



# **Harnessing Age Diversity for Workplace Excellence**

A Whitepaper on Bridging Generational Gaps and Developing Mid-Career Talent: Key Insights from the 2024 EDGE-EY-EqualVoice Survey of 400+ Swiss Business Professionals.

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## It is time to double down on Age-Inclusive Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I)

Now, more than ever, workplace Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) is becoming increasingly critical because:

- Diverse talent across all age groups and demographics chooses to work for organisations that demonstrate a real commitment to DE&I.
- Sustainability-driven investors want to invest in companies that make DE&I a priority, including those that embrace multigenerational workforce strategies.
- Customers prefer to do business with, and buy from, organizations that demonstrate DE&I values that align with their own, including age-inclusive practices and policies.

These three reasons show why DE&I must be addressed as the business-critical mission that it is. And why organizations must be able to move from commitment to action and from action to impact in a visible and credible way.

## Swiss Businesses at a Crossroads: Harnessing the Power of Age Diversity

In an era where talent is the ultimate competitive edge, Swiss companies are uniquely positioned to leverage the strengths and potential of a multi-generational workforce. The 2024 EDGE-EY-EqualVoice Survey, conducted in the first half of 2024, gathered insights from over 400 business professionals across diverse sectors and organisational levels in Switzerland. This comprehensive individual-level analysis provides new insights into two critical opportunities—bridging the generational divide and avoiding a leadership crisis—for organisations to bolster Switzerland’s economic strength.



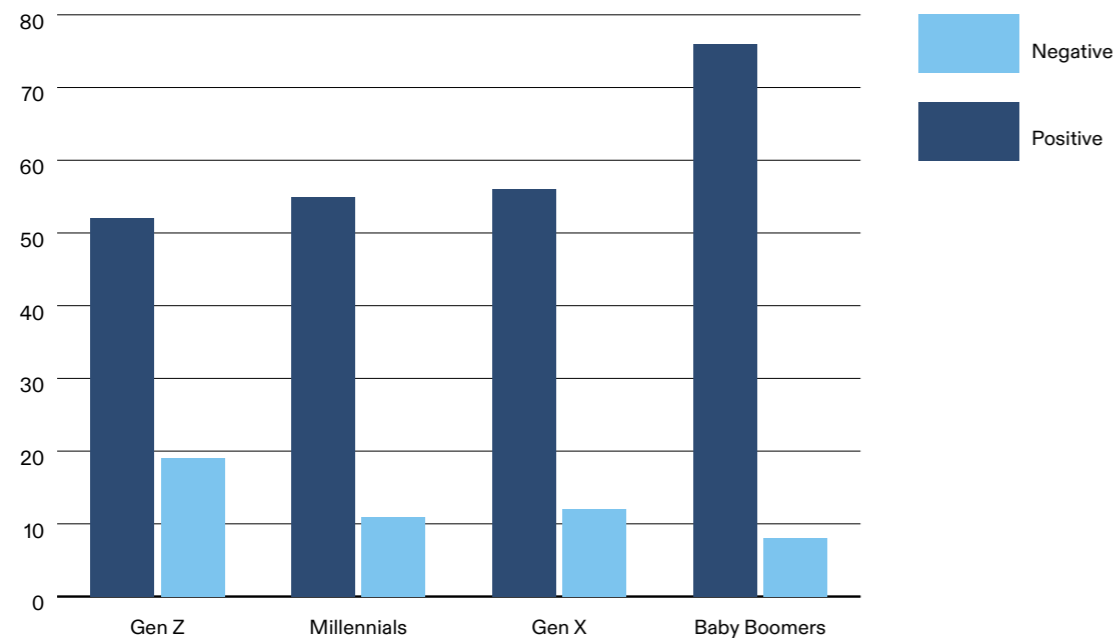
“The results indicate enormous potential; only the Baby Boomer generation broadly believes that their companies systematically promote the individual qualities of each generation.”

Aniela Unguresan  
Founder, EDGE Certified Foundation

# The Collaboration Conundrum: Bridging the Generational Divide

The Swiss workforce recognises the value of age-diverse teams, with most surveyed leaders (65%) acknowledging their importance for innovation and competitiveness. However, business leaders must take the helm in strategically leveraging each generation's unique strengths in their workforce planning and development.

Our study reveals a significant gap in perceptions: Gen Z reports the highest dissatisfaction with intergenerational teamwork (19%), and Baby Boomer colleagues (aged 60–66+) see intergenerational collaboration as the most positive. This disconnect represents a strategic business imperative that requires proactive leadership from the C-suite to build robust intergenerational teams.



