The Workplace Is Changing... Are You?
Understanding Generational Styles

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Objectives

• Identify characteristics and gain a better understanding of the three working generations
• Improve communications and teamwork
• Provide tips and suggestions for overcoming generational differences

Generations

• GI Generation (born 1901-1925)
• Veterans/Traditionalists (born 1925-1945)
• Baby Boomers (born 1946-1960)
• Generation X (born 1961-1980)
• Millennials/Generation Y (born 1981-2000)
• Generation Z/? (born 2001-present)

Based off Neil Howe and William Strauss research
What is a Generation?

- A society-wide peer group, born over approximately 20 years, who collectively possess a common persona.
- Generations are shaped by history and events, technological advances, social changes, economic conditions, popular culture, etc.
- In general, members share beliefs and a common location in history. They also perceive themselves to be part of a common generation.

Generational Differences:

- Seminal events shape values, expectations, perceptions, opportunities, obstacles, etc., during the formative years.

Millennials (1981-2001)

What do we know about the Millennials?

- Sheltered
- Accepting of kid safety rules and overall surveillance
- Racially Diverse
- Play dates/Scheduled lives
- Trophies for participation
- Helicopter parents
- Increased access to information
- Digital Natives
Events and Experiences that Shaped Generations

**Millennials**

*You can make a difference here.*

*Work flexibility anywhere, but I need complete access to information and the answer to "Why?" Work anytime — on my terms. Work even more? That is so lame. I'm texting all my friends to tell them how lame you are.*

80 million

**Seminal Events:**
- Invention of the Nintendo Entertainment System 1985
- Columbine and aftermath
- Virginia Tech shootings
- A.I. Isn't Afghanistan
- Internet & Social networking
- Bernie Madoff & Enron
- 2008 recession

**Famous Millennials:**
- Mark Zuckerberg
- Mary Kate & Ashley Olson
- LeBron James
- Prince William
- Britney Spears
- Justin Bieber
- Rihanna
- Beyonce (cusp)

When do the Millennials end?

“In the years to come, demographers will sift through all sorts of evidence to arrive at a final date range. If it turns out that people born in 1997 have more in common socially and politically with those born in, say, 1994 than those born in 1985, they could be reassigned, instantly shrinking today’s millennial mass by several million members.

Indeed, there are signs that today’s 18-year-olds do not really fit in.

“One of the defining events typically associated with millennials is that they grew up experiencing 9/11.” Mr. Fry said. But those born in 1997 “would have been 5 years old when the attacks happened,” not usually an age when global events leave formative impressions.”

Millennials Set to Outnumber Baby Boomers
Douglas Quenqua, New York Times
“The number one thing to realize with the Millennials is that as a whole they reflect much more parental perfectionism than any generation in living memory. Colleges and universities should know that they are not getting just a kid, but they are also getting a parent.”

William Strauss  
Author, Millennials Rising

**Millennials on the job**

- Multitasker (at least they think they are!)
- Tech savvy
- Inclusive and want to work collaboratively
- Outlook—Hopeful
- Confident and self-assured
- Want feedback at the push of a button
- Lack practical skill development
- Want specific direction

**Motivation and Value to Millennials**

- Create a flexible work environment.
- Practice “reverse mentoring”. They love to share their knowledge (Social media, technology).
- Take time to be their mentor. They want to be developed. Interested in professional development opportunities
- Offer opportunities for formal training (for hard and soft skills).
- Provide a sense of purpose in their position. Understanding why all work is important to office.
Gen X (1961-1980)

What do we know about Gen X?
- Grew up during the post Watergate era and the energy crisis.
- They were in many cases children of divorce and nontraditional family units.
- Many were latchkey kids who were raised on electronic media (television, Atari).
- Known as slackers and distrusting of anything organized growing up—Kurt Cobain and original MTV generation.
- Entered the workforce during a recession/endured the dot.com bust.

Events and Experiences that Shaped Generations

Gen X (Sandwich group)

“We're not very corporate.”

“Work. Work with flexibility. Work even more? Let's talk!”

44 million

Seminal Events:
- Fall of the Berlin Wall
- Challenger Disaster
- Desert Storm
- Personal computers
- Working mothers “Latch-key kids”
- MTV
- Divorce
- Energy Crisis
- Rodney King beating, LA Riots

Famous Gen Xers:
- Jennifer Aniston
- Andre Agassi
- Kurt Cobain
- Halle Berry
- Sarah Palin
- Barack Obama (cusp)
- Will Smith

Generation X on the job

- Adaptable, tech-literate
- Outlook—Skeptical
- Prefer to work independently but can work in teams
- Want to be challenged (They like to think outside the box)
- Challenge the system/Need to know
- Don’t waste their time - Gen Xer’s have little patience for fluff
- Get to the point
Baby Boomers (1946-1960)

What do we know about Baby Boomers?

• Grew up in a time of great prosperity
• Outlook—optimistic
• More likely to live in two-income household
• Have the basic feeling of security
• Have the higher level of education
• Lead by consensus
• Long term employment

Events and Experiences that Shaped Generations

Baby Boomers

“You’re important to our success.”

“Work, work, work. It’s what we’re about.”

73 million

Seminal Events:
Civil Rights & Feminist Movement
Vietnam
Cold War
Space travel
Assassinations
Scientific advances
Credit cards
Television

Famous Baby Boomers:
Bill & Hillary Clinton
George Bush
Oprah Winfrey
Tom Cruise (cusp)
Barack Obama (cusp)

Getting Along with Baby Boomers

• Show respect (Acknowledge that you have less experience and can learn from their experience)
• Choose face-to-face conversations
• Give people your full attention (Stop multitasking while someone is talking)
• Play the game (Workplace politics are a fact of life, so learn to be polite and respectful in these situations)
• Learn the corporate history
Visualizing the Generations: Money Ball

Generational Feedback

- Veterans seek no applause but appreciate acknowledgement that they have made a difference.
- Boomers are often giving feedback to others but also enjoy receiving positive feedback.
- X’ers need positive feedback to know they’re on the right track.
- Millennials are use to lots of praise and positive recognition and may mistake silence for disapproval. They need to know what they are doing is right.

Remember that All Generations Want...

- To be treated fairly
- Work that provides personal satisfaction
- Employers and co-workers who understand personal lives are important
- Work that is valued by employers, co-workers, and constituents
- A clear sense of purpose from employers
Questions

Will you make any changes based upon what you have learned today?

- Relationships
- Work environment
- Rules

References: