Harmonizing Office Culture: Embracing Generational Diversity

May 24, 2018
Agenda

• Generations Defined
• Generational Conflicts at Work
• Benefits of Generational Diversity
• Engaging the Different Generations
Introductions
Generations Defined
Common Questions

- How are generations defined?
- Who decides what boundaries to use?
- How do generations get their names?
How are generations defined?

Who Decides What Boundaries to Use?

• Social scientists mostly. There are no hard and fast dates – mostly general agreed upon timeframes.

How Do Generations Get Their Names?

- Mostly the media. And popular culture.

Pre-World War II Generation Names:

- GI Generation
- The Greatest Generation

Howe & Strauss
1991

Brokaw
1998

http://time.com/4131982/generations-names-millennials-founders/
Generations – At a Glance

# Generations – At a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approximate Birth Years</th>
<th>Composition of Labor Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greatest Generation</td>
<td>Prior to 1945</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1946-1964</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>1965-1980</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>1981-2000</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Pew Research Center

Generations Overview Video

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnzzwpWV1Fw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnzzwpWV1Fw)
Traditionalists/Greatest

• Experienced hard times while growing up which were followed by times of prosperity.

• Key Influences/Events
  • Great Depression
  • WWII
  • Post-War Economic Boom
  • Korean War
  • Rise of Corporations

• Family Experience: Traditional, Nuclear
Greatest Generation

Core Values & Attributes

• Loyal
• Adhere to rules & conform
• Dedication & Sacrifice
• Delayed Reward
• Discipline & Hard Work
• Trust in Government
• Don’t question authority
• Family Focus
Greatest Generation

**Attitudes toward Work**
- Dedicated
- Pay your dues
- Work hard
- Respect Authority
- Hard work
- Age=seniority
- Company first

**Work/Life Balance**
- Work hard to maintain job security

**Business Focus**
- Quality
# Greatest Generation

## Work Assets
- Bring value to the workplace with their experience, knowledge
- Consistent
- Disciplined
- Dependable
- Detail Oriented
- Hardworking
- Loyalty
- Stable
- Thorough

## Work Liabilities
- Don’t adapt well to change
- Don’t deal well w/ ambiguity
- Hierarchical
- Typically take a top down approach modeled by the military chain of command
- Avoid conflict, right or wrong
Baby Boomer

• Grew up during times of relative prosperity. Developed a distrust of government.

• Key Influences/Events
  • Civil Rights Movement
  • Vietnam War
  • Sexual Revolution
  • Cold War/Russia
  • Space Travel
  • Suburbia

• Family Experience
  • “Cleaver Family”
  • Mom stayed home
  • Beginning to “Disintegrate”
Baby Boomer

**Core Values & Attributes**

- Anti-Establishment
- Challenge Authority
- Equal rights & Equal Opportunity
- Personal Gratification
- Question Everything
- Team Oriented
- Consensus Leadership
- Want to “make a difference”
- Live to work
- Loyal to careers and employers
- Strong work ethic
Baby Boomer

**Attitudes toward Work**
- Workaholic-60 hr work weeks
- Work long hours to establish self-worth, identity, and fulfillment
- Work ethic = Worth ethic
- Quality

**Work/Life Balance**
- Were hesitant of taking too much time off work for fear of losing their place on the corporate team. As a result, there is an imbalance between work and family.

**Business Focus**
- Long Hours
## Baby Boomer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Assets</th>
<th>Work Liabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxious to please</td>
<td>Expect everyone to be workaholics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges the status quo</td>
<td>Dislike conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at seeing the big picture</td>
<td>Don’t like change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good team players</td>
<td>Challenge Authority of Greatest Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission oriented</td>
<td>Judgmental if disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically Savvy-gifted in political correctness</td>
<td>Not good with finances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service oriented</td>
<td>Peer loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will go the extra mile</td>
<td>“Process before results”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works hard</td>
<td>Self-centered</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Generation X

• First generation exposed to “modern” technology. Often left alone to own devices.

• Key Influences/Events
  • Watergate
  • Dual Income families and single parents
  • First Generation of Latchkey Kids
  • Y2K
  • Corporate Downsizing
  • End of Cold War & Fall of Berlin Wall
  • PC

• Family Experience
  • Latch-key kids
  • Women widely expected to work outside the home
  • The first “day care” generation
Generation X

**Core Values/Attributes**

- Independent & Self-Reliant
- Confident
- Balance
- Entrepreneurial
- Highly Educated
- Informality
- Lack of organizational loyalty
- Skepticism/Cynical
- Techno literacy
- Adaptable/Flexible

- Results driven
- Self-starters
- Unimpressed with Authority

Image Credit: Toledo Blade
Generation X

**Attitudes toward Work**
- Balance
- Work smarter and with greater output, not work longer hours.
- Eliminate the task
- Self-reliant
- Want structure & direction
- Skeptical

**Work/Life Balance**
- Because of parents who are Boomer workaholics, they focus on clearer balance between work and family. Do not worry about losing their place on the corporate team if they take time off.

**Business Focus**
- Productivity
# Generation X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work Assets</th>
<th>Work Liabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adapt well to change</td>
<td>Built “portable” resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer mentality</td>
<td>Cynical, skeptical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct communicators</td>
<td>Dislike Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t mind direction but resent intrusive supervision.</td>
<td>Dislike rigid work requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eager to Learn, Very Determined</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good task managers</td>
<td>No long term outlook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good short term problem skills</td>
<td>Respect Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly educated</td>
<td>Mistrusts Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multitaskers</td>
<td>Rejects rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not intimidated by authority</td>
<td>Don’t understand the optimism of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrive on flexibility</td>
<td>Boomers and Gen Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologically savvy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value “information”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want feedback</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Millennial

• Electronics-filled and increasingly online and socially-networked world.
• The most ethnically diverse generation and tends to be tolerant of differences.
• “You are special.”

