included, about sharing that kind of information in a public forum.

But I think it's key to figure out your elevator pitch really early on so that when you do announce that you have this skill set or that you would like to help in a certain way, you are facilitating that collaborative process with your team members and they don't have to guess about what you're all about and what skills you bring to the team or what your personal interests are. For example, I pointed out earlier on when we were just speaking with Mazi before the call, I noticed he had a Klimt background. And I can't tell you how beautiful I find that that background behind him. It's so attractive to look at. And it has it brings its own feelings with it.

So like when you use art or when you use a skill set to talk about yourself or you use resources or literature to talk about what you bring to a team, it really helps people understand what you're all about. And then you have to do less in the way of worrying about what people could potentially think of you.

MAZI RAZ: And Nikolina, I really like this idea of what you're raising, which is that figuring out a way of expressing yourself, presenting yourself as a total person not only as here's my resume, and not a resume essentially mean the abstract summary of what I'm about, but allowing the totality of who you are to show up. I totally appreciate and value that. I wonder however that in a workforce that everything is just so efficient or at least we try to be so efficient, and we don't really have a lot of space for social relations, we don't really have a lot of space for dialogues about Gustav Klimt, for instance.

How do we overcome that? How do we-- like Dalal, I suspect that your environment actually might be a good example of how this is heightened over there. It's about projects, it's about getting projects out there as quickly as possible. Have you encountered ways of balancing the dryness of getting things done and work with what Nikolina suggesting, which is this ways of bringing the total self?

DALAL ATTA: Absolutely. So one important thing I think no matter when it goes back to earlier like building that trust is creating a common goal on a team. So irregardless we are all working together to achieve X. And that's more I guess on the project side. But one thing that we do that I personally love and that we start rolling out across the organization is something we call like a team pledge or it used to be called the people promise. And so we actually used to have within each project and within your team and as a program that you define the level is everybody will go through and there's a few prompting questions to say. What is the one thing at least that you really want to protect about your time and your personal life?

So it could be every Wednesdays at 4:30 I need to leave because I volleyball. And the team will rally to make sure that whatever is happening on that Wednesday at 4:30 is covered so that you have the work life balance you need to do X. Or if it's someone with children, I have to go pick up my kids from school. And so we kind of start opening up and bringing our work and our life together to say these are the boundaries I need to create to promote work-life balance and the support I need from my team. And then we kind of create a pledge to say, these are the working norms, this is what our preferences are, this is what we need from each other as a team.

And so although it's oriented to work, it's a way of also disclosing a bit about yourself in a safe way to start saying, how can we as a team support each other so that everyone is able to bring their best selves and still have their own personal space? So that's one area that we kind of do from a more workshop tactical area. Then there's this other thing we have business chemistry, and there's so many of these self-

assessments. Sorry, it's business chemistry. And really the self-assessment is twofold in the sense of learn about yourself. So in a working environment, what are my preferences? What kind of style am I, and what style am I definitely not?

And then we start to learn that about each other on our team and just say as a well-balanced team, we actually want a little bit of everyone. We want that diversity, we want the drivers who only think about work, but then we want the personable integrators who want to know about your weekend and bring that balance and analytical versus the creative like very pioneer type thinking. And so you learn that about each other to say again, OK I need to brainstorm this strategy. I'm going to lean on my creative thinker for this one to help me think through this problem, or I need some structure, I'm going to go to the Guardian because I know they can think through a framework and help me.

And so when we learn this about ourselves in each other and we combine the work and the balance of life and priorities with the working styles, you naturally actually create that trust not bond amongst each other through that understanding, and understanding your differences and similarities, and how you actually make those work together to reach that common goal.

MAZI RAZ: Yeah. That is I think from my personal experience and my a little bit of understanding of this topic, that's a really key point here, which is understanding the similarities as well as the differences. Appears that, Dalal, the recent comments that you raised right now are actually quite popular in the chat. A couple of people are saying that that's a really good point. So now it makes a really interesting point here, which is that this is where getting to know each other and connecting on a personal level makes us all human. I want to take that again and push it forward and say that it not only makes us all human, but also makes work more effective. So if we keep reducing each other to just the resume or to just the box of checked boxes of capabilities, in fact, we are lessening the productivity, not increasing.

