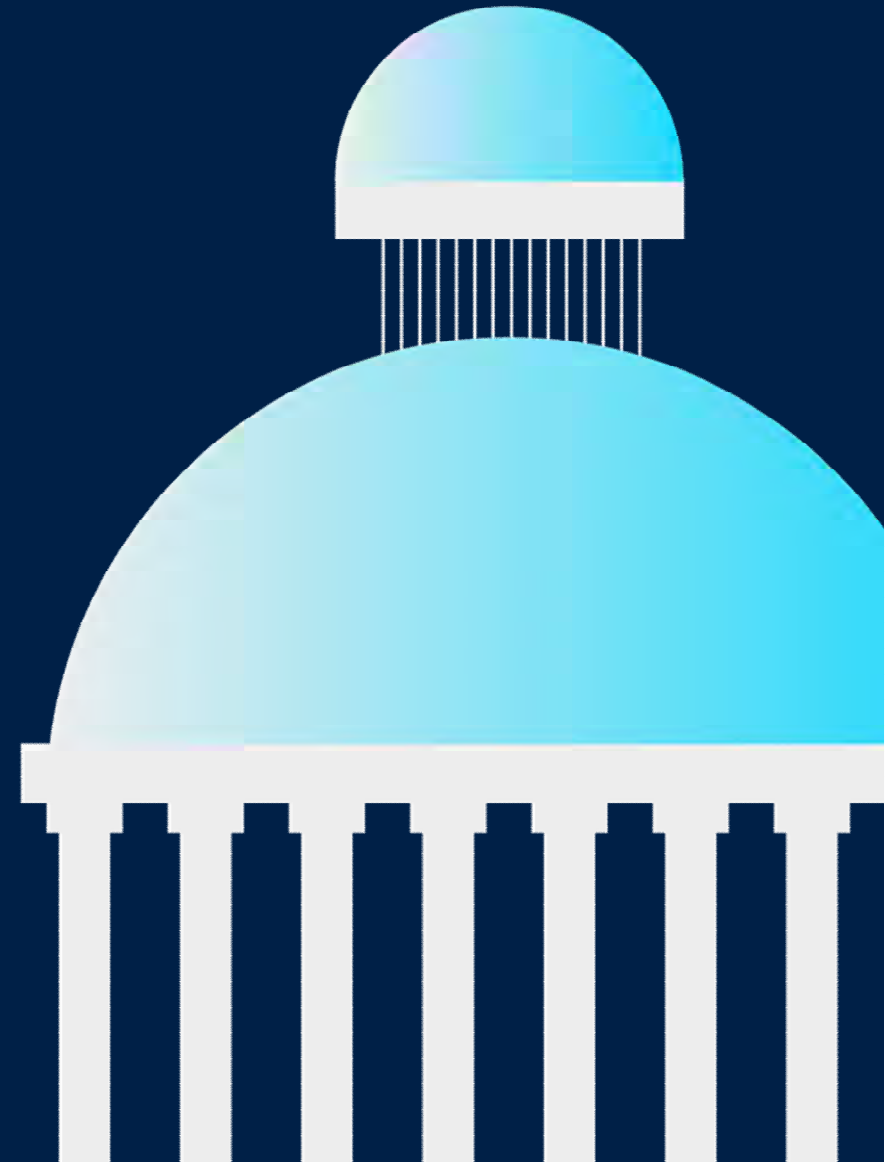


Gen Z & Intergenerational Dynamics: Your Insights and Ideas

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OXFORD
ELEVATE **Q5**



Overview



Q5

At the Oxford Elevate event on 16 March, Q5 designed and facilitated two interactive workshops with approximately 80 participants. These sessions built on the themes explored in the lectures and created space for participants to reflect, challenge assumptions, and share their perspectives.

This pack brings together the key ideas generated across both workshops. Rather than a transcript of discussions, it offers a synthesis of the most consistent, thought-provoking, and actionable insights.

What we explored

Workshop 1: Perspective Taking & Sense Making

In small groups, participants explored one of these questions:

- **How can organisations design workplaces that foster growth across generations?**
- **What tensions exist between generations, and what drives them?**
- **Who benefits from a multigenerational workforce – and who may be left behind?**

Participants were encouraged to adopt different perspectives and identify the challenges and opportunities for organisations to address or pursue in response to their assigned question.

Workshop 2: Reflection and Expansive Thinking

Participants reflected on lived experiences and explored:

- **How organisations can better support mental health and wellbeing**
- **What systemic changes – not just individual interventions – are needed**

Participants then applied expansive thinking to generate a range of ideas for how organisations can more effectively respond to these challenges.

