

# TRUE NORTH

In today's workplace climate, career advisory has gone beyond the simple act of placing clients into job roles. It has become an intricate art of helping clients navigate workplace complexities and interweaving that closely with an individual's beliefs, values and principles. As a career practitioner, you are tasked with the all-important role of helping one find meaning and fulfilment in their career. You are instrumental in their search for a purpose-driven life; for their **TRUE NORTH**.

## WHAT'S INSIDE



### FROM THE CASE CHEST

Beyond Traditional  
Coaching:  
The Advantage of  
Co-Advisory



### MAIN ARTICLE

Breaking Down Barriers:  
How Intergenerational  
Career Conversations  
Can Transform Your  
Workplace



### BOOK REVIEW

"Five Generations at Work:  
How We Win Together,  
For Good" by Rebecca Robbins  
and Patrick Dunne  
"Sticking Points" by Haydn Shaw

## Why Career Conversations Are Your Best Investment for Team Success



When Gabriel Lim, Government Relations Director at Acronis Singapore, first heard about career conversations, he wasn't sure what to expect. Fast-forward to today, a team of three has achieved something remarkable: 100% satisfaction and retention since implementing regular career conversations in April 2025.

### Breaking Free from the Annual Review Trap

"Employees should not only have Career Conversations during Performance Appraisals," Gabriel explains. "I see it as a year-long continuous journey between the employee and his manager."

This represents a fundamental shift from the traditional performance review model. Instead of waiting for formal, once-yearly discussions, Gabriel's team embraced ongoing conversations during lunch meetings and informal settings. By the time formal performance reviews arrive, managers and their employees already understand each other's goals and have identified concrete ways to bridge any gaps.

### The Power of Understanding Individual Profiles

Through Workforce Singapore's Career Conversations Guidebook, Gabriel's team learned to use the VIPs framework—mapping each employee's Values, Interests, Personality, and Skills. This simple tool enabled managers to tailor their approach: offering work-life balance discussions for senior employees while focusing on growth opportunities and learning for younger, ambitious team members.

### Creating the Conditions for Success

The transformation did not happen overnight. Gabriel's team participated in role-playing exercises, practising difficult conversations such as encouraging employees to step outside their comfort zones.

They learned to embed career conversations into daily routines rather than treating them as isolated events.

The impact has been profound. Gabriel's team now works on projects where they clearly understand success parameters, enjoy their responsibilities with minimal overlap, have creative freedom aligned with organisational goals, and continuously learn new skills. This has created what Gabriel calls a "virtuous cycle" of trust, happiness and exceptional team spirit.

### Why This Matters Now

"Every person wants to be heard and understood. The same can be said at the workplace," Gabriel reflects. "Employees feel more satisfied when they are deeply engaged in meaningful conversations in relaxed settings with their managers."

Career conversations are not just nice-to-have but they are essential for engagement, retention, and organisational success. Gabriel's experience at Acronis proves that when you move beyond traditional performance reviews to ongoing, meaningful dialogue, you don't just improve individual satisfaction - you transform entire team.



Ready to transform your team dynamics?  
Download the Career Conversations  
Guidebook and discover the tools that  
helped Acronis achieve team satisfaction.

[go.gov.sg/careerconversationgb-employer](https://go.gov.sg/careerconversationgb-employer)

**Want to share your career conversations success story?  
We'd love to hear from you.**



## TELL US YOUR STORY

If you have cases to share and would like them to be featured on this newsletter, feel free to write to [PCD@wsg.gov.sg](mailto:PCD@wsg.gov.sg)



## FROM THE CASE CHEST

# BEYOND TRADITIONAL COACHING: THE ADVANTAGE OF CO-ADVISORY

Career coaching provides individuals with self-awareness and guidance needed to make informed decisions. However, in an increasingly volatile labour market, guidance alone is often insufficient. Volunteer Career Advisors (VCAs) complement career coaching by offering practical, market-informed insights that enhance individual's readiness for professional transitions.

