

00:09 - 00:37

Cara Silletto

Welcome to Bridge the Gap podcast. I'm your contributor host, Cara Silletto. If we haven't met yet, I am the president and chief retention officer at Magnet Culture, a firm dedicated to reducing unnecessary employee turnover. And I'm the creator of the employee retention ecosystem. In fact, I am so glad to be back. As some of you may remember my name as a contributing podcaster for this series in 2021.

00:37 - 01:12

Cara Silletto

And others of you may have seen me and my speaking team from the Magnet Culture Crew keynote at different conferences in your state, or even at your own company meeting. So it's really great to continue the conversation on this podcast again and be able to dive deeper and give some updates on what we have been doing. Now, I started my career in Senior Living 20 years ago, and I worked at one of the state associations, which is where I learned about the complex regulatory and reimbursement environment in which you operate.

01:13 - 01:41

Cara Silletto

So in 2021, the Bridge the Gap crew invited me to be a contributing podcast host, and I covered a series of retention insights and strategies, including why people really leave organizations, the true cost of turnover, the evolution of our workforce by generation. I happen to be one of the oldest millennials, by the way. So the generational message has been a specialty of mine for over a decade now.

01:41 - 02:10

Cara Silletto

We also talked about how to stay connected to your frontline workforce and avoid that unknowing disconnect. That kind of happens over time if we're not intentional about it. We also dove into ways that we can improve our emotional intelligence, how we can enhance our onboarding, to get new hires to stay longer, and so much more. So those episodes for 2021 are actually still available if you missed them or if you want a refresher.

02:10 - 02:37

Cara Silletto

So check them out at BTG voice.com, and you can simply search my name. Cara Silletto and all my past episodes will pop up, including some guest episodes that I did over the years with Josh and Lucas as well. All right, today I'm excited to give you an update on the evolution of our workforce and share a new analogy that we've been teaching to help leaders better understand today's new workforce.

02:37 - 03:00

Cara Silletto

All right. Things have changed, my friends. Things have changed quite a bit. I feel like they're changing faster and faster every year. In fact. And before I dive into that, if you're not familiar with my approach, I just wanted to give you a little heads up. For the last 13 years, I've been focused on bridging generational gaps and reducing unnecessary employee turnover.

03:00 - 03:25

Cara Silletto

And in the way that I do my work, I had been known to share what leaders need to hear, not what they want to hear. Okay. So I just want to give you that heads up, because I do this job and have these messages. I do it with love. I try to be as kind as I can. I'm not always like, nice, you know, and and sugarcoat everything.

03:25 - 03:39

Cara Silletto

But I will try to be kind because I want leaders to be the best they can be. And I want to create places where people want to come back tomorrow. So I'm going to try to use as much tact as I can over these episodes coming this year.

03:39 - 04:13

Cara Silletto

But let's be honest, this harsh reality of why people stay, why people go, how attractive are we as an organization, really? You know, this harsh reality needs to be addressed head on. We can't just act like, oh well, we're doing the best we can, and that should be good enough to keep people. Because sometimes, you know, what we've done isn't going to work for the next generation that comes in. And sometimes we think that, well, we know it's better today than it was.

04:13 - 04:42

Cara Silletto

We're working on getting better with our onboarding and our leadership development and communication and areas like that. But if I were to put you up against an organization down the street or even an organization in a completely different industry, because we know some of our staff not only job hop but industry hop. How competitive are you really? How attractive are you really both as an organization?

04:42 - 05:06

Cara Silletto

And then I just want to talk to you for a second. How about as a leader, how much do you listen to your people? How much do you learn from your people? How much have you adjusted and adapted your leadership and communication approach? Over the years, as the workforce has evolved around you? So again, I'm going to do my best to share these strategies with love.

