

BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP: Engaging and Aligning the Three Generations in the Workplace

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Do Any of These Comments Sound Familiar?

- “Can we get back to work now? These kids will either get with the program or they will leave. They always do”
- “I don’t get it! My managers are barely technologically literate yet they’re never open to suggestions on how to improve a process with technology. What’s up with this attitude?”



Or Any of These Comments?

- “I’m older, have more experience and stop asking so many questions.”
- “You don’t answer my question because you don’t know the answer or you wish you had asked it when you were my age but didn’t have the nerve.”
- “Will they hold it against me when I apply since I don’t know all the latest technology?”



Key Questions:

- What are you doing in your company to harness the power of generational change?
- How can companies manage the “brain drain?”
- How do companies effectively work with and manage the merging minds of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials?



- We are all a product of our past.
- Understanding the differences is first and foremost; therefore our discovery process starts with the Baby Boomers.
- But...The following overviews simply mean that certain behaviors are more typical of each group. Nothing is universal.



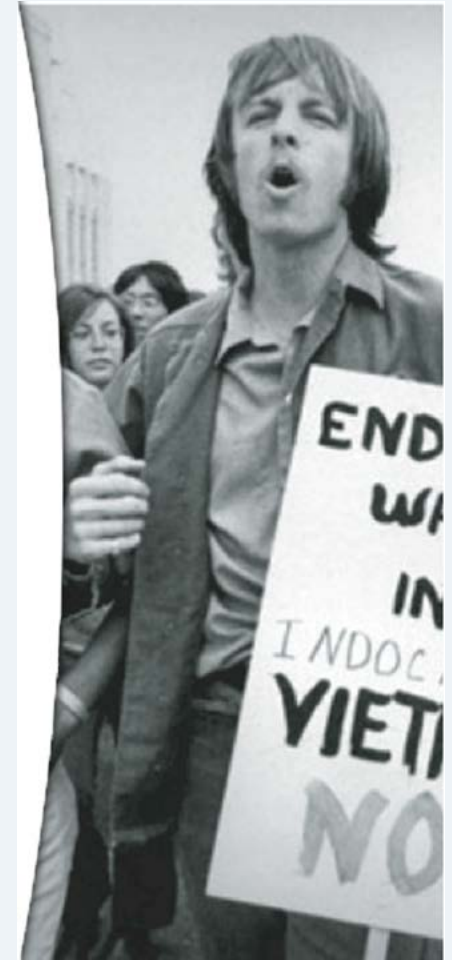
Who Are They: The Baby Boomers

- Born circa (1946-1964).
- 76 Million.
- There are two categories of Boomers.



Baby Boomer #1: (1946 - 1955)

- **Events:** JFK, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, political unrest, walk on the moon, Vietnam draft, anti-war protests, sexual freedom, drug experimentation, civil rights movement, women's movement, and the environmental movement.
- **Key Characteristics:** Experimental, individualistic, free spirited and social cause oriented.



Baby Boomer #2: Generation Jones (1956 - 1964)

- Events: Watergate, Cold War, states lower drinking ages, oil embargo, raging inflation, gas shortages and Carter's imposition of registration for the draft.
- Key Characteristics: Less optimistic, government distrust, general cynicism.



Baby Boomers:

- Associated with the rejection and the redefinition of traditional values.
- Healthiest and wealthiest generation.
- Often self-absorbed, very focused, workaholics.
- Committed to one company or organization.
- Focused on success as defined by possession and wealth.



Baby Boomers:

- Women establishing careers.
- The juggling act between a job and a family.
- Creation of the latch-key kid.
- Contribution to significant social changes.



Generation X - (1965 - 1980)

- Averaging 3-5 years in any one organization.
- Tend to be free agents.
- Frequently distrusting corporate motives.
- Technologically savvy, pragmatic, and competent.
- Efficient at managing themselves.



Generation X:

- Received very little formal training in the work place, learned on the fly.
- Will not sell their souls to the job 24/7.
- Work/life balance over money and career advancement.
- Moving in and out of the workforce to accommodate kids and outside interests.



Millennial: (1982 - 2005)

- *Also Known as Gen Y*
- *Fortune* deemed Gen Y the highest maintenance but potentially highest performing generation in history.
- Viewed as entitled.
- Outspoken.
- Inability to take criticism.



Millennial:

- Technologically sophisticated.
- Well positioned to address global issues.
- Inclined to see the world as a vast resource.
- Driven to make a difference.



Millennial:

- They are racially and ethnically diverse.
- Demand fast tract career positioning.
- Work/life balance.
- Thirst for positive feedback.
- Cutting edge technology.



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- Research shows that 68 % of Baby Boomers feel “younger people” do not have as strong a work ethic as they do and that makes doing their own work harder.
- 32 % of Gen X-ers believe the “younger generation” lacks a good work ethic and that this is a problem.



- And 13 % of Millennials say the difference in work ethics across the generations causes friction. They believe they have a good work ethic for which they're not given credit.



- Every generation believes their work ethic is fine but flash points are erupting.
- What is the root cause of the problem?
- Every generation has a very different set of view points or values based on what they experienced and the world around them as a developing child.



Why does this Matter?

- Bridging the gap – Build Bridges.
- Merging generations to breed success.
- Creating a collaborative workforce.
- Creating business growth through positive behavioral change.
- Always remember.....
 - age defines a demographic not a person.



Baby Boomer Retention Ideas:

- Show appreciation for their extensive knowledge.
- Communicate the importance of sharing to avoid brain-drain.
- Encourage them to be mentors, and create a well defined mentor program.



Baby Boomer Management Ideas:

- Respect is key.
- Dedication to employer is important to them.
- Encourage sharing.
- Allow them to lead projects and others.



