'High-Tech' and 'High-Touch'
How EAPs can Appeal to Multigenerational Workforces

By Andie Burjek

Almost half of the workforce will be made up of Millennials by 2020, according to Magellan Health's "Workforce 2020" report. But too many EAPs don't account for how the workforce of today differs from the workplaces of 30 years ago.

As if the challenges of appealing to Millennials isn't enough, Generation Z is now entering the workforce in droves. (Gen-Z is loosely defined as individuals born after the year 2000.)

"You have to shift and stay current and relevant as time progresses," said Tina Thompson, senior vice president of health and performance solutions for Beacon Health Options. "If you stand still and provide an outdated process or service, you run the risk of becoming a dinosaur."

While being aware of different generations and generational trends in the workforce is valuable for EAPs looking to add variety to their services, it's important not to generalize. Some stereotypes — like older people being bad with technology or younger people being uncomfortable communicating via telephone — are becoming less true, Thompson noted.

"You do need to understand the generation you're speaking to and what their expectations are," she said. "And then on top of that, you need to get an idea for where that individual is in the process."

That's where offering options and steering clear of a one-size-fits-all approach comes in. An EAP needs to stay relevant to everyone who uses the service, she said. That means offering a variety of access points, including electronic and face to face.

Generational Basics

Important factors in addressing the needs of members from multiple generations include their preferred modes of communication and ways of engagement, said Ken LeBeau, CEAP, Director of EAP with Cigna. It's also helpful to keep in mind the prevalent life events common to each generation to promote EAPs and/or plan EAP seminars.

For instance, Millennials and Gen-Zers may have concerns like managing their student loan debt, finding work/life balance, and attaining milestones like getting married, becoming a parent, or

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buying a home. Also, they report more stress than older generations to situations like mass shootings and sexual harassment, according to the "Stress in America" report released by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2018.

Younger workers are comfortable doing their research before they contact an EAP, said Thompson, who has been in the industry for 30 years. In the past, EAPs may not have expected that people would do their homework. They would have relied on the EAP itself to educate them.

"They put things out there on social media, where it is open to many sources. They might be pushing things out to people they've never met or don't know, because it's just how communication has evolved from years past," she said.

Although being proactive toward one's behavioral health is a positive development, there are a few caveats. People may be overwhelmed by hundreds if not thousands of options for resources on the Internet, and not all this information has necessarily been vetted, said Thompson. They may end up with unreliable information about the state of their health.

As a connected group of people, younger workers may also have a sense of urgency and impatience when it comes to getting information and accessing services, she added.

Preferred Modes of Communication

To appeal to these younger generations, LeBeau suggests online private chats or texting (as opposed to email), video-based counseling, and resources for financial benefits or stress management help.

Part of Cigna's strategy is to offer multiple ways to find and obtain EAP assistance, LeBeau said. Members can call a toll-free number, access self-service tools on a website, use an online chat tool, and make an online request for work/life resources delivered via email. Once they begin short-term counseling with an EAP, people can choose to receive counseling over the phone, in person, or by video.

Cigna uses mobile apps to appeal to tech-comfortable people, a growing number of its member population. Through the app, members can access both coaching modules on key health and well-being topics and webcasts that people can watch via phone, tablet or computer.

Avoid a "Cookie Cutter" Approach

Mazzitti & Sullivan EAP Services stresses the need to provide options for everyone from the old-fashioned to the tech savvy. Further, the organization also seeks to keep managers and staff up-to-date. Offering a variety to everyone is also a good way to avoid generational stereotypes. Kara Hoy, client solutions specialist, said that the EAP tries to keep on the cutting edge of technology to appeal to anyone *of any age* who might find that appealing while still providing personalized services that treat each individual as a human being.

While keeping the common generational issues in mind is good in the macro sense — whether that's remembering that Millennials may have money issues, Baby Boomers may have marital problems or Gen-Zers may be dealing with depression or suicidal thoughts — steering away from a cookie-cutter approach will

help an EAP reach a person as an *individual*, not just as someone who was born in a certain year.

Stress itself is an omni-generational issue as well, according to the APA's "Stress in America" report. Among all demographics, 64 percent of adults find work and money to be major stressors, and 63 percent find health-related concerns to be a major stressor (up from 59 percent in 2017).