05:06 - 05:31

Cara Silletto

But I'm also going to give the real situation that's going on and some hard truths that we may need to address as leaders and organizations. So I welcome you along for the ride, and I'm always available if you want to connect with me on LinkedIn. I can answer any questions throughout the year. If

anything pops into your head, or if you disagree with what I say or you agree with what I say, I'd love to hear that feedback.

05:31 - 06:00

Cara Silletto

So please connect with me and let's have that ongoing conversation. First, today I want to share some demographic updates on what's going on. As I mentioned, I've been talking about generational dynamics for over a decade, and I love doing our new generational keynote and even our deeper dive workshops because these light bulb moments that are coming to leaders when they hear about how the new workforce was raised, it is really, really helpful.

06:00 - 06:15

Cara Silletto

So I will, of course, dive way deeper into that in a future episode this year. But I just wanted to give for our January episode kind of an overview of what do our 2026 generational demographics even look like.

06:15 - 06:57

Cara Silletto

Now, if you look at just the birth year of the four generations that are working today, we've got baby boomers, you know, born 46 to 64. We've got Gen Xers, born 65 to 1980. We've got millennials born from 1981 to 1996. And then we've got Gen Z, which is now the group born after 1997 and later. So if we just look at the birth year numbers of these groups, it almost looks like an hourglass. You may have heard me talk about this before. We had, you know, 76 million baby boomers, a huge generation. Gen X came in behind them at only 55 million strong.

06:57 - 07:45

Cara Silletto

So that was a much smaller group than the millennials. And imagine that hourglass again, millennials were a bit bigger at 62 million, and Gen Z. Now we're calculating probably about 65 million there. So this is why having that smaller Gen X group, they tended to do what their baby boomer bosses told them to do. That's kind of what I, what I typically say is I kind of fell in line with the way we've always done it, or the way the baby boomers told them to work. Why? Because the boomers said so, you know, and back then it was a you listened to your boss, you respect your elders. Why? Because they said so. So we have this kind of baby boomer Gen X way that we did things for a long, long time.

07:45 - 08:20

Cara Silletto

And then when my generation, the millennials, came into the work world 20 years ago-ish, we started pushing back far more than the previous generations of saying, why do we do it that way? And I don't want to work for a company that does it that way and looking for other options. So the Gen Z folks kind of got on the millennial bandwagon and have also today said, yeah, I'm not going to work for a company that doesn't invest in me with professional development, who doesn't have time for me as a busy leader who doesn't communicate effectively with me, who doesn't give me flexible schedules.

08:20 - 09:08

Cara Silletto

You know, it's interesting because I feel like the Boomer Xer, friends of mine and colleagues of mine, they understand what it was like to just do what you're told, and you just show up. You come to work sick because the job's got to get done. You know, you stay till the job gets done. There is that type of mentality and upbringing of the work world with the Baby Boomers and Gen Xers. And then, of course, we've shifted a lot since the Millennials and Gen Xers showed up to say, now, you know, we've been talking about work-life balance for ten plus years. We've been talking about self-care, now of don't run yourself ragged, don't stay till the job gets done because it's never going to be done. So you need to just leave at 5:00 or whatever your shift ends, and head home.

09:08 - 09:46

Cara Silletto

And so there happens to be this pretty big kind of frustration, gap and conflict that comes from these different mindsets that we have. And there's not one that's right or wrong. You know, some of them certainly lead to more productivity and profitability, and things like that. But if we don't understand what makes the new workforce tick and what really brings them in, draws them into the organization, and then retains them, if we just try to push the baby boomer Gen X mindset and weigh on to the Millennials and Gen Z, of course, we're going to push them away.

09:46 - 10:40

Cara Silletto

And then that doesn't help productivity and profitability, because we're now bringing in new hires every single day, week, or month. And so we have to find a balance. How do we kind of meet in the middle? I am not here to say that one side should win or that there's a right or wrong here, but we have to understand how it's been done, how the workforce has evolved, and what we need to do moving forward. So those numbers that I gave you were the birth year numbers or birth rates that we had by generation. But I wanted to share with you what we're looking at going into 2026 as far as the current labor force numbers. Okay. So the labor force is very, very different. Remember, I mentioned an hourglass kind of visual for the number that was born here in the US.

