

MANAGING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Elisabeth A Nesbit, PhD, NCC
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Before we begin...

"But those who bemoan the next generation's shortcomings grow more and more bitter, angry, disappointed and cynical. On the other hand, those who bless not only grow old with grace and joy, they have a disproportionate influence on the generation that follows."

~ G.T. Smith (1999)

An Overview

- ◎ A generation is:

a cohort of people connected by their historical location and shared life events.

- ◎ Culture is...

*membership in a socially constructed way of living, which incorporates collective **values**, **beliefs**, norms, boundaries, and lifestyles that are cocreated with others who share similar **worldviews** comprising biological, psychosocial, historical, psychological, and other factors (ACA, 2005, p. 20)*

- Caveats about cultural research

Thoughts to Ponder

- ◎ Generations takes for granted the good that was done before them, react against the bad that was done to them, and respond to the historical situation in which they live.
- ◎ Approaching generational differences as cultural differences.
 - Behavior is purposeful

The Four Generations in the Workplace

◎ The Veterans:
1925-1945

- 87 to 67 years old
- 34.8 million

◎ The Baby Boomers:
1946-1964

- 66 to 48 years old
- 81.5 million

◎ Generation X:
1965-1981

- 47 to 31 years old
- 61.1 million

◎ Millennials:
1982-2001

- 30 to 11 years old
- **85 million**

Estimates based on 2010 US Census data <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>

Baby Boomers

- ◎ Martin Luther King Jr
- ◎ JFK
- ◎ Walter Cronkite
- ◎ Civil Rights Movement
- ◎ Walk on the moon
- ◎ Roe v. Wade
- ◎ Vietnam
- ◎ Pay-your-dues leadership
- ◎ Attach to organizations
- ◎ Work = life
- ◎ Financially motivated

Baby Boomers

- ◎ Communication Styles in the Workplace
 - Meetings
 - Memos
 - Top-down
 - It's all good unless you hear otherwise

Baby Boomers

This is the generation for which management training and techniques are generally designed.

◎ Motivated by:

- Financial bonuses
- Minimal need for on-going verbal encouragement or affirmation

◎ Strengths:

- Life and work experience
- Big-picture understanding with an appreciation for details
- Loyal & dedicated

Generation X

- ◎ Richard Nixon
 - ◎ Ronald Reagan
 - ◎ Nelson Mandela

 - ◎ Challenger Explosion
 - ◎ Rodney King
 - ◎ AIDS
 - ◎ Watergate
 - ◎ Iranian Hostage Crisis
 - ◎ Fall of Communism
 - ◎ 9/11
- ◎ Leadership based on competence
 - ◎ Attach to individuals
 - ◎ Distrust of Organizations
 - ◎ Work/life balance
 - ◎ Skeptical

Generation X

- ◎ Communication Styles in the Workplace
 - Minimal to no meetings
 - Email memo
 - Relational & direct without being overly personal
 - Affirming of personal value

Generation X

This is the lost generation – they have learned to blend into a Boomer world or leave and create their own

◎ Motivated by:

- Independence & freedom
- Periodic affirmation
- Validation of life outside of work (paid time off)

◎ Strengths:

- Innovative
- Systemic perspective – spheres of influence
- Independent, self-starters

Millennials

- ◎ Barack Obama
- ◎ Bill Clinton
- ◎ Their parents
- ◎ Blake Mycoski

- ◎ 9/11
- ◎ Clinton-Lewinsky
- ◎ Operation Iraqi Freedom
- ◎ Hurricane Katrina

- ◎ Still being defined
- ◎ Attach to small groups
- ◎ Relationships matter
- ◎ Social justice
- ◎ 24/7 access, service, & questions answered

Millennials

- ◎ Communication Styles in the Workplace
 - Casual interactions
 - Bottom-up
 - Regular validation
 - Personal and affirming

Millennials

Educational system, inadvertently, taught them to expect different things from the workplace than Xers or Boomers were modeled

◎ Motivated by:

- Mentorship
- Having a voice in the process
- Regular feedback, affirmation, and validation

◎ Strengths:

- Technology savvy
- Collaborative
- Multiculturally diverse and aware
- Eager to be mentored

Mentoring

◎ Rediscovering the Art of Mentorship

- Be intentional
 - Serve, with relationship in mind
 - When possible, go to them
- Be authentic
 - Perfect is not believable
- Be teachable
 - Consider out-of-the-box approaches that still accomplish the goal

What now...

- ◎ Identify your strengths AND weaknesses
- ◎ Where might you benefit from another generation's perspective or skills?
- ◎ How might you be intentional about the mentoring process?
 - Who might you approach regarding a mentoring relationship?

Contact Information

Dr. Elisabeth Nesbit

Elisabeth.Nesbit@denverseminary.edu

(p) 303.357.5811