At a Glance

These insights reflect the collective perspectives of participants at the Oxford Elevate event, highlighting both the complexity and the opportunity of designing organisations that work across multiple generations.

The challenge for organisations is not to eliminate these tensions, but to understand and navigate them – making conscious choices about how work is designed, how people are supported, and how different needs and expectations are balanced.

In doing so, organisations can move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches and create environments where individuals can both contribute to – and benefit from – a truly multigenerational workforce.

Workshop 1: Managing a Multi-generational Workforce

In small groups, participants explored a key question, adopting different perspectives and identifying the challenges and opportunities organisations can pursue.

- How can organisations design workplaces that foster growth across generations?
- What tensions exist between generations, and what drives them?
- Who benefits from a multigenerational workforce – and who may be left behind?

Themes and insights [1 of 2]

1

Different Definitions of Productivity

Observations:

- Gen Z are more likely to have “*a side hustle that takes time*” and view productivity as including “*multitasking*” and balancing multiple priorities
- Other generations are more likely to see their primary job as their main focus, with productivity linked to “*hours spent*” and sustained attention
- These differences can lead to misalignment in expectations and perceptions of performance (e.g., being seen to work vs. what is actually delivered). These differences are not always explicitly discussed, but can show up in how performance is judged or perceived

What’s the “so what” for organisations?

- Understand how productivity is currently defined across different groups (e.g., *through interviews, focus groups, or short surveys*) and identify where there is misalignment or tension
- Make explicit choices about how productivity should be measured and reflect this consistently in performance frameworks and day-to-day management (e.g., *through aligned objectives and metrics and structured feedback*)

2

Ensure “Flexibility” Is Equally Accessible

Observations:

- Flexibility enables autonomy, balance, and the ability to pursue additional opportunities (e.g. “*side hustles*”) or fulfil responsibilities (e.g. “*caring responsibilities*”)
- However, access is uneven and shaped by role type, seniority, and individual circumstances. For example:
 - Some roles (e.g. operational or frontline) have limited access to remote or flexible working
 - Early-career employees may feel less able to use flexibility due to visibility or progression concerns
 - Financial circumstances and “*insecurity*” can limit the extent to which individuals feel able to take advantage of flexible options

What’s the “so what” for organisations?

- Understand how access to flexibility varies across roles and groups (e.g., *through employee listening and role-based analysis*) and identify where flexibility is constrained in practice
- Design flexibility approaches that account for these differences, including role-specific solutions where needed (e.g., *offering shift-swapping for frontline roles, flexible start/finish times for office-based roles*)
- Establish clear guardrails for equitable access (e.g. *through manager guidance*)

3

Address Differences in Experiences of Security and Opportunity

Observations:

- Tensions between generations can be shaped by differing experiences of “*economic mobility, opportunity, and insecurity.*”
- Some individuals have experienced greater economic stability and opportunity for career progression. Others are navigating more uncertainty and not seeing the same opportunities
- This can lead to differing perspectives on risk, commitment or loyalty, and expectations for what an organisations should provide

What’s the “so what” for organisations?

- Understand how experiences of security and opportunity vary across groups (e.g., *through targeted interviews or focus groups*) and identify where particular groups feel disadvantaged or overlooked
- Make targeted choices about where to act (*decide where consistency vs flexibility is appropriate*) and reflect this in progression, benefits, and support mechanisms

Themes and insights [2 of 2]

4

A Multigenerational Workforce Is Not Automatically Inclusive

Observations:

- Diversity of age and experience is seen as a strength. However, “not all voices are equally heard or valued”:
 - Hierarchy and tenure can shape influence and decision-making
 - Younger employees may feel their perspectives are overlooked
 - More experienced employees may feel their expertise is undervalued in fast-changing environments
 - There is a need for “*diversity as a measure within decision-making*”

What’s the “so what” for organisations?

- Assess whose voices are currently shaping decisions – and whose are not, across forums and processes (e.g. *by reviewing key decision forums and gathering input across levels through interviews or focus groups*)
- Design or adapt forums to actively surface different perspectives, rather than relying on existing dynamics (e.g. *through structured input, rotating contributors, or pre-reads to gather views*)
- Support leaders in creating inclusive environments (e.g. *through targeted leadership development*)

5

Managers as Key Players

Observations:

- Managers are expected to navigate differing expectations, motivations, and working styles.
 - This includes mediating tensions around flexibility, performance, and communication styles
- Many managers feel underprepared for this aspect of their role and approaches can vary depending on individual capability, experience, and confidence

What’s the “so what” for organisations?

