

Generational Cohorts in the Workforce

A Self-Guided Learning Module



Defining Generational Cohorts

In this self-guided learning module, you will:

- Learn about Generational Cohort Theory
- Build additional understanding of the influencing events, core values, and distinguishing characteristics of each of the generational cohorts
- Explore some generational research, specifically for Baby Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials
- Discover a tool to help you identify and map the root causes of generational misalignments

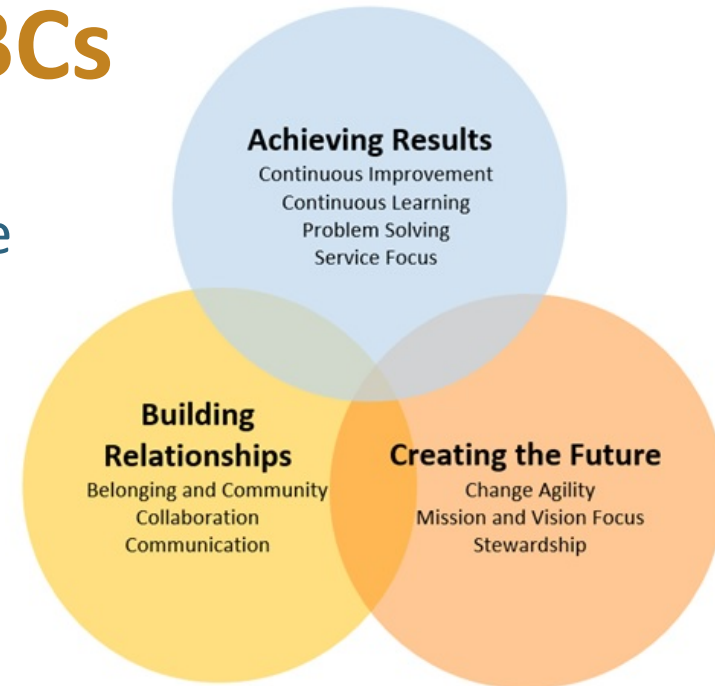
UC Core Competency ABCs

Today's learning points as related to the

Core Competencies of:

- Problem Solving
- Belonging and Community
- Collaboration
- Communication

By understanding how generational differences play a role in our day-to-day work, we can increase our likelihood of successfully solving problems, collaborating, and communicating – all in order to build belonging and community at work.



Berkeley People Management Knowledge Assessment

You may wish to go deeper by identifying your current knowledge (specific to UCB) in nine critical people management areas by completing the UC Berkeley People Management Assessment:

- Compensation and Classification
- Complaints and Grievances
- Disciplinary Action
- Health and Safety
- Leave and Disability Management
- Payroll and Timekeeping
- Performance Management
- Personnel Policies and Contracts
- Recruiting and Hiring

<https://hr.berkeley.edu/berkeley-people-management-knowledge-assessment>

Risk Management

As employees of the University, we all have the responsibility to be stewards of the public's resources. With this in mind, every Berkeley People Management workshop helps us to mitigate risk to the campus.

From the campus' perspective, programs like this impact overall employee success because well-trained, well-informed managers engage with their teams to promote safe, equitable, and stable work environments where everyone can be successful. Through the learning opportunities you will take part in today and through the entire [BPM program](#) series, we will engage with you to ensure you have what you need to be successful. You will be able to spot potential issues and mitigate them sooner, and you will know the proper procedure for identifying and addressing challenges and issues within your teams. More broadly, this multi-level program creates the necessary foundation for building a learning culture on campus, and today's program adds to that foundation.

What is Generational Cohort Theory

A Way to Look at Changes Across Generations

Generational Cohort Theory

....is the concept that a generation of individuals that share the same political, economic, and social events during the early stages of life will develop a similar set of beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Generations are a Social Construct

...so only where events occur in a way that distinguishes a cohort can we speak of a generation.

Six items that can cause such distinction:

- A traumatic or formative event
- A dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society
- An interval that connects a generation to success or failure
- The creation of a “sacred space” that sustains a collective memory
- Mentors or heroes that give impetus and voice by their work
- The work of people who know and support each other

Some Examples Could Include:

Event	Example
A traumatic or formative event	World War II
A dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society	The post war baby boom
An interval that connects a generation to success or failure	The Great Depression
The creation of a “sacred space” that sustains a collective memory	Woodstock
Mentors or heroes that give impetus and voice by their work	Martin Luther King
The work of people who know and support each other	Bill Gates & Steven Jobs

What Examples Can You Think of?