10:40 - 11:19

Cara Silletto

But if you flip that hourglass the opposite direction almost, you know, just like a, like a bowl or like a man. What would be that analogy? I mean, just like a circle, right? Instead of an hourglass, we're looking at more of a circle. And so at the top, believe it or not, the baby boomers today only make up 14% of the workforce. Now, because we all know baby boomers are retiring 10,000 a day and we still have a lot of baby boomers, though, in senior leadership positions, in our boards, in our executive teams, and even across our staff. To some extent, as well.

11:19 - 12:24

Cara Silletto

But the baby boomer number is only 14%, while the Gen Xers are now 30%. And of course, take up most of the leadership positions today. And the millennials are 36%. So, even larger than that, the Gen Xers and millennials make up the bulk of the workforce for sure right now, both in the workforce and in those leadership seats. And then Gen Z. Now, remember, this group is only up to about age

27 or so, 28, and they go all the way down into teenage years. So we haven't even met all the Gen Zers yet, but the ones we have met that have entered the workforce, there are only about 20% of the workforce. So just to put that perspective here, 14% baby boomers at the top, then we got 30% Gen X, 36% millennials, and 20% Gen Z. It really has changed the dynamics of our work world today.

12:24 - 13:12

Cara Silletto

Because, you know, the boomers held so much control for so long. And now that is transitioning to some of the Gen Xers, of course, but also millennials are now in our 40s. So I happened to be born in 1981. I'm one of the oldest millennials, and I am 44 years old. Right. We're not the young spring chickens that we once were. Most of those millennials are now in their 30s and early 40s. And so we do sit in a lot of organizational leadership positions as well. So as I mentioned, I'll dive into more of the dynamics around this in a future episode. But if you want to get a sneak peek, you can go to magnetvault.com, and you can download my latest little purple mini book, which is called It's Not About Birth Year.

13:12 - 13:44

Cara Silletto

So spoiler. Even though I just gave you all these demographics based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it's really not about birth year, okay? It's more about a person's mindset. How were they raised? What was their parenting like, what was their community, their surrounding upbringing like? And that is how we shape how traditional thinking we are or how, you know, more new mindset thinking we are, and how we view that employer-employee relationship.

13:45 - 14:35

Cara Silletto

So just wanted to give you the update on those demographics for now. And then the other big piece of info I wanted to share today is a new analogy that we've been sharing to really understand today's new workforce, especially this millennial Gen Z population. Although I would argue that even Boomers and Xers have shifted their priorities, they have shifted the way they do what they do. And so many of them are evolving with the workforce and then even just changing as a person, maybe setting some of their own personal priorities ahead in the work-life balance conversation and wanting to put themselves before the job. At this point, I heard a lot of folks over the years, especially coming out of the pandemic. That said, you know, enough is enough.

14:35 - 15:37

Cara Silletto

And I'm not just going to be a workaholic. I cannot work this much. And so folks of all different ages started to recalibrate and rethink the way that they show up at work and how much they are giving to the organization. I will also say that I truly believe the workaholic era is over, that it is going to be so hard moving forward to find folks who will work a ton of hours, a ton of overtime for the organization. It's not that it doesn't exist, but just be prepared. Here's one of these harsh realities. Be prepared. If you have an overachieving workaholic in a leadership position at your organization, or even in a non-leadership position, be prepared to replace them with two people when they leave. All right. So we have to kind of think about how this has changed over the years and what that's going to mean for staffing and stability moving forward.

