

## **Defeating workplace stereotypes. It is all in your head.**

**Categories :** [EMPLOYER HOT TOPICS](#)

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The simple answer is yes....but not for the reasons you think.

Stereotypes do not simply exist. They are created...by us. They are a product of our own minds, prejudices and need to categorize what we see around us.

This need to categorize has simply extended into the workplace, and it has attracted a lot of attention lately, especially as the “millennial” generation enters the workforce. No matter what mainstream publication or show you watch, there are continuous reports of “stodgy” older workers and “arrogant” younger bosses drawing the modern day equivalent of the [Maginot Line](#) all over the office or factory floor....two stereotypes waging war on each other from across cubicle walls or along warehouse aisles.

Now, while these reports make for good headlines, they are not fully accurate. Stereotypes are based on our need to “group” – to compartmentalize our world as a way to give it some sense of order. Grouping allows us to process information quicker, easier, faster.

However, the risk is that we once we group, we swiftly pass judgment and move on. Stereotypes

may provide the “black and white” that many of us need to function in our “grey world”, but the world is not just black and white....it is grey...all different shades of grey.

For the most part, personality traits and quirks, competencies, skills, and lifestyle choices cannot be generalized, compartmentalized and labeled. They are formed – by genetics, by life experiences, by relationships, and (honestly) by quirks in the universe. Therefore, they cannot be considered the root cause of workplace warfare.

There will always be individuals who do not fit a particular generalization or stereotype, and we can always think of someone (outside of a particular stereotype) who has characteristics found in that stereotype. Generalizations simply are not true for every person in every situation. They are not absolutes.

We all want the same things – no matter what we look like, what we like, where we live or who our life partners are. In the workplace, we are all concerned with:

- Getting respect
- Trusting our co-workers/managers
- The implications of office politics
- Getting recognition for good work
- Enhancing our skills
- Achieving work/life balance

We all want the same things; we just might want it wrapped in different packages. Think about it....everyone needs a car, but depending on our needs....we might need a different type of car.

That is the funny thing about people....we are all different. We are simply too diverse to be categorized, and that is the challenges for management....to learn how to deliver the same thing to our employees, just in different packages.

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