Event	Example
A traumatic or formative event	
A dramatic shift in demography that influences the distribution of resources in society	
An interval that connects a generation to success or failure	
The creation of a “sacred space” that sustains a collective memory	
Mentors or heroes that give impetus and voice by their work	
The work of people who know and support each other	

Cohorts in Today's Workplace

Generational Cohort	Birth Years *
Traditionalists	1927-1945
Baby Boomers (Boomers)	1946-1964
Generation X (Gen X)	1965-1980
Millennials	1981-2000
Generation Z (Gen Z)	2000+

** While groups argue about the EXACT start and stop year for each cohort, you can use this as a general guide.*

Generational Cohort Theory Exercise

On the following slides, we ask that you spend some time thinking about how the political, economic, and social events that individuals experienced during the early stages of their lives could have impacted their beliefs, values, and behaviors.

Using Generational Cohort Theory, consider:

- What are some key events that you feel have influenced members of each cohort?
- What core values do you think these events could have instilled into members of the cohort?

Some Examples to Get You Started

Baby Boomer Key Events	Core Values
First Walk on the Moon	Optimism
Woodstock	Idealism
Gen X Key Events	Core Values
Latch-Key Kids	Self-reliance
The Challenger Explosion	Pragmatism
Millennial Key Events	Core Values
Expansion of Technology	Cyber-literacy
Cell Phones	Connectivity
Generation Z Key Events	Core Values
Disruptive Technology Movement	Perseverance
Google	Confidence

Now It's Your Turn

Generational Cohort Theory Thought Exercise

Need some help thinking of Core Values, check out the [Develop Good Habits webpage](#).

Traditionalists

Key Events: 1930's-1940's	Core Values

Need some help thinking of Core Values, check out the [Develop Good Habits webpage](#).

Baby Boomers

Key Events: 1950's-1960's	Core Values

Need some help thinking of Core Values, check out the [Develop Good Habits webpage](#).

Generation X

Key Events: 1970's-early 1980's	Core Values

Need some help thinking of Core Values, check out the [Develop Good Habits webpage](#).

Millennials

Key Events: late 1980's-2000's	Core Values

Need some help thinking of Core Values, check out the [Develop Good Habits webpage](#).

Generation Z

Key Events: 2000's-2020	Core Values

Need some help thinking of Core Values, check out the [Develop Good Habits webpage](#).

What Cohort Might Come Next?

Key Events: 2020's-beyond	Core Values

Let's Look at the Research

Many researchers have gone through this thought exercise for Baby Boomers, Gen X and Millennials. Here are some of the things they came up with. Do you agree?

Baby Boomers: A Deeper Look

Influencing Events

- Vietnam War
- The civil rights and woman's movements
- The JFK and Martin Luther King assassinations
- Nixon's Watergate
- First walk on the moon
- The sexual revolution
- Expansion of suburbia
- Economic prosperity
- Woodstock

Core Values

- Orientation towards teaming / consensus building
- Cooperation
- Personal gratification
- Personal growth
- Health and wellness
- Youthful self-identity
- Ambitious
- Competitive
- Optimism
- Idealistic

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Concerned with fairness, humanity, and the heart
- Good at mentoring

Negative Stereotypes

We lists these as a bias check. If you find yourself using words like you see below, we ask that you go back and reassess. The goal is to always avoid moving to a place of negative stereotyping.

- Self-centered
- Unrealistic
- Ultra-political
- Power-driven
- Workaholic

Generation X: A Deeper Look

Influencing Events

- Increasingly globally competitive environment
- Sesame Street
- MTV
- AIDS epidemic
- Steroids and pro athletes
- Divorce
- “Latch-key kids”
- The Challenger explosion
- The beating of Rodney King
- End of the Cold War

Core Values

- Comfortable with diversity
- Think globally
- Entrepreneurial
- Technoliteracy
- Informality
- Self-reliance
- Pragmatic
- Individualistic
- Independent
- Skeptical
- Friend = Family
- Life balance
- Fun

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Require feedback and flexibility
- Comfortable with change
- Dislike close supervision
- Adventure seekers

Negative Stereotypes

We lists these as a bias check. If you find yourself using words like you see below, we ask that you go back and reassess. The goal is to always avoid moving to a place of negative stereotyping.