Baby Boomer Meeting/Training Ideas:

- Give them room to experiment and get their hands dirty.
- Common purpose.
- Prepare for resistance to change.
- Reward and recognize a job well done.



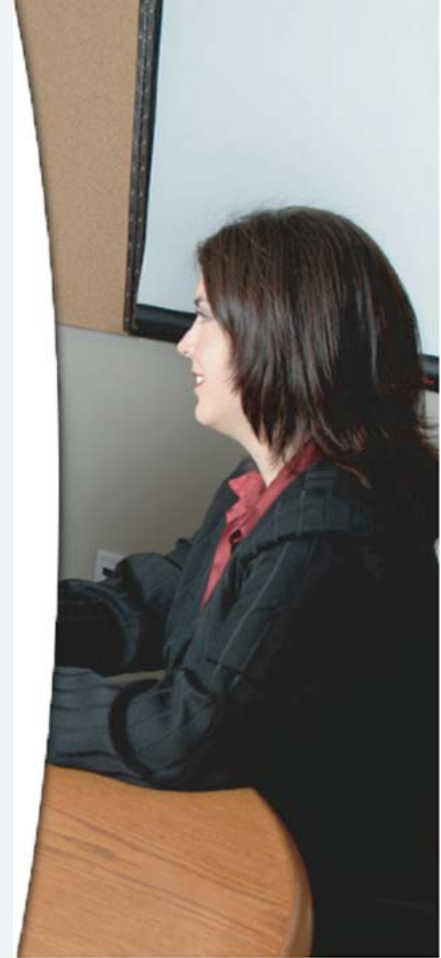
Gen X Retention Ideas:

- Flexible schedules, interesting work, sense of purpose, emphasis on accomplishment not tenure, minimal bureaucracy.
- Continued learning and skill development.
- Value feedback, clear communication, and recognition for a job well done.



Gen X Management Ideas:

- Tremendous capacity to process a great deal of information and concentrate on multiple tasks.
- Don't hover over their shoulder.
- Craves time with bosses and they never get enough feedback.
- They are problem solvers and self-starters.



Gen X Management Ideas:

- Crave stimulation and expect immediate answers.
- Focus on outcomes rather than techniques.
- Make learning experiential.
- Give them a say in establishing goals, standards, and evaluation criteria.
- You want an empowered work force, give Gen X the ball and they will run with it, these workers have been self-directed from a very young age.
- Life-long learners.



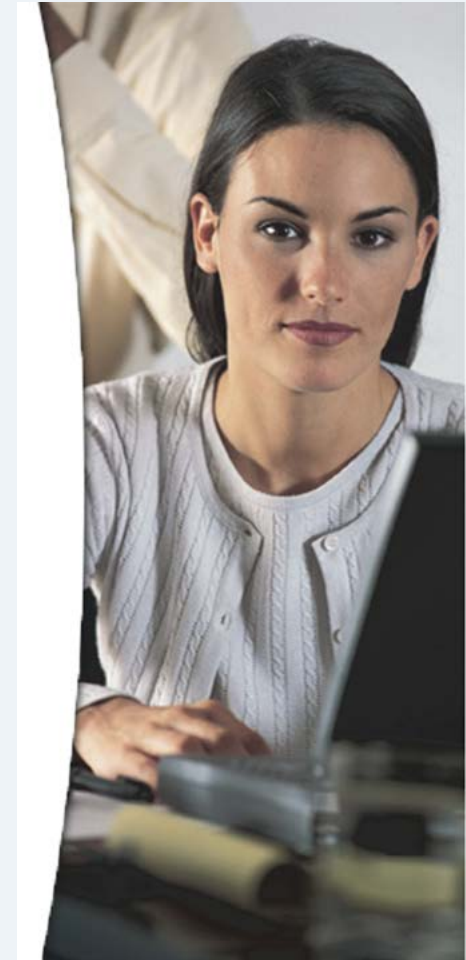
Gen X Meeting/Training Ideas:

- Educate them on generational differences.
- Give them control over their own learning.
- Let them engage in parallel thinking.
- Break out sessions.
- Exercises.



Gen X Meeting/Training Ideas:

- Let them co-facilitate or facilitate.
- Research projects.
- Web based tools.



Millennial Retention Ideas:

- Flex-time, telecommuting, volunteer service, career incentives that permit talented and competent candidates to advance quickly.
- Support the technology they use.



Millennial Retention Ideas:

- Commit to socially responsible causes: they will gravitate to organizations that are not just focused on profits but have socially responsible missions.
- Encourage their values and show you care.



Millennial Management Ideas:

- They want the best and think they deserve it.
- They do not want to be seen as children.
- Forget gender roles, they have.
- Show how their work will contribute.
- Mentoring is critical.
- New hire orientation - they require a greater investment up front.



Millennial Management Ideas:

- Frequent check-ins.
- Provide full disclosure.
- Top priority is stability.
- Greater understanding of their strengths and limitations.
- Need help with communication skills and collaborative problem solving.
- Don't plan to be at the same location for a long time.



Millennial Meeting/Training Ideas:

- Hands-on and team based.
- Gravitate to group activities.
- Make it fun.
- Provide lots of feedback.
- Incorporate games.
- Incorporate technology.



Millennial Meeting/Training Ideas:

- Likes structure.
- Simulations and case studies.
- Allow for creativity.
- Be visual.
- Tie learning into actions.
- Allow focus time.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Generation Z: (2000 - 2009)

- Typically, the children of Gen X (or the youngest Boomers, oldest Gen Y'ers)
- The Internet Generation
- Highly connected “Digital Natives”
- Individualists
- Self-directed
- Leverage change to lead



THANK YOU!

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