Graphic 1: “How would you rate the current level of inter-generational collaboration in your workplace? At 76%, Baby Boomers report the highest satisfaction with intergenerational collaboration, while Gen Z expresses the most concerns about cross-generational workplace dynamics. [Generation Age Ranges: Gen Z: <28y, Millennials: 29-43, Gen X: 44-59, Baby Boomer: 60-66].

Forward-thinking organisations are moving beyond traditional mentoring programs toward strategic intergenerational workforce planning to address this. This approach involves:

- Defining for each department or team what the strength of each generation is to drive the respective business purpose.
- Deliberately designing project teams that capitalise on each generation's strengths.
- Creating inclusive leadership frameworks that recognise and amplify generational advantages.

## Why It Matters

The implications of this generational disconnect extend far beyond day-to-day operations. As companies face increasing pressure to innovate, the inability to bridge generational perspectives creates a significant innovation bottleneck.

Organisations risk stagnation when younger employees' fresh ideas cannot effectively merge with the seasoned expertise of experienced colleagues. This risk is particularly acute as the Baby Boomer generation approaches retirement, threatening to take decades of invaluable knowledge with them.

Moreover, in today's volatile markets, organisational adaptability has become paramount—a quality that flourishes only when diverse age perspectives are successfully integrated into decision-making processes.

Strategic workforce planning that effectively harnesses these generational dynamics has become a key differentiator between companies that merely survive and those that thrive in the modern business landscape.



“A multigenerational workforce harnesses the unique strengths of each generation and creates a dynamic and innovative environment. However, companies must learn to strategically utilise these diverse talents to truly optimise business performance.”

Isabelle Staiger  
Partner, People and Workforce | EY Switzerland

## Toolbox

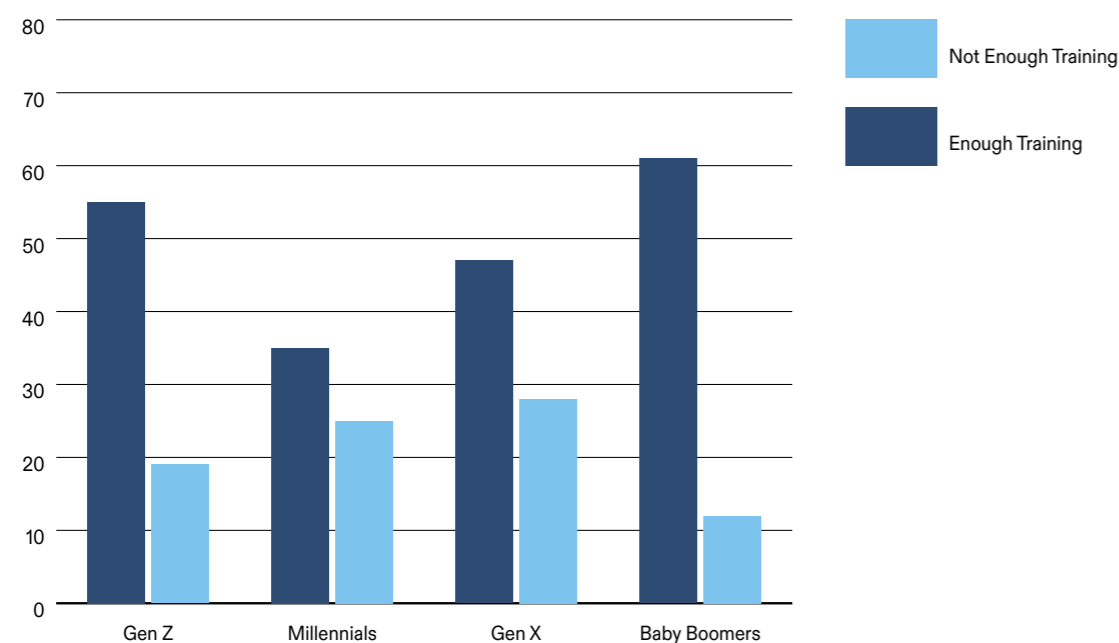
### “Collaboration Conundrum”

To effectively address intergenerational collaboration challenges, organisations may consider the following actions:

- **Cross-Generational Project Teams:** Deliberately mix age groups in project teams to foster mutual understanding and learning and leverage diverse skills.
- **Communication Training:** Implement programmes to help employees understand and adapt to different communication styles.
- **Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring:** Establish two-way mentoring programmes to facilitate knowledge transfer and build cross-generational relationships.
- **Technology Buddies:** To bridge the digital divide, pair tech-savvy employees with those less comfortable with new tools.
- **Emphasise Shared Goals:** Focus on common objectives to unite diverse teams and minimise age-based divisions.
- **Track Progress of Intergenerational Collaborations:** Focus on team productivity and innovation outputs, as well as employee satisfaction scores across age groups, retention rates of employees from different generations, and the knowledge/wisdom transfer effectiveness.
- **Wisdom Circles:** Organise regular cross-generational meetings where employees share insights on specific challenges.