**Key Influences/Events**

• Digital Media
• Coddled by Parents/child focused world
• School Shootings
• AIDS
• 9/11 & terrorist attacks
• Expanded technology
• Natural disasters

• **Family Experience**
  • Helicopter Parents
  • Everybody gets a trophy
Millennial

**Core Values/Attributes**

- Avid consumers
- Civic Duty/Patriotic
- Diversity/Multiculturalism
- Fun! Now!
- High morals
- Highly tolerant
- Very competitive
- Like personal attention
- Self confident
- Most educated generation

- Extremely techno savvy
- Optimism
- Focus on change using technology
- Sociable - Makes workplace friends
Millennial

**Attitudes toward Work**

- Ambitious
- What’s next?
- Multitasking
- Tenacity
- Entrepreneurial

**Work/Life Balance**

- Not only balance with work and life, but balance with work, life, community involvement, and self development. Flex time, job sharing, and sabbaticals will be requested more by this generation.

**Business Focus**

- Contribution
## Millennial

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Work Assets</strong></th>
<th><strong>Work Liabilities</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer mentality</td>
<td>Distaste for menial work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Inexperienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal oriented</td>
<td>Need supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly educated</td>
<td>Need structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multitask Fast</td>
<td>Lack discipline; Impatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td>Lack of skills for dealing with difficult people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical savvy</td>
<td>Respond poorly to those who act in an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenacious</td>
<td>authoritarian manner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Distaste for menial work
- Inexperienced
- Need supervision
- Need structure
- Lack discipline; Impatient
- High expectations
- Lack of skills for dealing with difficult people
- Respond poorly to those who act in an authoritarian manner
Generational Conflicts at Work
Different generational cohorts come of age during different time periods.

Thus different social, economic, and cultural contexts.

As a result, they end up with noticeably different values.
These values then clash in the way we do work, and we end up getting angry and blaming, rather than just working it out.

In other words, we have *conflict*. And that is not unique to any specific generation.
Boomers vs. Gen X

Baby Boomers are loyal to a fault and have a strong belief in the group or the collective. They like teamwork.

Gen Xers were largely left along growing up. They tend to prefer independent work.

When Baby Boomers want to get involved, Gen Xers feel micromanaged.

They react negatively and the Boomers feel they are not “team players.”

And conflict ensues.
Millennials have grown up in “child-centric” environments. They are also used to being “connected” at all times.

Gen Xers (who are managing Millennials) do not see the need for extra attention and constant updates.

But the Millennials crave the ability to work with groups and to connect more with those up in the hierarchy.

And conflict ensues.
Boomers vs. Millennials

Boomers spend most of their career with one employer. Work hard and get recognized through promotion and pay raises.

Millennials will have multiple employers in their career. They want access to higher-ups early in their career to help that.

Boomers don’t believe they have earned the attention of company leaders. “They haven’t been here long enough.”

But Millennials just want to learn and contribute to things they see as meaningful.

And conflict ensues.
Benefits of Generational Diversity
Benefits of Diversity

Drive Innovation & Creativity
- HBR, 2013

Solve Complex Problems
- UMich, 2004

Perform Better Financially
Become an Employer of Choice

PEOPLE CONSIDER DIVERSITY IMPORTANT WHEN DECIDING WHERE TO WORK

Retention of people of all ages and experience levels has its advantages.

I want the best talent. Period. I don’t care how old they are.

People generally want to work with good people. Candidates will come.

Younger Workers Gain Professionally

Diverse workforces contain many different types of people.

Interaction with those that are different provides learning that isn’t always possible outside of work.

Less experienced employees learn by example and gain a strong foundation – lifting their future ceiling as contributors.
Each Generation Learns From the Others

Generation X and the Millennials benefit from the Boomers’ hardworking values, professional experience, and institutional knowledge.

Generation X’s value of a balanced life benefits Baby Boomers, who may work too much. Their realistic approach to work benefits the Millennials, whose tenacious, goal-oriented approach to work can sometimes result in misplaced effort.

Millennials are early adopters of technology and have influenced Baby Boomers and Generation X to follow suit, allowing companies to stay competitive while leaning in more on technology to help streamline and systemize our work.
Each Generation Learns From the Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boomers</th>
<th>Gen X</th>
<th>Millennial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardworking Values</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Experience</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Knowledge</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Life</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic Approaches toward Work</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology-Orientation</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diversity Journal, 2012
Engaging the Different Generations
Engaging the Boomers

- Want to be viewed as mentors
- Value their experience
- Ask; don’t tell
- Give credit for achievements

Engaging Generation X

- Like freedom and autonomy
- Believes few rules & flexibility = creativity
- Work/Life Balance
- Don’t micromanage, but do give feedback

Engaging Millennials

- Long hours ≠ Productivity
- Work because they enjoy social interaction
- Expects performance rewards, pay increases, bonuses, and advancement opportunities
- Collaborative Supervisors
- Don’t treat like children, but do give them mentors and training

Questions
Thank you

Natalie Stubblefield
Plante Moran
Natalie.stubblefield@plantemoran.com