More on Engaging Potential EAP Clients

❖ *Recognize that traditional promotions still work.* There are certain trends that may apply to employees of any generation. For example Cigna found that with many of its employer clients, workers felt overwhelmed by emails, LeBeau said. Using traditional media like posters, brochures, and health fair giveaways are becoming more popular.

❖ *Hold benefits fairs.* "Across generations, we have seen advantages to having an EAP representative participate in benefit fairs during open enrollment," he said. "This facilitates face-to-face interactions about program services and establishes a personal connection to the EAP."

❖ *Promote, promote, promote.* The National Business Group on Health (NBGH) 2015 report, "Increasing Employee Assistance Effectiveness and Utilization: New Approaches and Emerging Trends" suggested two ways of increasing EAP utilization in the workplace: high levels of promotion and, whenever possible, having EAP staff available on site.

❖ *Stress confidentiality.* A different report — IBISWorld's industry report on EAPs in the U.S., released in 2017 – suggested increasing utilization by emphasizing employee privacy in communications.

❖ *Offer "bridge the gap" workshops.* "A younger person may be managing older employees who have different communication and learning styles," LeBeau said. "A younger manager may seek to make changes that cause resistance or a negative response by long-term employees." Cigna addresses

this in their EAP by offering a "Bridging the Gap" seminar about generations working together.

Mazzitti & Sullivan does something similar, offering training to managers and staff in its EAP to help people in the multi-generational workforce understand each other better.

Summary

Regardless of specific strategies for promoting the EAP, employee engagement remains a challenge, according to LuAnn Heinen, vice president of workforce well-being, productivity, and human capital at NBGH, who oversees EAP initiatives.

What she's been hearing from employers is that the type of EAP they want is something that offers not just online access but both "high-tech" and "high-touch." ∎

Andie Burjek is an associate editor at Workforce magazine, where she primarily writes about benefits, wellness, and employee health along with other human resources topics. This article is based on a story published in Workforce magazine in May 2017. For a list of references used in this article contact her at aburjek@humancapitalmedia.com.

Editor's note: For more information on this topic, see this month's Brown Bagger and Lifestyle Tips inserts.

Editor's Notebook

I was amazed when I learned that one of my college-age nieces took notes in class in an old-fashioned spiral notebook and not on a laptop. That's but one example of why it's important to not over-generalize generational differences. That being said, there is no getting around the fact that different age groups <u>do</u> think differently. This issue of *Employee Assistance Report* takes a look at generational differences in the workplace:

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In this month's cover story, Andie Burjek explains generational basics, preferred modes of communication, the need to avoid a "cookie cutter" approach (e.g. the EAP must offer <u>options</u>) and perhaps most important, *cross-generational* strategies for engaging potential EAP clients.

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Because different age groups have different values, attitudes, and expectations, this month's *Brown Bagger* discusses what motivates each age group at work – while also recognizing that there are certain issues that cross generations. <u>An EAP's ability to appeal to everyone is **crucial**</u> because while employers want higher utilization, *EAR* readers are well aware that actual employee engagement can be a challenge.

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What's REALLY behind that recent resignation letter from one of your Millennial-age employees? A Millennial presents some fascinating insights into what makes her generation tick in this month's *Lifestyle Tips* insert.

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Finally, recognizing that bridging generation gaps works two ways, what is it that <u>Millennials</u> – who will soon comprise nearly half of the workplace – need to know about **Baby Boomers** like me? See article on page 5. Happy reading! ∎

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EAPA Town Hall Meetings Set

C urrent EAPA chapter and branch leaders, potential chapter and branch leaders, and all EAPA members are encouraged to save the dates for the upcoming EAPA Chapter/ Branch Leader Town Hall Meetings for 2019. The next event will be held Thursday, **March 14**, from 3-4 p.m. EDT.

Each meeting will be hosted by the EAPA Board of Directors and will include association updates from the Board, Committees, and EAPA staff. All EAPA members are welcome to attend. Detailed log-in instructions and an agenda will be sent one week before each Town Hall meeting.