- Slackers
- Selfish
- Dirty
- Eye-rollers
- Loud

Millennials: A Deeper Look

Influencing Events

- Expansion of technology
- Fall of Berlin Wall
- Mixed economy
- Globalization
- Cell phones
- Video games
- Play dates
- Return of family values
- Drugs and gangs
- Violence

Core Values

- Fast paced
- Great at task switching
- Optimistic
- Civic duty
- Globally concerned
- Technically savvy
- Confident
- Value achievement and praise
- Comfortable with diversity
- Street smarts
- Health conscious
- Fun-seeking
- Social
- Moral

Distinguishing Characteristics

- Fast job mobility
- “Can Do” attitude
- Strong team ethic
- Very comfortable sharing feelings

Negative Stereotypes

We lists these as a bias check. If you find yourself using words like you see below, we ask that you go back and reassess. The goal is to always avoid moving to a place of negative stereotyping.

- Lazy
- Spoiled
- Disrespectful
- Technology dependent

The Cohorts at Work

Research has also shown that generational cohort differences can manifest in the work behaviors of teams and team members. Some of these include:

- Definition of work
- On the job assets
- On the job liabilities
- Work preferences
- Work values
- Traits of an ideal leader
- Key job motivators

Definition of Work

Baby Boomers

- Work is a means to self-satisfaction
- Get it done whatever it takes, nights and weekends

Generation X

- A job is a job
- Find the fastest route to results, protocol is secondary

Millennials

- Hard work and goal setting are sure tickets to achieving your dreams
- Work to deadlines, not necessarily to schedules

On the Job Assets

Baby Boomers

- Driven to go the extra mile
- Good at relationships
- Want to please
- Good team players
- Service oriented

Generation X

- Adaptable
- Techno literate
- Independent
- Creative
- Not intimidated by authority

Millennials

- Task switching is a way of life
- Techno savvy
- Optimistic
- Heroic spirit
- Believe in the power of collective action
- Eager to please

On the Job Liabilities

Baby Boomers

- Uncomfortable with conflict
- Reluctant to go against peers
- May put process ahead of results
- Overly sensitive to feedback
- Can be judgmental of those who see things differently

Generation X

- Impatient
- Less concerned with people pleasing
- Cynical
- Not intimidated by authority (some things can be an asset and an liability)

Millennials

- Expect attentive supervision
- Like structure
- Inexperienced at handling failure and difficult people issues
- Consumer and creator are blurring (if something is digital, it belongs to everyone)

Assets/Liabilities Activity

On the following slides, we ask that you spend some time brainstorming how these assets and liabilities might show up on the job.

Using the research and your ideas, consider:

- What potential issues may arise in a multi-generational work group considering the assets of each cohort? What might you do about it?
- What potential issues may arise in a multi-generational work group considering the liabilities of each cohort? What might you do about it?

Some Examples to Get You Started

Asset-Related Issues	Ways to Address
<p>Generation X is independent, other generations like team work</p>	<p>Help Generation X see the value of teams</p> <p>Help other generations realize that working independently is also ok</p>
<p>Baby Boomers are hard working, driven, willing to go the extra mile</p>	<p>Show Baby Boomers success stories using flex time and working from home</p> <p>Make sure Generation X and Millennials understand expectation for “checking-in” when they are not in the office</p>
Liability-Related Issues	Ways to Address
<p>Generation X are impatient, Millennials like supervision and structure</p>	<p>Provide management training for Generation X if they want to manage</p>
<p>Baby Boomers may avoid conflict, Millennials are inexperienced with conflict, Generation X are not intimidated by conflict</p>	<p>Show all groups that disagreement, when done in appropriate ways, is safe and valuable</p>
<p>Team members aren’t aware of the liabilities of others</p>	<p>Create open dialogue and safe environments for pointing out “blind spots” in the work habits of colleagues</p>

Now It's Your Turn

Asset/Liability Thought Exercise

Potential Issues: Assets

Issue	Ways to Address

Potential Issues: Liabilities

Issue	Ways to Address

Let's Continue Exploring the Research

Researchers have looked at work, environmental, leadership, and motivation preferences for Baby Boomers, Gen X and Millennials as well. Do you agree with their findings?