# The ‘Middle-Child’ Effect: A Looming Leadership Crisis

While companies focus on onboarding young talent and developing senior leadership, mid-career professionals—the backbone of the Swiss industry—are perceived as being overlooked (see Graphic 2). With Millennials and Gen X comprising over 70% of Switzerland’s workforce\*, this oversight poses a material risk to organisational resilience and long-term success.



Graphic 2: “In my current job I am given the training opportunities I need to improve my skills.” Gen Z and Baby Boomers report the highest satisfaction with training opportunities, while Millennials and Gen X express more concerns about their professional development. [Generation Age Ranges: Gen Z: <28y, Millennials: 29-43, Gen X: 44-59, Baby Boomer: 60-66]

\* Source: Swiss Federal Statistical Office

This challenge demands a coordinated response from business leadership across functions:

- Succession planning and leadership pipeline development.
- Innovation capacity and market adaptability.
- Long-term competitive positioning in global markets.

## Why It Matters

The repercussions of neglecting mid-career talent reverberate throughout the entire organisational structure. As senior leaders retire, companies face an impending leadership vacuum, with mid-career professionals potentially lacking the necessary skills and competencies to step into these crucial roles.

This leadership development gap threatens operational continuity and innovation capacity—particularly as these mid-career professionals often serve as crucial bridges between traditional practices and emerging technologies. Their position at the intersection of experience and adaptability makes them vital to maintaining Swiss companies’ global competitiveness.

Without a strong, well-developed middle tier, organisations risk compromising their business continuity and knowledge transfer capabilities, potentially undermining decades of accumulated institutional wisdom and market advantage.

# Toolbox

## “Middle-Child” Effect

To implement strategies for addressing the “middle child” effect, organisations may consider the following actions:

- **Targeted Development Programmes:** Create learning initiatives specifically for mid-career professionals.
- **Skills Gap Analysis:** Regularly assess and address skill gaps across all career stages.
- **Cross-Generational Learning Teams:** Form diverse teams to work on projects that require a mix of new and traditional skills.
- **Mentoring and Reverse Mentoring:** Encourage knowledge sharing between different career stages.
- **Personalised Learning Paths:** Offer flexible, self-directed learning options that cater to individual needs and schedules.
- **Skill Acquisition Metrics:** Track the rate of new skill acquisition among mid-career professionals.
- **Internal Mobility:** Monitor the rate at which mid-career employees move into new roles or take on expanded responsibilities.
- **Engagement Scores:** Measure changes in engagement levels among this group.
- **Leadership Readiness:** Assess the pipeline of mid-career professionals ready for senior roles.



“Age diversity not only enriches collaboration but strengthens the entire working atmosphere. Companies that specifically focus on multigenerational teams promote openness and enthusiasm for innovation in everyday work.”

Dr Annabella Bassler  
CFO Ringier AG & Initiator EqualVoice

## The Broader Context

The Collaboration Conundrum and Middle-Child Effect emerge as key insights from our data set gathered across Swiss organisations. These insights mark only the beginning of a deeper understanding of intergenerational dynamics, allowing executive decision-makers—including CEOs, CFOs, COOs, and CSOs—to develop actionable strategies. This thorough approach is a first step in enabling business leaders to cultivate true intergenerational wisdom, transforming age diversity from an organisational challenge into a powerful competitive advantage.

## From Insights to Action

The 2024 EDGE-EY-EqualVoice Survey reveals that Switzerland is at an important juncture in leveraging its multigenerational workforce. The data points to two clear imperatives that demand executive attention: addressing the satisfaction gap in cross-generational collaboration and preventing the erosion of leadership capability as mid-career professionals remain underdeveloped.

Forward-thinking C-suite leaders are responding by fostering a culture of intergenerational wisdom—an environment where diverse age perspectives are accommodated, actively sought out and valued. This cultural transformation manifests through three key strategic actions:

**01** They embed generational diversity into strategic workforce planning, moving beyond traditional mentoring to create intentional team structures that maximise each generation's strengths. This approach has been shown to accelerate innovation cycles and improve knowledge retention.