See below for the dates of all 2019 EAPA Town Hall meetings:

- **Thursday, March 14**
- **Thursday, June 6**
- **Thursday, August 22**
- **Thursday, December 12 -** EAPA Annual Virtual Business Meeting and Town Hall

All meetings will be held at 3 p.m. (EDT) at the EAPA Online Meeting Room at eapa.adobeconnect.com/town-hall. ◼

Depression need not be a Life Sentence

T he World Health Organization considers depression the leading cause of disability worldwide. That's ahead of widely publicized contenders such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Current scientific literature clearly states that if you've had depression once, it will probably strike you down again and lay waste to your good years (ironically, disseminating this idea might exacerbate people's depression). You'll be impaired at work, your relationships will suffer, and your happiness and sense of meaning in life will be obstructed.

Depression *can be* a lifelong problem. But in rare longitudinal studies that modeled the whole population, 40 to 60 percent of people who had depression once never experienced a recurrence, even after being questioned years and even decades later.

Thriving, or well-being, was not measured directly in these studies, but it stands to reason that many of these people who had depression once, and shook it over the long term, were living better than the average person without depression.

In a surprisingly large number of cases, people move from the ashes of despair to flourishing. For some, full healing may simply take the passage of time. Others may achieve it following formal treatment. Others may discover a new purpose in life or a daily routine that works for them. Some people may achieve this state after the first time they were depressed; others may get there only after several bouts of depression.

The most exciting aspect about illuminating these pathways is that some pathways undoubtedly will provide new points of leverage for containing the depression epidemic. ◼

Source: Psychology Today. Read more here https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326546659_The_Curious_Neglect_of_High_Functioning_After_Psychopathology_The_Case_of_Depression

What Do Boomers Need From Millennials?

*Editor's note: I encourage readers to check out the page 1 story in this month's **Lifestyle Tips** insert for insights into Millennial thinking in the workplace. The following are some <u>additional</u> thoughts from a <u>Baby Boomer</u> to a Millennial-age colleague.*

❖ **When it comes to using technology don't say, "There's nothing to it"**! Boomers did not grow up with the technology that younger people take for granted. It's true some Boomers, like Millennials, use a *lot* of technological tools – others, very few – and still others, like me, lie somewhere in between. It's also true that some Boomers pick up new things quickly, but kindly acknowledge that some of us do not! We'll "get it," given time and practice, but don't say, "There's nothing to it" and leave us on our own to figure it out. <u>Show us</u>, don't just tell us.

❖ **Show us what to do in <u>stages</u>, don't just "click around" on a monitor, and assume we'll understand**. When someone in their 20s or 30s shows me something on a computer, they will show me much too quickly, and the steps they took to get from point A to point B aren't nearly clear enough. In my view, this reflects several generational differences.

1. As we age, our Baby Boom brains just don't think as quickly as they used to. Well, mine anyway! I will likely "get it," but it'll take me longer to understand what it is that you're telling me. Don't show me so fast. Take your time.

2. Along similar lines, please <u>explain</u> what you are doing. Many of us Boomers can find website navigation difficult. We might get <u>one</u> of your "clicks," on a given web page, but if there are multiple steps, it's a good bet that we might get lost or confused if we're left to "connect the dots" on our own.

3. If there *are* steps, kindly write them down (or email them to us) so we have something to refer to until we are more familiar with the process.

❖ **If you plan on quitting your job, kindly provide notice**. This is undoubtedly the aspect of generational differences that I hear Boomers complain about most. That is: Young people don't just quit, they fail to show up for work! Again, I do not wish to over-generalize, I'm sure some hardworking young people provide a week or two notice to the employer, just like we did in my day. If so, great!

But I hear all too often from people my age that this isn't the case. If the job isn't for you – fine. We quit jobs, too. But if you fail to show up for your shift without any notice, you made someone else's life <u>difficult</u>. Maybe they were done with their shift, and now they have to stay late. Or perhaps you left your boss shorthanded on a busy day when they were "counting on you" being there to pitch in.

By better working <u>together</u>, we can overcome generational barriers in the workplace!

Signed,
A Baby Boomer ■

EAPA Announces CEAP Webinar

The Employee Assistance Professionals Association (EAPA) will be offering a series of live webinars for prospective candidates of the Certified Employee Assistance Professional (CEAP) credential. The Online CEAP Exam Prep Course series will be offered from March 5-14, 2019.

This course provides CEAP candidates with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully evaluate questions on the CEAP exam. Facilitators will review the key concepts of each EAP Job Performance Domain and provide insight into test design. Participants will be presented with practice test questions and strategies for identifying key words and eliminating distractions.