Work Preferences

Baby Boomers

- Need for public recognition
- Desire reward for work ethic and long hours
- Value organizational perks
- Prefer decisions made through consensus
- Respect power and accomplishment

Generation X

- Need for flexible hours
- Desire less supervision
- Value state-of-the-art technology
- Value employee-focused benefits
- Prefer informal work environment
- Independence/self-reliance is essential
- View rules as flexible

Millennials

- Need for alignment between work assignments and personal goals
- Desire strong leadership
- Value strong mentor programs
- Prefer large teams
- Staying connected is essential, there is zero tolerance for delays
- Detail oriented
- Value structure and praise

Environmental Preferences

Baby Boomers

- Work can come before family fun
- Loyal to the importance and meaning of work
- Technology is necessary for progress
- Value somewhat formal communication through structured networks

Generation X

- Value work/life balance
- Loyal to individual career goals
- Technology is a practical tool for getting things done
- Value casual and direct communication

Millennials

- Value blending personal life into work
- Loyal to the people involved in the project
- Technology –what else is there?
- Value casual and direct communication, can struggle with email and phone conversations

Leadership Preferences

Baby Boomers

- Leaders who emphasize individualism and self-expression
- Leaders who look at workers as more than employees (equals)
- Most important: honesty, competence

Generation X

- Leads with excitement, making them feel like change agents
- Experts who get right to the point
- Most important: determination, ambition, competence

Millennials

- Leads with team style making them feel like they can accomplish their goals
- Authority figure (active, involving) who gives feedback
- Most important: determination, ambition

Motivation Preferences

Baby Boomers

- Respect their experience
- Let them know they can make a difference
- Warm, humane, and dynamic environment
- Promote your area/business as leading edge

- **To Reward:** Acknowledge publically
- Talk about career advancement

Generation X

- Non-structured environment
- Hands-off supervisor
- Honest communication
- Fun opportunities
- Educational opportunities
- Ideas evaluated on merit

- **To Reward:** Balance fair compensation and ample time off
- Talk about job satisfaction

Millennials

- Structure and supervision are available
- Bright and creative people work/belong here
- You and your peers can turn things around, you can be a hero

- **To Reward:** Individual and public praise (exposure)
- Talk about job change

Preferences Activity

On the following slides, we ask that you spend some time brainstorming how these preferences might show up on the job.

Using the research and your ideas, consider:

- What potential issues may arise in a multi-generational work group considering the preferences of each cohort? What might you do about it?
- What opportunities may arise in a multi-generational work group considering the preferences of each cohort? What might you do about it?

Some Examples to Get You Started

Issue	Ways to Address
Different opinions on technology	Show Baby Boomers how new technology can help them, show Generation X that technology can shorten their work day, show Millennials that there's more than technology
Differences in how each wants to be recognized for achievement	Discussions with supervisors about how they should be rewarding their employees, not everyone wants the same rewards

Opportunity	Ways to Encourage
Generation X and Millennials like state-of-the-art technology	Use technology to help bridge the gap between the two, electronic mentoring and management programs where Generation X can support Millennials without always being present
Baby Boomers and Millennials work well in teams	Pair these groups to capitalize on the team work and mentoring relationships that will form
Millennials are very people loyal	Help Millennials build networks in the organization so they stay connected to the organization and are less likely to job-jump

Now It's Your Turn

Preferences Thought Exercise

Potential Issues: Preferences

Issue	Ways to Address

Potential Opportunities: Preferences

Opportunity	Ways to Encourage

General Points to Remember

- Provide opportunities for people to discuss generation cohort differences
- Don't generalize one person's behavior, on one day, to the entire cohort or the entire team
- Practice generational inclusivity
 - Listen to different points of view
 - Immediately address disrespectful behavior
 - Tailor messages - one communication style does not fit all
 - Draw attention to common ground and similarities rather than differences
- Ask for help - bring in a specialist

One Last Tool

The Generational Management Decision Tree

The Generational Management Decision Tree

This tool was created by Dr. Angela L.M. Stopper, as a way to slow down and think about the impact of generational cohort theory before we jump to conclusions about the behaviors of others.