### BACKGROUND

"Irene" (not her real name), a finance professional in her early 40s, came with over 20 years of experience across the Asia-Pacific region. She held a Financial Business Partner role in a Danish technology firm.

After nine years with the same organisation, Irene felt stuck in her role with limited career progression and grew increasingly dissatisfied due to her supervisor's high, unclear expectations, intolerance for mistakes, and lack of work-life balance. When organisational dynamics shifted and she found herself consistently excluded from key development projects, she realised she needed to evaluate external opportunities rather than seeking growth within her current role.

### CAREER COACHING AND SELF-DISCOVERY

Irene wanted to understand her career strengths and weakness to decide on her next move. Through the Polaris by WSG programme, she engaged in structured coaching sessions to better understand her career direction.

During these sessions, Irene identified recognition and career progression as her primary career values – both of which were unmet in her current position. The coach helped her reflect on her professional identity, guiding her to position herself as a regional senior finance professional with deep experience. Drawing on Mihaly Robert Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow", she recognised that her strengths and satisfaction lay in solving complex financial problems, which reinforced her intention to remain within the finance domain.

Further assessments through the Workplace Big Five Profiling revealed specific areas for development. While Irene was technically strong, she acknowledged gaps in self-presentation and visibility - skills necessary for career advancement. The profiling also revealed latent strengths in leadership and people development that she had not fully recognised before. Building on these insights, Irene created several action plans following reflective questions asked by coach.

### COLLABORATION WITH A VCA

Irene also had many queries about the current labour market based on her experience in the field and how she might meet the employment demand given her experience in the field. The coach and Irene reviewed the list of VCAs and connected with VCA Adrian Ho, so that Irene could gain a better understanding of hiring strategies and recruitment opportunities available.

While coaching had enabled Irene to gain clarity and direction about her career values and strengths, Adrian provided something distinct: practical, market-informed insights grounded in industry experience.

In a three-way session facilitated by the coach, Adrian provided candid and actionable guidance to Irene. He first encouraged Irene to explore ways to improve existing systems within her organisation as a means of sustaining her role in the short term. However, recognising the signs of organisational restructuring, he also advised her to prepare for transition. Adrian recommended that Irene reconnect with her network in the manufacturing sector where her background would be more directly relevant and marketable, guiding her to reposition her resume to emphasise transferable experience from her earlier roles. He also provided realistic perspectives on salary expectations, current hiring trends, and market volatility, highlighting specific skill sets and courses that would enhance her competitiveness. This external validation enabled Irene to recalibrate her expectations and refine her strategy with greater precision and confidence.

### OUTCOME

After a month, the news of retrenchment broke but Irene was prepared. The prior joint intervention of the coach and VCA had significantly boosted her readiness for this transition. She had already begun upskilling, strengthened her professional branding, and reconnected with former colleagues in her network.

Leveraging these efforts, Irene successfully secured a Finance Manager position in a fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) company. Although the role offered a lower salary, it aligned more closely with her strengths and career aspirations and brought her closer to family and friends.

### CONCLUSION

Irene's experience illustrates the distinctive value of co-advisory support. While coaching facilitated self-awareness and strategic direction, the involvement of a VCA introduced elements that coaching alone could not provide - market realism, industry relevance, and sector-specific actionable insights. This collaboration enabled Irene to move beyond internal clarity to develop practical, market-informed strategies that facilitated timely decision-making when change was imminent. For Irene, this co-advisory connection was instrumental in transforming uncertainty into preparedness and ultimately into a successful career transition.