To register and learn more visit http://www.eapassn.org/Conferences-Education/Event-Registration/EventID/310. ■

Source: EAPA.

Improving Company Culture – Part II

Good company culture can't be faked or bought. Instead, you and your leadership team need to continually check its pulse and make sure that your engagement strategies are working. And if they're not, you need to try something new. Not sure where to start in improving your – or your client's – organization? The following are some strategies from Forbes Agency Council members. (Additional recommendations appeared last month.)

❖ **Work from anywhere** – Our team is full of explorers. Employees need flexibility in their work environment. A few employees have enjoyed working from Bali, Costa Rica, Berlin, etc. People establish their work hours up front so colleagues can know when to expect their team members to be online. Tools like Slack and Dropbox keep us connected and working productively. They return energized with lots of great stories.

– Gina Michnowicz, Union+Webster

❖ **Company volunteering** – Company volunteering has helped my team improve morale, productivity, and show deeper connections for everyone involved. Volunteering has allowed some of my employees the chance to collaborate with other employees that they may not see or talk to that much. Employees have the chance to reveal skills that they might not have had the opportunity to show at work, too.

– Solomon Thimothy, OneIMS

❖ **Swarm days** – We implemented a flexible remote work policy three years ago that has become core to our culture. But sometimes humans go nuts after spending too many consecutive days in a home office dungeon. To mitigate against this, we instituted "swarm days" every Thursday, where we all "swarm" to one physical office and hang out. It's the chaser to the remote work tequila shot and works and tastes great.

– Chris Sanborn, Sanborn

❖ **Transparency and empowerment** – While we love perks, we are firm believers that perks do not equal culture. Given that, the most powerful tried-and-true strategy is transparency and empowerment. Share your successes and your failures, and look to everyone to help build a better company. It is just amazing how much good can come from putting these tenets into practice.

– Michael Mothner, Wpromote

❖ **Ask people what they want** – If you want to improve your culture, make sure you are asking your people what they _want_. What do they want their work experience to be? How do they want to learn? How do they want to be rewarded and acknowledged? How do they want to grow? Once you start having these conversations, your culture will not only improve, it will bring an air of authenticity and improvement will be fluid. ∎

– Julie Veloz, IPG Mediabrands

Source: Forbes Agency Council, an invitation-only organization for executives in successful public relations, media strategy, creative and advertising agencies. Find out if you qualify at forbesagencycouncil.com/qualify.

'Women at Work' Efforts Need Improving

Despite the push to grow more diverse and inclusive workplaces, that commitment has not translated into meaningful action, according to "Women in the Workplace 2018", the largest comprehensive study of the state of women in corporate America.

Since 2015, LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company have published the annual report to give companies and employees the information they need to advance women and improve gender diversity within their organizations. This year, 279 companies employing more than 13 million people shared their data and surveys of their HR practices.

Key findings included: Women remain significantly underrepresented, particularly women of color; and companies need to change the way they hire and promote entry- and manager-level employees to make real progress.

This report includes concrete, evidence-based steps organizations can take that will make a difference. Many additional, important statistics and information can be found at http://www.workexcel.com/content/e-book/Women_in_the_Workplace_2018_print.pdf ∎

Bosses can Reduce Mental Health Stigma

Experts tell us that one in four adults will struggle with a mental health issue during his or her lifetime. At work, those suffering from clinical conditions, or minor ones, often hide it for fear that they may face discrimination from peers or bosses. These stigmas can be overcome, but it takes more than policies, it also requires empathetic action from managers. According to the *Harvard Business Review*, the following are some ways managers can help drive a more empathetic culture:

❖ **Rethink "sick days."** If you have cancer, no one says, "Let's just push through." They recognize that it's an illness and you'll need to take time off to treat it. But few people in business would react in the same way to signs of stress, anxiety, or manic behavior. Managers need to be more comfortable with the idea of suggesting and requesting days to focus on improving mental as well as physical health.

❖ **Encourage open and honest conversations**. It's important to create safe spaces for people to talk about their own challenges, past and present, without fear of being called "unstable" or passed up for the next big project or promotion. Employees shouldn't fear that they will be judged or excluded if they open up in this way. Leaders should also encourage everyone to speak up when feeling overwhelmed or in need.