- Understand where managers are currently facing tension or ambiguity (e.g., flexibility, performance expectations, communication styles) (e.g., *through manager interviews, surveys, or real case examples*)
- Provide clear guidance on how to navigate these situations, including boundaries and decision-making principles (e.g., *through playbooks, frameworks, or practical guidance tools*)
- Invest in practical, scenario-based capability building, focused on real situations managers are encountering (e.g. *through workshops using real case studies or role-play scenarios*)
- Recognise and reinforce effective people management, not just delivery outcomes (e.g., *through performance management, feedback, and recognition mechanisms*)

Workshop 2: Responding to the Mental Health Crisis

This workshop focused on mental health in the workplace and workforce. Participants reflected on their own experiences - what they have seen, heard, or encountered within their own or other organisations, and were then invited to explore how organisations can better support mental health across different areas, using a range of levers and approaches.

Themes and insights [1 of 2]

1

Mental Health Is a Shared, Visible Challenge

Observations:

- Mental health challenges are increasingly visible and widely experienced.
- There is greater openness in discussing mental health, but also a recognition of ongoing challenges

What's the “so what” for organisations?

- Seek to understand the different ways mental health challenges are showing up across the organisation – what are the “signs”? (e.g., through surveys, focus groups, or analysing absence and engagement data)
- Assess how consistently understanding and support are experienced across teams and contexts (e.g., by comparing employee experiences across functions, roles, or managers)
- Assess whether current approaches reflect the scale and diversity of need, rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all solution (e.g., by reviewing uptake and effectiveness of existing support across different groups)

2

Support Is Often Reactive Rather Than Preventative

Observations:

- Support mechanisms (e.g. EAPs, resources) are generally available, but often only used once issues have escalated
- There is less focus on early intervention or prevention
- This can create a sense that support exists, but is not always accessible at the point it is most needed
- Ultimately, there appears to be a tendency to respond once someone is already struggling, rather than addressing underlying causes

What's the “so what” for organisations?

- Seek to understand when and how employees are currently accessing support, and whether this is happening early enough (e.g., by analysing usage data of support services and gathering employee feedback)
- Assess the extent to which current approaches focus on prevention vs reaction, including where gaps exist (e.g., by mapping current initiatives across the employee lifecycle)
- Assess the root causes driving mental health challenges (e.g., workload, lack of clarity, pressure), rather than focusing solely on downstream support

3

Work Design Drives Wellbeing

Observations:

- Wellbeing has been consistently linked to how work is structured and experienced day-to-day.
- Factors such as workload, competing priorities, and lack of clarity were cited as key contributors to stress
- Positive experiences were associated with *clarity*, *autonomy*, and *manageable expectations*
- In some cases, employees described environments where they felt unable to switch off or where expectations were unclear
- This reinforces that wellbeing is not separate from work – it is embedded within it

What's the “so what” for organisations?

- Seek to understand how work is currently experienced across teams, including workload, clarity, and prioritisation (e.g., through surveys, team discussions, or workload analysis)
- Assess where aspects of work design (e.g., role scope, expectations, processes) are contributing to stress or inefficiency
- Assess whether employees have sufficient clarity, control, and focus in their roles, and where this may need to be strengthened (e.g. through role clarity reviews, objective setting, or feedback loops)

Themes and insights [2 of 2]

5

Psychological Safety Enables both Wellbeing and Performance

Observations:

- Psychological safety in enabling both wellbeing and performance.
- Employees are more likely to “*speak up*”, “*ask for help*”, and contribute when they feel safe
- Conversely, “*fear of judgement*” or negative consequences can prevent people from doing so
- This can lead to reluctance to admit struggle, challenge workload, or provide upward feedback
- As a result, issues may remain hidden until they escalate

What’s the “so what” for organisations?

- Seek to understand how safe employees feel to speak up, ask for help, and challenge, across different teams and levels (e.g., *through surveys, focus groups, or team-level discussions*)
- Assess 1) how consistently psychological safety is experienced across teams and 2) where fear of judgement or negative consequences may be preventing openness, and how this manifests in practice
- Understand the role leaders play in shaping the environment around them, and build their capability to create psychologically safe environments (e.g., *through leadership development, feedback, and coaching*)

Q5 – workshop facilitators

Get in touch with Q5:






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Awards & recognitions