**02** They are reimagining mid-career development as a business-critical investment rather than an HR programme. By focusing on this crucial demographic, companies are building robust leadership pipelines while maintaining their competitive edge in global markets. These mid-career professionals become the custodians and catalysts of intergenerational wisdom, ensuring valuable insights flow freely across organisational layers.

**03** Finally, they are positioning generational intelligence as a core business capability and cultural cornerstone. In Switzerland's knowledge-intensive economy, organisations that cultivate environments where multiple generations readily share insights, challenge assumptions and collaborate openly see tangible improvements in market performance, innovation capacity and talent retention.

Companies that successfully nurture this culture of intergenerational wisdom create more than just effective teams—they build learning organisations where institutional knowledge and fresh perspectives combine to drive continuous innovation.

This cultural foundation and strategic action enable Swiss companies to maintain their global leadership position while building more resilient and adaptive organisations. In an era where talent determines market success, making intergenerational wisdom a lived experience rather than an aspirational goal isn't just good practice—it's a business imperative that deserves sustained C-suite attention and investment.



### **About EDGE Certified Foundation**

<https://www.edge-cert.org>

EDGE Certification® is the global standard for workplace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I), focusing on gender and intersectional equity. Based on measurable evidence and independently audited, it provides organisations a credible way to demonstrate their DE&I commitment and performance.

The certification framework evaluates four key pillars: talent pipeline representation, pay equity, policy effectiveness and cultural inclusiveness. The assessment examines statistics, policies and employee experience against EDGE Standards, with action plans developed to address identified gaps.

EDGE offers three certification levels for gender-binary assessment: EDGE Assess (commitment), Move (progress) and Lead (success). The EDGEplus add-on certification extends analysis to intersectional factors including non-binary gender identity, LGBTQ+, race/ethnicity, nationality, age and disability. Certifications are valid for two years.

### **About EDGE Empower**

<https://www.edgeempower.com>

EDGE Empower® is a leading software solution for measuring, tracking and advancing workplace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives, provided by EDGE Strategy. The platform enables organisations to meet compliance requirements and achieve EDGE Certification® while leveraging DE&I as a competitive advantage in talent acquisition, customer relationships and investor relations.

Trusted by more than 250 organisations across 57 countries and 27 industries, including global leaders like L'Oréal, Allianz, Chevron, the World Bank Group and various UN agencies, EDGE Empower® has established itself as the go-to DE&I management platform.

### **About EY**

[https://www.ey.com/en\\_ch](https://www.ey.com/en_ch)

The global EY organization is a leader in assurance, tax, transaction and advisory services. We leverage our experience, knowledge and services to help build trust and confidence in the capital markets and in economies all over the world. We are ideally equipped for this task – with well trained employees, strong teams, excellent services and outstanding client relations. Our global purpose is to drive progress and make a difference by building a better working world – for our people, for our clients and for our communities.

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## About EqualVoice

<https://www.equalvoice.ch/en/>

75% of media coverage worldwide is about men (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020). The main goals of EqualVoice are to give women and men equal representation and to raise awareness of how the genders are portrayed in the media. The real-time measurement of the EqualVoice-Factor, an in-house developed semantic algorithm, is a tool for achieving these goals: it shifts the discussion from subjective perceptions of gender equality in publications to a factual basis. This serves as a foundation for developing solutions to the problem of equal representation in the media.

The EqualVoice initiative was launched in November 2019 by Ringer Group CFO Annabella Bassler and is headed by publisher Michael Ringier and CEO Marc Walder. In its capacity as an international media corporation, the Ringier Group leverages its journalistic and technological capabilities to champion gender equality. Currently, we analyse the gender visibility gap between women and men using the EqualVoice-Factor in text, images, and video content across 32 media brands in 7 countries, reaching 50 million users.

## About the EDGE-EY-EqualVoice 2024 Study

The inaugural EDGE-EY-EqualVoice Survey (2024) captures insights from more than 400 Swiss business professionals on intergenerational workplace dynamics. The study reveals how different generations collaborate, share knowledge and contribute unique perspectives within organisations. Drawing from real experiences across Swiss businesses, its findings illustrate pathways for companies to unlock the cultural wisdom that emerges when diverse age groups work together effectively.



We thank all contributors who shared their expertise and insights in the creation of this whitepaper.

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Their contributions and perspectives have shaped this comprehensive analysis of intergenerational workplace dynamics in Switzerland. This publication reflects their professional commitment to advancing workplace excellence and shall serve as a valuable resource for Swiss business leaders.



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