❖ **Be proactive**. In a *Harvard Business Review* survey on employee burnout, nearly 70 percent of respondents said that employers were not doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout. Bosses need to do a better job helping their employees connect to resources – like an EAP – before stress leads to more serious problems. ∎

Are Flexible Schedules Really About Trust?

Flexible work schedules are crucial for any modern employee, with 91% saying flexible working was important and 92% saying they wanted the option to work from home. Interestingly, 66% said they would prefer to work more in the office than at home and **0%** saying they would want to work exclusively from home.

But flexible work schedules does not simply refer to where you work (i.e. home or office) but also when and how you work, according to Adam Henderson, founder of Millennial Mindset. Flexible working *should mean* that you have the flexibility to manage your time and resources in a way that is most effective for you. This means that the work not only gets done, but gets done to the best quality possible.

The necessities of business means that there have to be team meetings and face-to-face times, but this can be solved by several fixed days and times when everyone has to be in the office. For instance, every Tuesday and Thursday between 10 and 2 everyone has to be in. This means all core meetings and department meetings could be held between these times, but then the staff have the ability to work flexibly for the remainder of the week.

More employers need to trust their employees to take accountability of their own workload and time management to get things done, whether this is at 9 am in the office or 9 pm at home. ∎

Language can be Clear Sign of Depression – Part II

From the way a person moves and sleeps, to how someone interacts with other people, depression changes nearly everything. It is even noticeable in the way an individual speaks and expresses themselves in writing.

A new study, published in *Clinical Psychological Science*, revealed clear and consistent differences in language between those with and without symptoms of depression. Language can be separated into two components: content and style. In part one of this two-part article, content was examined. Style and practical implications are discussed in the conclusion.

Style

The style of language relates to how we express ourselves, rather than the content we express. "Absolutist words", which convey absolute magnitudes or probabilities, such as "always", "nothing" or "completely" – were found to be better markers for mental health forums than either pronouns or negative emotions.

The prevalence of absolutist words is approximately 50 percent greater in anxiety and depression forums, and approximately 80 percent greater for suicidal ideation forums.

Pronouns produced a similar distributional pattern as absolutist words across the forums, but the effect was smaller. By contrast, negative emotion words were paradoxically less prevalent in suicidal ideation forums than in anxiety and depression forums.

Research also included recovery forums, where members who feel they have recovered from a depressive episode write positive and encouraging posts about their recovery.

Here we found that negative emotion words were used at comparable levels to control forums, while positive emotion words were elevated by approximately 70 percent.

Crucially, those who have previously had depressive symptoms are more likely to have them again. Therefore, their greater tendency for absolutist thinking, even when there are currently no symptoms of depression, is a sign that it may play a role in causing depressive episodes.

Practical Implications

Understanding the language of depression can help us understand the way those with symptoms of depression think, but it also has practical implications.

Researchers are combining automated text analysis with machine learning (computers that can learn from experience without being programmed) to classify a variety of mental health conditions from natural language text samples such as blog posts.

Such classification is already outperforming that made by trained therapists. Importantly, machine learning classification will only improve as more data is provided and more sophisticated algorithms are developed.

This goes beyond looking at the broad patterns of absolutism, negativity and pronouns already discussed. Work has begun on using computers to accurately identify increasingly specific subcategories of mental health problems – such as perfectionism, self-esteem problems and social anxiety.

That said, it is of course possible to use a language associated with depression without actually being depressed. Ultimately, it is how you feel over time that determines whether you are suffering.

Since an estimated 300 million people worldwide are living with depression, according to the World Health Organization, having more tools available to spot the condition is paramount. ∎

Additional source: Mohammed Al-Mosaiwi, "The Conversation."

Quick Ideas

The Case for Napping at Work

There are countless studies and reports showing the detrimental effects a lack of sleep can cause.

❖ Wellsource (https://www.wellsource.com/) recently gathered aggregate data from more than 400,000 health risk assessment participants and found that the average American sleeps 6.9 hours a night, just shy of the recommended 7-9 hours for adults.

❖ There's a correlation between sleep hours and pain. In the Wellsource HRA population, people in the most pain ("very bad") report sleeping 5.8 hours, on average. Those who report no pain sleep an average of 7 hours.

❖ Napping is proven. Uber, Google, Huffington Post, Ben & Jerry's, and Nike are among the organizations that offer nap rooms where employees are encouraged to catch a few minutes of restorative sleep. ∎

Source: Carabiner Communications.