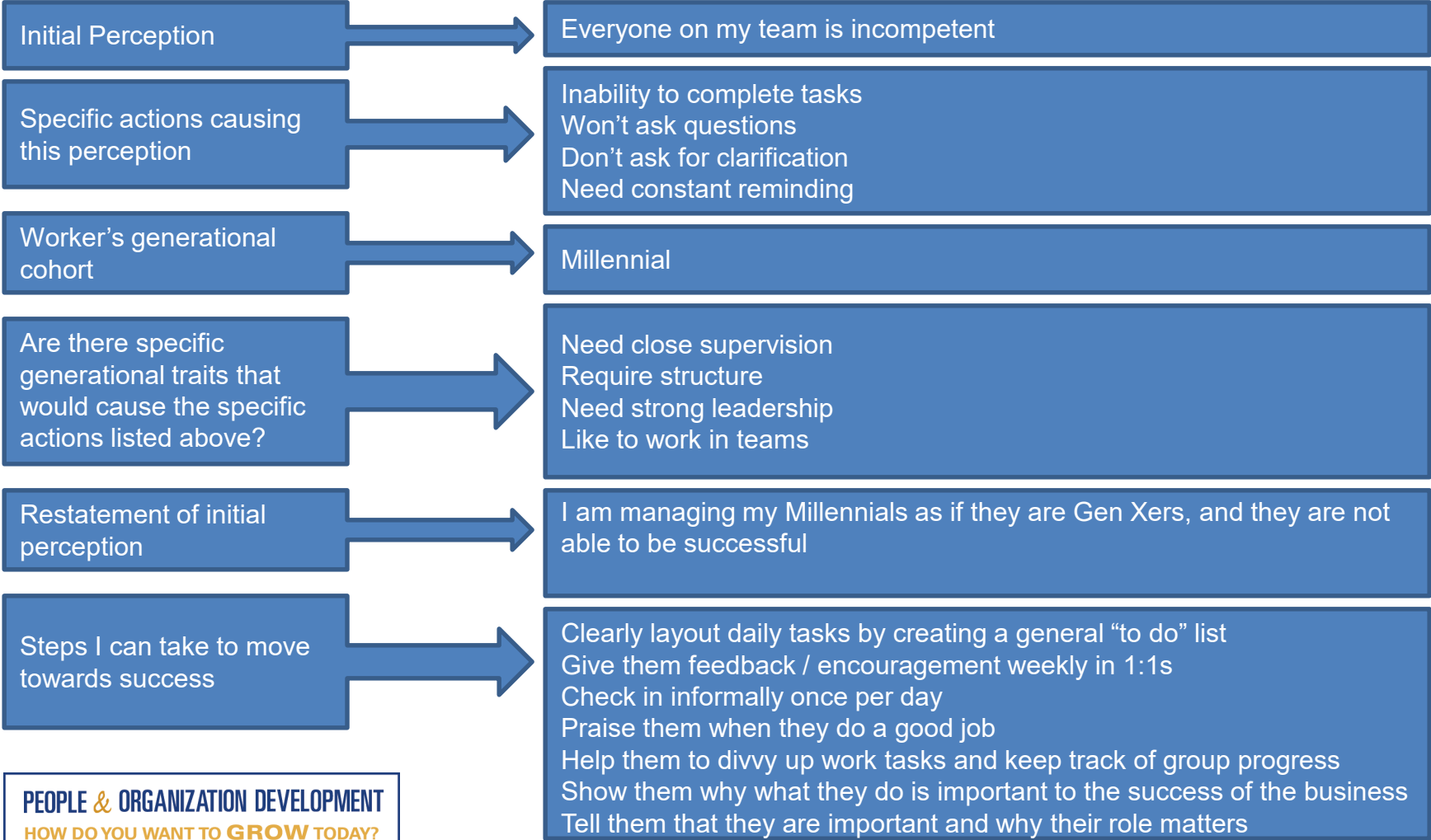
Use it:

- When you experience tension with another individual or group
- To dissect the problem
- To come up with a workable solution

Generational Management Decision Tree: Your Turn

- Think of a time when you experienced tension with a member of your team, your peer group, a customer, or anyone in your work circle
- Dissect the problem using the question prompts and the information you've just learned about Generational Cohort Theory
- Come up with a workable solution