15:37 - 16:36

Cara Silletto

It's going to get harder and harder to find those workaholics, and most of them who leave over time are going to need to be replaced by two. I've even heard stories of three replacement people in some scenarios, unfortunately, so we have to be prepared for that as we watch this workforce evolve. So, now let's get to this new analogy. Now, if any of you have read my purple book from 2018 called *Staying Power: Why Your Employees Leave and How to Keep Them Longer*, you may recall the beginning part of this analogy. However, we've spent years now creating a more helpful and relevant approach that is helping leaders connect better with their people. So now, years ago, an executive called me and said, hey, my friend, my buddy told me to call you because you are good at reducing employee turnover, but I'm not sure I actually have a turnover problem because I've got folks who've been with me 20 years.

16:36 - 17:35

Cara Silletto

I know how to keep people. It's just these new hires. And he was particularly talking about the younger workers, you know, kind of blaming them and saying they have no loyalty. They have, you know, so much entitlement, and they're just job hoppers, and they don't want to work, you know, all those stereotypical complaints and things. And it was interesting because that day, when he mentioned to me he's got folks who've worked for him 20 years, and it's just the new hires that are the problem.

I immediately realized that it's like having two different workforces, okay? And it sort of breaks down to that generational breakdown of like, Boomer Xers mindset. Again, it's not about their birth year. It's about a person's mindset. It's like there's a more traditional-minded workforce. That tends to be those who've been with us a long time. And then there's a new workforce mindset that is the younger or newer hires that are coming in could be any age, but they're coming in as a new hire.

17:35 - 18:42

Cara Silletto

All right. So the way that we see the more traditional mindset is we call them the trees. They are deep-rooted in the organization. Think of it like a 20-year-old oak, a 20-year-old oak. You are not going to transplant a 20-year-old oak, okay. The roots are too deep, too wide. It is too comfortable where it is right now to make a big change. And a lot of folks have been with an organization a long time, are not big fans of change, and they may love it there. They may be very comfortable and happy there, or they may just be comfortable there and not so happy, but they're not going anywhere. So a lot of times we love our trees.

But a lot of times, you know, they are probably not going to go anywhere, even if we wanted them to. Now, the great thing about our trees, though, is they're dependable. They can weather the storm anytime. Things get tough, get busy, get hectic. They're going to be there. They're stable, they're sturdy. And so we depend on these trees.

18:42 - 19:37

Cara Silletto

We love having our trees, but we cannot expect that new hires coming in today are going to end up like a 20-year-old oak that they're going to stay in that one company or even that one position for a long, long time and have these really deep roots and all of that. It's just not happening. So the new workforce that we're bringing in today, now, we used to call this other side of the analogy the revolving door.

Right. But we came up with a more relevant analogy. So now we've got the trees as our deep-rooted folks have been with us forever. And then we've got now the new hires coming in. Think of them more like house plants. All right. They're more like house plants if you visualize a bunch of different house plants. I mean, there's hundreds if not thousands of varieties of house plants, and there's a spectrum of needs of these house plants.

19:37 - 20:14

Cara Silletto

Now, if we go back to the trees for a minute, Mother Nature just treated them all the same, like, hey, you're all getting some rain today in that one forest. Hey, you're all going to get sunshine today. And it was very much a one-size-fits-all care plan for all these trees in this one forest, this one company. Okay, but with the house plants, you cannot treat an orchid like you do a cactus. You will either overwater the cactus or underwater the orchid. If you try to treat them as a one-size-fits-all model. So instead, we see this new

20:14 - 20:45

Cara Silletto

Analogy is so helpful for leaders. They come up to me after every session and say, that house plant analogy really got me thinking differently, you know, because I ask them, what house plant is each of your team members? So do you have some orchids that are a bit high maintenance? You know, some of our staff like to be put on a pedestal, and they need more sunshine and more attention. And then you've got folks on the other end of that spectrum, which would be a cactus, a succulent, you know, what are we, once a month? Leave me alone, boss.

