t no other point in history have there been so many generations in the workforce at one time. CFOs, along with others on the leadership and management teams, must consider the needs and preferences of workers in their 20s to their 70s. But the Millennial generation, born between 1980 and 1994, were at the heart of a discussion at a Middle Market Companies CFO Dinner, part of the CFO Studio Executive Dinner Series, that looked at balancing diverse employee expectations while maintaining a dynamic Finance department. The event was held recently at The Union League of Philadelphia. The evening’s discussion leader was Curt Allen, Chief Financial Officer, Subaru of America.

Mr. Allen, part of the team that has helped Subaru create new sales records for seven straight years, revealed that he is a Baby Boomer. His staff includes nine Millennials, but in total, 55 percent of the team members are over 50, and 20 percent are over 60. “Our focus is to both hire more Millennials and to bring more diversity to our team,” he said.

One commonality guests agreed upon is that Millennials must be motivated to stay engaged and happy. Job growth is one way to do this.

“[Millenials] want to move up quickly. If not, they will move on to another company,” said Mr. Allen. Unlike generations before them who would wait around for a promotion, Millennials are unwilling to sit tight. “These are the leaders of tomorrow, and it’s important to let them know there are opportunities that await,” said Mr. Allen.

It’s the job of business leaders to help Millennials understand their role in the company as part of a larger plan that gives them a sense of purpose.

It’s also important to the Millennial employees to receive encouragement and immediate feedback.

Elaine Cheong, Director, Global Commercial Banking, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, and a CFO Studio Business Development Partner, understands the importance of finding the right balance.

“With folks living longer and also staying in the workforce longer, it is imperative to be able to marry the different cultures, from the Traditionalists to Generation Y. Culture is a key aspect to being a successful company, so paying attention to the marriage of these cultures is very important.”

The dinner guests largely agreed that generational diversity within a company breeds more success than does sameness in a company’s ranks. They acknowledged their companies’ efforts to create and sustain environments in which Millennials and employees from other generations can productively co-exist and thrive.