

# Generational Differences:

## Bridging the Generation Gap

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# One of Many Tools in your Management Utility Belt



- Meyers-Briggs
- Mentoring Skills
- Communication Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Strategic Planning
- Generational Awareness
- Team Building

# What is the Point?

- Recognize Generational Differences
- Recognize Validity of Perspective
- Answer: ‘THE Question’
- Identify Effective Methods of Motivating Different Generations

# Two Golden Rules

- Generations are Generalizations Only
- Only one tool on the Manager's Utility Belt-
  - You must not assume you can address every situation based on the individual(s) generation, even if they fit the description.

# 4 Working Generations



- Veterans (years born)
- Boomers
- Gen X
- Gen Y (Nexters)

# Each Generation

- Different Experiences Growing Up
- Different Hardships
- Different Decision-Making Processes
- Different Life Values
  - Work versus Play
  - Debt-to-Equity
  - Priorities

# Veterans

- Growing Up:
  - Stock Market Crash
  - Great Depression
  - The Dust Bowl
  - Pearl Harbor
  - D-Day
  - Korea
  - Radio
  - Motion Pictures (morality: Good vs Evil)
  - Family: Strict, conservative.

# Veterans

- Hardships
  - ‘We’d Like to Thank you Herbert Hoover’
  - Hitler’s Evil Empire
  - Command-and-Control business management

# Veterans

- Decision Making
  - Respect Authority
  - Leadership by Heirarchy
  - Law and Order
  - Advance through Hard Work

# Veterans

- Life Values
  - Conservative
  - Discipline
  - Family Values
  - Respect for Authority
  - Perseverance

# Boomers

- Growing Up
  - Rosa Parks
  - Civil Rights Acts
  - Birth Control
  - National Organization for Women
  - Martin Luther King, Jr
  - Landing on Moon
  - Television
  - Family: focused on children, enjoying freedoms

# Boomers

- Hardships
  - Competition in Job Market
  - Unreported Domestic Violence
  - Racism/Sexism
  - Vietnam

# Boomers

- Decision Making
  - By Consensus
  - Gratification
  - Personal Growth
  - ‘Get Involved!’

# Boomers

- Life Values
  - ‘Work Hard, Play Hard’
  - Personal Growth
  - Health and Wellness
  - Teamwork

# Gen X

- Growing Up
  - Watergate
  - Stock Market Crash '87
  - Space Shuttle Challenger
  - Exxon Valdez
  - Rodney King
  - Computers
  - Family: Dual career, fewer siblings, 'latch-key'

# Gen X

- Hardships
  - Debt-to-Income Imbalance
  - Divorce Rates
  - Lack of reliable government or private sector jobs

# Gen X

- Decision Making
  - Self-Management
  - Pragmatic
  - Global Ideas
  - ‘Ends Justifies the Means’

# Gen X

- Life Values
  - Autonomy
  - Balanced
  - Fun
  - Diversity

# Gen Y

- Growing Up
  - Oklahoma City
  - Technoliteracy
  - Multi-Living
  - Columbine High School
  - Internet
  - Family Life- ‘Soccer Moms’, Life outside of school

# Gen Y

- Hardships
  - Single Parents
  - Sheltered
  - Technology-based  
Terrorism
  - Requirement for  
Degrees

# Gen Y

- Decision Making
  - Morals
  - Civic Duty
  - Balanced Fun
  - Tendency to Follow Authority

# Gen Y

- Life Values
  - Morals
  - Optimism
  - Civic Duty
  - Flexibility
  - Well-Roundedness

# THE QUESTION:

How can I get them to see it my way?

THE ANSWER

**You Don't.**

# Bridging the Gap

- Learn how to *motivate* them
- harness their strengths
- identify/**communicate organizational boundaries.**

# Veterans

- Motivation
  - ‘Personal Touch’ Communications
  - Ask Permission to Coach, and Coach Tactfully
  - Learn their Background
  - Ask about their concerns in non-threatening manner
- Strengths
  - Loyal
  - Stable
  - Detail-Oriented ‘Devil is in the Details’
  - Hard Working

# Boomers

- Motivation
  - Public Recognition
  - Promote Opportunities for Change
  - Name Recognition
  - Building Consensus
  - Invite into Participative Management
  - Reward Long Hours
- Strengths
  - Driven to Success
  - Politically Correct
  - Team Players
  - Desire to Please

# Gen X

- Motivation
  - Give a variety of projects
  - Autonomy of process
  - Constructive Feedback
  - Technology
  - Variable Scheduling Options
- Strengths
  - Adaptable
  - Techno-savy
  - Independent
  - Creative

# Gen Y

- Motivation
  - Mentoring by elders
  - Heroism by example
  - Creative Teamwork
  - Multi-Learning
- Strengths
  - Optimism
  - Confidence
  - Work Experience
  - Highly Technoliterate

# Pitfalls: Veterans

- Involving their personal life in the discussion
- Failure to Train to New Technologies, then **Support**
- Failing to Define Organizational Structure
- Failure to Learn about their Experiences

# Pitfalls: Boomers

- Failure to Promote Change
- Failure to Demonstrate Promotional Pathways
- Failure to Recognize Achievements
- Failure to Provide Management Training (budget and spending)

# Pitfalls: Gen X

- Failure to answer the question, “Why?” whenever plausible.
- Unnecessary Rigidity during informal communications
- Failure to help them develop more experience
- Failure to develop people skills

# Pitfalls: Gen Y

- Lack of Mentoring
- Failure to Plan for More Orientation
- Failure to Provide Multiple Avenues of Learning
- Failure to Provide Avenues for Job Transition(s)
- Train to Deal with Difficult People (Patients)

# MOTIVATING THE CROSS-GENERATIONAL TEAM

- ACORN Imperative
  - Accommodate Differences
  - Create Choices
  - Operate as a Sophisticated Manager
    - Flexible leadership style
    - Able to explain policies and exceptions
    - Fair, inclusive, establish trust
    - Great communicators
  - Respect Competence and Initiative
  - Nourish Retention

# Conclusions

- Generations are Generalizations
- Only one tool on your Management Utility Belt
- Don't try to make them be like you, accept them for who they are and where they came from.
- Focus on Motivation and Strengths.
- Define Organizational Boundaries that cannot be breached.
- Finally, educate your personnel about their generational differences!!

# References

- When Generations Collide. By Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman
- Generations At Work. By Zemke, Raines and Filipczak
- Retiring the Generation GAP. By Jennifer Deal.