Contributed by:  
**Parameswari Seenivasan**

Career Coach  
Workforce Singapore





## MAIN ARTICLE

# BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS: HOW INTERGENERATIONAL CAREER CONVERSATIONS CAN TRANSFORM YOUR WORKPLACE



Picture this: A 24-year-old project executive sits across from a 60-year-old manager, both frustrated. The younger employee wants immediate feedback and career advancement, while the manager prefers structured, formal discussions. Sound familiar? This scenario plays out in Singapore's workplaces, highlighting a challenge in our modern workforce that demands urgent attention. Today's workplace spans four generations—from Baby Boomers to Generation Z—each bringing unique perspectives, communication styles, and career expectations. When harnessed effectively, this diversity can drive creativity and innovation. However, workplace stereotypes often create unnecessary barriers, with mature employees viewed as less adaptable and younger generations misunderstood for prioritising flexibility and digital-first approaches. Communication differences, traditional hierarchies, and rapid technological change widen generational gaps, but purposeful intergenerational career conversations can bridge these divisions and unlock collective multigenerational potential.

## Understanding the Generational Landscape

Each generation brings distinct characteristics shaped by their formative experiences.

- **Baby Boomers (1946-1964)** demonstrate strong work ethic and loyalty to employers, valuing hierarchy and formal structures while preferring face-to-face meetings and traditional processes. Their communication style remains formal and direct through phone calls, in-person meetings, and email with proper etiquette.
- **Generation X (1965-1980)** represents independent and self-reliant workers who are adaptable to change and technology. They value work-life balance and

efficiency, preferring straightforward, no-nonsense communication via email, phone, or brief meetings with clear agendas. This generation serves as a bridge between traditional and modern workplace approaches.

- **Millennials (1981-1996)** are tech-savvy and collaborative, driven by purpose and seeking meaningful work. They actively seek feedback and professional development opportunities, favouring interactive communication through instant messaging, video calls, and collaborative platforms with regular feedback loops.
- **Generation Z (1997-2012)**, as digital natives with entrepreneurial mindsets, value diversity, inclusion, and authenticity. They prefer flexible work arrangements and quick decision-making, communicating through visual, bite-sized content via messaging apps, social platforms, and brief video formats.

These differences are not merely preferences—they reflect fundamentally different approaches to work, career development, and professional relationships. Understanding these distinctions becomes the foundation for meaningful intergenerational career conversations that benefit everyone involved.

## The Hidden Costs of Generational Misunderstanding

The benefits of an intergenerational workforce include knowledge transfer, diverse skill sets, and comprehensive market understanding. However, the challenges are equally significant: communication gaps, conflicting work styles, and age-related stereotypes create barriers that prevent organisations from realising their full potential.

Managers often avoid career conversations due to fear of confronting challenging dialogues or concerns about making promises they may be unable to deliver, particularly to mature workers. Without proper frameworks, managers make decisions based on personal judgement rather than established guidelines, leading to employee disengagement and staff turnover.

This avoidance creates a vicious cycle where generational misunderstandings deepen, talent remains underutilised, and both young and mature employees feel unsupported in their career development aspirations.

### The Power of Purposeful Career Conversations

Intergenerational career conversations serve as strategic tools that unlock collective potential by bridging communication gaps and leveraging diverse strengths. Consider the transformative dialogue between Robert, a 60-year-old Project Director, and Jordan, his 24-year-old Project Executive.

With three years of experience and strong technical skills, Jordan felt ready to take on team leadership. He valued autonomy, skills mastery, and remote work, believing his technological and institutional strengths qualified him for advancement. However, he focused on individual productivity rather than on team dynamics.

Robert saw Jordan's restlessness and initiated a career conversation that transformed both their perspectives. Through their dialogue, Jordan discovered that leading an intergenerational team required understanding diverse communication preferences and work styles, skills he had not considered before.

"Each generation has unique communication preferences and work styles," Robert explained. "Some value in-person collaboration, others prefer structured processes. Building trust across these differences takes relationship-building, which is challenging when working primarily remotely."

This conversation illustrates the mutual benefits of intergenerational dialogue. Jordan gained insights into leadership complexity and the importance of cross-generational relationship building, while Robert demonstrated how experienced professionals could transition into mentoring roles that create lasting organisational impact.