And these moments of connecting on a personal level and becoming really truly human with one another. In fact, it helps with the organizational goals as well.

SANTOS LEE: You know Mazi one thing that I find speaks to that a bit is how terms or terms have evolved. I think it used to be-- we used to talk about work-life balance and then it became about work-life flexibility, and I think now it's more about life-work flexibility. So life comes first. It's not work-life, it's life-work and really getting to know that we're these beings that work is an incredibly big component of our life, but it really is about life as a whole first. So I think that really resonates.

MAZI RAZ: I believe I can make a general comment here that I suspect these are values that are held common across all generations. And if that is the case, then I suspect that if we figure out what binds us all together is common values, it may be the initial good steps towards overcoming some of these generational dynamics at work rate. But on that topic, Sean, I know that you started the first the slide for the very first question for the people for our audience to contribute to this experience. You also had a good idea that maybe we should also go back to the audience and provide an opportunity for them to help us with this problem. So why don't you if you don't mind put up the second question on from the audience to address in the chat as well?

SEAN ACKLIN GRANT: Yeah, I've been watching the chat and sort of as it's mirrored our dialogue in gradually turning towards solutions and suggestions, and I'm already seeing some great responses on this. So I'll put up the question, which is, how can we lead generational inclusivity at work and in society? What would you be doing differently?

And so even just already as a thought starter I saw a couple of great responses, one from Fiona suggesting focusing on psychological safety, i.e. a belief that you'll not be penalized for making a mistake she says has made the biggest difference. Kathleen, friend of the show, also suggests that creating space to have uncomfortable dialogues with safety could go a long way towards harm reduction. So we'll keep this up for a little bit and watch the chat responses.

MAZI RAZ: Thank you, Sean. That's very well. I have curious questions to ask our panelists. We often revert to training as a way of overcoming some of these problems at work. Essentially we think about education as a way of overcoming this. While I totally value that no, I work for an educational institution and I'm an educator myself, so I definitely value that. Beyond education, what else is possible? What else might we be doing?

DALAL ATTA: think it's really important for leaders to set the tone within their teams and create that space that we're talking about. Like an individual can try but at the end of the day, especially when we do look to our leaders for that informal culture and that direction, like I think it's really important for a leader to set the tone around inclusivity and to say we have a common goal, let's build that trust, and let's learn from each other's different experiences and diversity and bring that together to enhance our current thinking. And so at the end of the day, it really is leader led, but then I think employees will drive it forward. So it's not to say it's always on the leader to make sure it's happening, but I think if the leader unlocks that, they'll open up the floodgates as employees and as a team and just add value in so many ways, whether it's productivity, whether it's new idea creation, or just efficiency.

MAZI RAZ: And if we consider the notion of distributed leadership, that leadership is not just someone who sits in the c-suite, but everyone inside the organization is a leader, then what you're suggesting is that everyone can actually be responsible in spreading that view. Santos any thoughts that you would like to share here?

SANTOS LEE: Yeah, certainly I think that comment that think you read out from Kathleen it's funny. I actually wrote it down because it really resonated with me as well about creating space to have uncomfortable dialogue because I think it's OK to be uncomfortable. And I think it's OK to have that dialogue. I think healthy tension is good. That's the only way we can really truly get to the heart of the matter by bringing it out in the open, having those uncomfortable dialogues and whatnot. So that was one point. Second point I think what, Dalal, you were mentioning earlier about the teams and kind of the setting the purpose I think really resonated as well, and really like I guess really embedding this and inclusion into the organizational DNA.

And then I guess lastly, I think, Nikolina, you mentioned something earlier that resonated for me as well in terms of challenging assumptions, like being proactive and challenging assumptions, and almost being out there looking for evidence to the contrary that disproves these stereotypes like so. I mean, I think I was chatting with a branch manager a while back, and they actually found that the highest uptake of digital mobile banking, one of the highest was actually senior citizens. Of course, it's useful for them because if they can do mobile banking in the winter, they don't have to go and trek through icy streets as well. But it just goes to show that there's evidence out there, and then I think we need to be proactive out there and looking for that disproves the stereotypes.