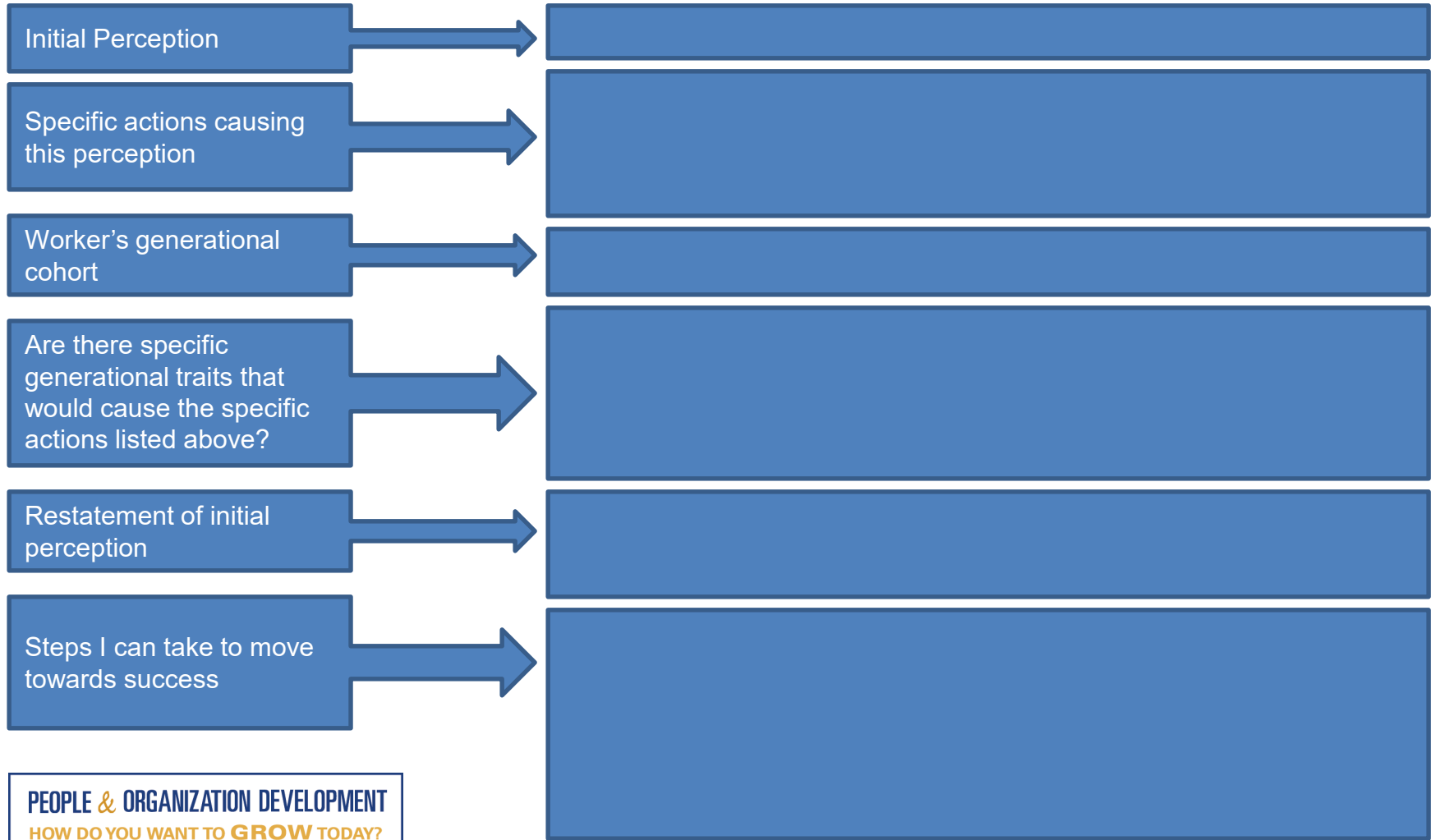
An Example to Get You Started



Now It's Your Turn

Generational Management Decision Tree

The Generational Management Decision Tree Tool



My Action Plan

Now that you have completed this course, make an action plan containing both action items that you will do back on the job to embrace generational diversity. Be sure to include a time frame, to help hold yourself accountable for doing what you plan.

Action Item	Time Frame
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	