



Bridging the Generation Gap

Combine the Best of Many

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Each generation has a unique perspective to bring to the table. The key is to listen, to educate yourself about where others are coming from and how they prefer to interact, and ultimately to utilise each other's strengths for the advantage of the office as whole.

Generations alone don't dictate preferences and behaviour. It's a complex interplay between generations, individual personality and experiences, and the environment in which each individual was nurtured. It is forces beyond our control that influence how we behave, what we value, how we work, and what we expect of others.

Use it as a starting point for understanding, not as a label that gives you permission to judge.

	Silent	Boomer	GenX	GenY	GenZ
Formative experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World War II Rationing Fixed gender roles (particularly for women) Nuclear families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold War Post-war boom Apollo moon landings Woodstock Family oriented Rise of the teenager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> End of Cold War Fall of Berlin Wall Introduction of first PC Early mobile devices Rising levels of divorce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9/11 terrorist attacks PlayStation Social media Invasion of Iraq Reality TV Google Earth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic downturn Global warming Mobile devices Arab Spring Produce own media Cloud computing Wiki-leaks
Signature product	Automobile	TV	Personal computer	Smart phones and tablets	Graphene, nano-computing, 3D printing, driverless cars, virtual reality
Aspiration	Home ownership	Job security	Work-life balance	Freedom & flexibility	Security & stability
Attitude toward career	Jobs are for life	Organisational – careers are defined by employers	Early “portfolio” careers – loyal to profession, not necessarily to employer	Digital entrepreneurs – work “with” organisations, not “for”	Career multitaskers – will move seamlessly between organisations and “pop-up” businesses

	Silent	Boomer	GenX	GenY	GenZ
Work is ...	An obligation	An adventure	A challenge	Fulfilment	Opportunity to contribute to meaningful social change
Leadership style	Directive	Consensual	No layers	NOW	Collaborative, appreciate different points of view
Interactive style	Individual	Team player	Entrepreneur	Participative	Inclusive, celebrate differences
Communications	Written letter	Face to face or telephone	Email and text	Online and mobile	Constant, visual, realtime
Rewards	Job well done	Money & title	Freedom	Meaningful work	Privacy and choice
Messages that motivate	Your experience is respected	You are valued and needed	Do it your way	Work with bright, creative people	You make a positive difference!
Work & family	Work	No balance	Balance	Balance	Balance

SOURCES USED FOR GENERATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS TABLE:

- <http://fourhooks.com/marketing/the-generation-guide-millennials-gen-x-y-z-and-baby-boomers-art5910718593/>
- <http://www.wmfc.org/uploads/GenerationalDifferencesChart.pdf>
- <https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/12499/Cross-Generational-Competence-How-to-Get-Multi-Generations-to-Work-Together-Effectively-11-30-am-12-30-pm>

QUESTIONS BUSINESS LEADERS SHOULD ASK

Board and Committee Composition

- Does it allow for less traditional experience? Does it allow for more traditional experience?
- Does it actively seek less traditional skills and experience? Does it actively seek more traditional skills and experience?
- Does the induction, communication processes and meeting proceedings allow for various generations to contribute in their strength?
- Does it go beyond isolated or token “youth initiatives”? Does it really ask for and consider wisdom, or does it try to hurry the sharing of wisdom?
- Is the culture of the board and committees dismissive or nurturing towards various generations?

Strategy

- Does our strategy look at least two generations ahead?
- Is the strategy being communicated in a way that resonates for the various generations represented in the company?
- Does the strategy include aspirations that are important for generations not represented by directors on the board?
- Are we communicating results that matter across the generations?
- Do our policies support the implementation of the strategy across the range of generations in all our stakeholder groupings?

Budget

- Are we funding projects that keep us relevant across generations?
- Are we enabling the executive to truly engage the workforce across the various generations?

Decisions

- Do we know who to visit/call/email/WhatsApp when we need to know how other generations view the factors influencing the decision?
- Do we consider lessons learned or concerns held by different generations?
- How good are we at walking a mile in the shoes of other generations ... without first judging the colour and the style of the shoes?

Make sure your generational focus is not just for show. When you get frustrated don't judge; remind yourself that you need to learn to see it from their side. It doesn't mean that you should do it their way, but it does give you a better opportunity to combine the best of many worlds to create a future for those that will inherit the impact of your decisions.