MAZI RAZ: This idea of changing one's mindset about themselves and about other generations appears to be the key theme here in today's dialogue. One of the other things that I have. I'm a huge advocate and interested in helping people have different points of views and seeing the world from different points of

views. I often in a classroom I share something with my students and I say that creativity is not just about thinking outside the box, but it's about thinking from the box in which others are sitting. So if we can figure out ways of positioning ourselves in someone else's shoes and start seeing the world from their point of view, we may begin essentially building these bridges across generations.

One toy that I recently encountered, it's actually virtual reality goggles driven toy. When you wear them, it turns your view and your body into a youngster into an older person, slightly blurred vision and shaky hands for instance. And then you actually have to operate. So it develops empathy immediately. And there are many ways that we can start doing that at work.

One of the key things that you note that you mentioned, Santos, and I think is highly valuable is to figure out a ways of creating shared spaces, shared projects as you mentioned. I am really fascinated how come we really haven't been talking about a common purpose, the strongest glue that binds all of us together. Have you encountered any organization that actually has managed to overcome these differences by instilling a really strong purpose?

NIKOLINA GELMANOVSKA: I definitely have Mazi because I work for the military, the Canadian military. And while there are a lot of different voices in the military and there are a lot of different types of professionals, hundreds, they all sort of converge on a purpose. And that's actually different from military to military. For the Canadians, it really is to be supportive of our allies and to ensure the safety of Canadian citizens everywhere. So that is a shared purpose that's really, really strong, but the military is kind of unlike any other organization in that sense. So I think while the military has its challenges around culture, one thing that it does really, really well is have everyone converge on a shared purpose. So maybe there's something that we could learn from them on that.

MAZI RAZ: Thank you, Dalal.

DALAL ATTA: think it's kind of what I alluded to earlier, it's every project we have a common goal to deliver whatever solution to that client. And so you find that roles kind of go out the window. It's who has the right and ability to bring what to the table for us to achieve that goal and flexing on the right people at the right time. So everyone kind of shines at some point in time in our projects because at the end of the day, we're all trying to get to the same endpoint of bringing the best solution forward.

MAZI RAZ: Santos, while I totally agree with the points that Dalal and Nikolina have raised, I wonder if you can help us add to that not just a common goal but also a common purpose that our organization might actually embody.

SANTOS LEE: What do you mean Mazi in terms of what--

MAZI RAZ: Goals are you-- Dalal is absolutely right. Goals are very good ways of getting people together and accomplishing things. But purpose, a much bigger and much perhaps more meaningful. And then the meaning that is embedded in the purpose can strongly help overcome these differences. I wonder if you have at BMO been observing how the purpose actually gets spread out the organization.

SANTOS LEE: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I think it's-- and I think that's a great example, Mazi. I think right now we have part of our new ambition. 2025 strategy and the purpose of the organization. One of the key pillars and commitments is what we're calling a zero barriers to inclusion. And that really is a commitment to say that by a certain target, we're going to have promote a zero barriers type of organization in society then according to that. And there's a bunch of initiatives tied to that then trickle down across the organization. That is something that it's at the foremost, it's top of mind, and it's brought up basically in all

the key town hall and in organizational meetings to make sure that really cascades and is internalized across the group.

MAZI RAZ: Thank you for tuning in and listening to this episode. We'd like to extend further thanks to our guests Nikolina, Dalal, and Santos for taking the time to share the knowledge and insights with us. If you liked this episode, make sure to subscribe for similar content in the future.

If you want to learn more about generational inclusivity in the workplace, we've provided more in a blog post on our website in which you can also find links to resources on this topic. You can also learn about our organization, the Ivey Academy, and check out all our activities, events, and programs. Visit Iveyacademy.com or follow us on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram using the handle @Iveyacademy. Thanks again for listening. We look forward to having you with us for the next episode.