### Breaking Down Communication Barriers

Effective intergenerational career conversations require understanding the stark differences between generations. Gen Z values immediate feedback and informal digital communication, while Baby Boomers prefer formal, structured discussions with hierarchy. When managers lack this awareness, career conversations break down before they begin.

Successful intergenerational communication requires adaptation from all parties. Gen Z employees can take proactive steps by adapting communication styles to balance digital preferences with face-to-face interactions, using phone calls for important discussions, and adopting formal communication when engaging with older generations.

They should show respect for experience by actively seeking to understand established processes, demonstrating genuine curiosity about colleagues' experiences, and asking thoughtful questions about past projects and institutional knowledge. Practising patience with different paces means adjusting expectations around decision-making timelines and feedback cycles, recognising that older generations prefer more deliberate, structured approaches to career planning.

Additionally, offering reverse mentoring positions to younger employees as helpful resources for digital tools and contemporary trends while remaining humble, creating mutually beneficial knowledge-sharing relationships with senior colleagues.

### Organisational Strategies for Success

Forward-thinking organisations implement specific strategies to encourage intergenerational career conversations. Training managers in intergenerational communication helps them recognise generational strengths through workshops, create safe spaces for open dialogue about age-related myths, and provide specific training on adapting communication styles for different generations.

Effective managers learn to ask open-ended questions such as: "How do you like to discuss your career growth? Do you prefer informal check-ins, team settings, or one-to-one conversations to discuss opportunities?" and "What experiences from your career do you think would be valuable to share with colleagues at different career stages?"

Cross-generational mentorship programmes create structured opportunities for knowledge exchange where experienced employees share institutional wisdom while younger workers contribute fresh perspectives and technological expertise. These programmes work bidirectionally reverse mentoring allows younger employees to teach senior colleagues about digital tools and contemporary trends.

Fostering cross-generational collaboration through diverse project teams blends perspectives, drives innovation, and strengthens teamwork. When different generations collaborate on projects, they naturally learn from each other's approaches and develop mutual respect.

## Career Planning for Mature Workers: A Strategic Imperative

Career planning for mature workers has become essential as organisations recognise the value of experienced employees seeking meaningful professional transitions. Unlike traditional upward mobility, this approach emphasises leveraging decades of expertise while addressing evolving personal priorities.

For example, a Product Director, Robert, who has 40 years of experience in product development with the same company, he sought better work-life balance without losing meaningful work. While he found energy collaborating with development teams, strategic leadership was causing burnout. Robert reached out to Jason, his Gen Y General Director, for a career conversation with exemplifies this strategic approach.

"I am considering transitioning from operational responsibilities to advisory and mentoring roles, encompassing external consulting for regional subsidiaries, internal mentorship of new talent, and knowledge transfer support to innovation initiatives," Robert explained.

Jason demonstrated excellent leadership by responding: "You're ahead of the curve. People at all career stages want roles aligned with their values. Your experience with focused scope could be incredibly valuable. Let's explore this formally."

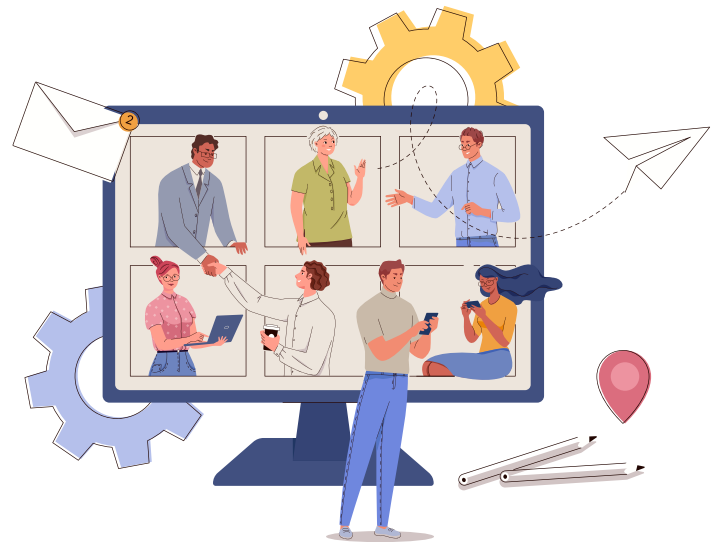
This intergenerational dialogue proves invaluable. Younger leaders learn to utilise experienced team members' wisdom, while mature workers receive support for reimagining their contributions. Successful transitions often involve shifting from operational responsibilities to advisory, mentoring, or consultancy roles.