20:45 - 21:09

Cara Silletto

Like, come say hi, see if I need anything, and then let me do my thing, and don't bother me. So you got this other end of the spectrum. And most staff, I would say, are in between. They're not the highest maintenance, and they're not the lowest maintenance. They need attention and care and nutrients and love, you know, at least a few times a week or once a week or something in between that.

21:09 - 21:33

Cara Silletto

But if a leader understands that each one of their people has a different care plan that is needed, then they're more likely to keep everybody happy. Unfortunately, I still see some managers who say, well, I have to treat everybody equally. I have to treat them the same way because that's the only way to stay fair. And I got to tell you, that is an old school leadership model.

21:33 - 21:57

Cara Silletto

Now. Now we do need to be fair from a from an HR standpoint as far as policies and things like that, but as far as your leadership and your communication and your checking in with people, your support for your team, you have to give guidance and support to your team. And that guidance and support can be adapted and adjusted based on the person's needs.

21:58 - 22:23

Cara Silletto

Now, every new hire coming in is going to be more high-maintenance and need a lot more guidance and support starting out, but then over time, you will figure out where they land on that houseplant spectrum of when you need to check in with them over time. All right, so people may adjust. They might not be the same exact type of house plan or need the same care plan as when they came in six months in or six years in.

22:23 - 22:47

Cara Silletto

But you gotta stay on top of that and really think about it. And what was really great when we started talking about this individualized care plan idea for our employees, I thought, hello, we've been talking about individual care plans and senior care and senior living. And across the whole spectrum of care for a long, long, long time. So this is not a new this is not a new idea.

22:47 - 23:09

Cara Silletto

We've been doing that for our residents, our patients, those that we care for, our clients, all of these folks. And now we just have to shift that over to our employees as well. We can no longer use a one-size-fits-all type of approach. So throughout this whole series this year, you're going to hear me talk about the house plants.

23:09 - 23:57

Cara Silletto

You're going to hear me use a phrase that I love to say, which is water your plants. Okay. It's a very subtle way to remember to check in with your people and to take care of them in an individualized way. So if you want a tool for this, you can either water your plants as a recurring reminder on your calendar, which is great. You know, maybe whether you do that daily, weekly, monthly, you know, but just put that reminder on your calendar or you can write it on a post-it note, stick it to your computer. We actually created a downloadable phone wallpaper. That's a really great little houseplant graphic that says water your plants. So if you go to magnetcault.com, you can download that free phone wallpaper.

23:57 - 24:24

Cara Silletto

It'll show up on your phone. And while you're at work, every time you check your phone, it's going to remind you, what are your plants? Go check on your people. You know it'll pop up for that as well. So I am, like I said, so excited to be back to Bridge the Gap and to have these helpful discussions, hopefully, that are going to recalibrate your thinking around employee retention today and throughout this year.

24:24 - 25:29

Cara Silletto

So I'm excited to continue this journey with you. That's all I wanted to share. Today was just some very basic updates about where the workforce is at, how we're thinking about the new workforce differently, and so on. In my next Bridge the Gap episode, I'm actually going to introduce you to a broader model, a more comprehensive approach to reducing turnover called the Employee Retention Ecosystem. And throughout this year on my episodes, we're going to explore various implementation strategies of the different ecosystem components. It is actually broken into three roles of leaders and staff. And then it's broken down into six responsibilities that they have. And then it's broken down into 18 actions that have to be taken from the top, all the way down to our staff level. These 18 actions have to be put into place to create a place where people want to work. So that's going to be the focus of my series this year. I can't wait to dive into it with you.

25:29 - 25:56

Cara Silletto

But if you're impatient, you want all the strategies. Now you can connect with me on LinkedIn. You can subscribe to our Magnet Culture YouTube page. So youtube.com slash Magnet Culture. And you can certainly reach out to me, as mentioned on LinkedIn, any time to say hello, share your thoughts, or ask questions. I'd love to make this a dialog with each and every one of you. So I'm Cara Silletto. Thanks for listening to this week's Bridge the Gap contributor on Wednesday.