This strategic approach helps mature employees adapt to evolving technologies, maintain workplace relevance, and find renewed purpose through structured transitions that validate professional experience while creating ongoing organisational value.

### Practical Implementation Tools

Mature workers can utilise frameworks such as Super's Life-Career Rainbow to self-assess changing life roles and spot potential conflicts, focusing on exploring complementary employment instead of fully leaving the workforce. It helps individuals visualise how their work role may shift as other life roles gain prominence.

For Robert, this meant redefining his work role from full-time Principal Project Manager to part-time consultant/mentor, reducing work centrality while maintaining professional engagement. His family and homemaker roles expanded to include greater involvement with aging parents and grandchildren, while leisure and citizen roles encompassed community involvement and volunteer work.



### The Path Forward

Intergenerational career conversations are not just about bridging age gaps. They are about creating workplaces where every generation's strengths are recognised and leveraged effectively. When Jordan learned about leading diverse teams and Robert discovered new ways to share his expertise, both benefited from perspectives they could not have gained alone.

The key lies in moving beyond stereotypes and assumptions to genuine curiosity and mutual respect. Whether you are a digital native eager for advancement or an experienced professional considering your next chapter, intergenerational career conversations offer pathways to growth that honour both ambition and wisdom.

As Singapore's workforce continues to evolve, organisations that master intergenerational dialogue will unlock innovation, retain valuable talent, and create inclusive cultures where every generation thrives. The question is not whether different generations can work together effectively, it is how quickly we can learn to harness our collective potential through meaningful career conversations that transform both individuals and organisations for lasting success.



**Shawn Moi**  
Principal Manager  
Career Guidance Division  
Workforce Singapore



## BOOK REVIEW

### “Five Generations at Work: How We Win Together, For Good”

By Rebecca Robbins and Patrick Dunne



This comprehensive guide transforms workplace generational dynamics from challenge to competitive advantage. Drawing on six years of research across global organisations including EY Foundation, LVMH, and Samsung, Robbins and Dunne present compelling evidence that our five-generation workforce is an untapped powerhouse for innovation and collaboration.

The authors skillfully debunk generational stereotypes while providing practical frameworks for harnessing diverse perspectives. Rich case studies spanning corporates, family businesses, and foundations demonstrate real-world applications across four continents. The book’s strength lies in its actionable toolkits and mindset shifts that enable leaders and line managers to move beyond labels towards meaningful intergenerational partnerships.

Written accessibly for all career stages—from students to board members—this is a pragmatic call to action. In our era of rapid changes, the authors convincingly argue that generational diversity represents our greatest asset for sustainable change. Essential reading for any leader seeking to unlock their organisation’s full potential through inclusive, cross-generational collaboration.



### “Sticking Points”

By Haydn Shaw

This book addresses generational conflicts in modern workplaces, identifying common friction areas between Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. Shaw presents practical strategies for bridging these divides, focusing on communication styles, work preferences, and values differences. The book offers actionable frameworks for managers to foster collaboration across age groups. While occasionally oversimplified in its generational categorisations, Shaw’s approach is pragmatic and accessible. The book serves as a valuable guide for leaders seeking to harness the strengths of multigenerational teams and reduce workplace tension.

## LOVING OUR NEWSLETTER?



You can find all issues of *TRUE NORTH* and other career development resources on our **Online Learning Resource (OLR)** for Career Practitioners.

Check it out here:  
[go.gov.sg/olr](https://go.gov.sg/olr)



SCAN HERE