Baby Boomers, Gen-Xers, Millennials and GenZ: Appreciating Generational Diversity in the Workplace

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Generation Defined

- A “generation” is defined as a group of people who share the same formative experiences
- Most frequently, birth year is used to define a generation
  - ~20-year span
- Each generation shares a unique set of values and traits
- Generational characteristics are not universally shared by all in that group
- “Cuspers” may have a blended set of characteristics (born on the “cusp” of a generation)
# Generations – Age Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Born</th>
<th>Age of adults in 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Greatest Generation</td>
<td>1910-1928</td>
<td>90-100+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Silent Generation</td>
<td>1928-1945</td>
<td>73-90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>1945-1965</td>
<td>54-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>1965-1980</td>
<td>38-53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Z/Digital Natives/Post-Millennials</td>
<td>1995-2012</td>
<td>6-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Society’s Definition

**Baby Boomers**
- Predominantly white
- Conservative
- Say they don’t like millennials

**Generation X**
- America’s neglected “middle child”
- Less conservative, but not liberal either
- Less distinct than the other two, but don’t care

**Millenials**
- Ethnically diverse
- “Entitled”, “everybody gets a trophy”
- Viewed as being very liberal
- Techies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Seminal Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silent</strong></td>
<td>WWII, The Great Depression, The New Deal, Korean War, Rise of Labor Unions, the discovery of penicillin (products of depression, sacrifice important, “seen but not heard” = loyalty is everything)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baby Boomer</strong></td>
<td>Rosa Parks refuses to move to back of bus, first nuclear power plant, Congress passes Civil Rights Act, birth control pills introduced, National Organization for Women established, Martin Luther King Jr. leads march in DC, JFK elected/assassinated, Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy assassinated, first moon landing, Woodstock (optimistic about future; team oriented, health/wellness important, work, involvement = engaged, satisfied with their job)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation X</strong></td>
<td>Intel’s first chip invented, MTV, CDC’s first report on AIDS, first email system, personal computer introduced, Reagan assassination attempt, Watergate scandal, Three Mile Island meltdown, Corporate layoffs, Rodney King beating, Iranian hostage crisis, Stock Market decline, Desert Storm, fall of Berlin wall, Challenger explosion, Lockerbie flight bombing, Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (survivors of traumatic events; established institutions and leaders in society failed = skeptical, self-sufficient, independent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Millennial</strong></td>
<td>Prozac introduced, Google, Ebola, World Wide Web opens to public, O.J. Simpson trial, Oklahoma City Bombings, 9/11, MA issues same-sex marriage licenses, Recession begins, CDs/DVDs, Y2K, Obama elected, rise of social media, school violence, early exposure to adult issues, diversity (cautious; culturally/rationally tolerant, accepting of change, “Everybody wins!” = open communicators, want leadership/opportunities to learn; fixing social injustices a major focus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation Z/Digital Natives/Post-Millennials</strong></td>
<td>Children of Generation X, Recession still present, domestic/foreign terrorism, Swine Flu, Hurricane Katrina, iPod, Facebook; will be smarter than any generation previously, will not be team players, creative, more self-directed, little concern for privacy or personal information, thrive on speed, highly connected to use of communications; entrepreneurial, innovative; want to actually “save the world” not just talk about doing it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zemke, R., Rianes, C., Filipczak, B., 2000; Schuman H, Rodgers W. 2004; Smola KW, 2002
Baby Boomers still Largest Generation

Population by Generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>In millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GenZ</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>72.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>64.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silents</td>
<td>26.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pew Research Center, April 2016
Millennials are largest generation in U.S. labor force

Note: Annual averages plotted 1995-2014. For 2015 the first quarter average of 2015 is shown. Due to data limitations, Silent generation is overestimated from 2008-2015.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Major Shifts in U.S. Society and Culture
Educational Trends

- Greater share of Millennial women have a bachelor’s degree than their male counterparts
- Today’s graduates have spent less than 5000 hours of their lives reading, but have spent over 10,000 hours playing video games and over 20,000 hours watching television
- Technology: in 2013, 71% of the U.S. population age 3 and over used the internet
- Grade inflation
- College attainment has spiked
## Generational Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baby Boomer</th>
<th>GenX</th>
<th>Millennial</th>
<th>GenZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outlook</strong></td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Skeptical</td>
<td>Cautiously Optimistic</td>
<td>System is “rigged”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work ethic</strong></td>
<td>Loyal; driven; “My way or the highway”</td>
<td>Responsibilities have to align with values</td>
<td>Described as poor work ethic; self-centered</td>
<td>Skeptical about education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View of authority</strong></td>
<td>Pay your dues</td>
<td>Competence; do not micromanage</td>
<td>Respect must be earned</td>
<td>Internet is the authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communications</strong></td>
<td>In person</td>
<td>Email or voicemail; informality</td>
<td>Text/Social Media (Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat)</td>
<td>‘Instinctual’ relationship with technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Personal gratification</td>
<td>Reluctance to commit</td>
<td>Inclusive</td>
<td>Desire for deeper social connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work-Life Balance</strong></td>
<td>Responsible for balancing everyone else</td>
<td>Would be nice</td>
<td>Flexibility and options</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of feedback</strong></td>
<td>“Once a year, with lots of documentation”</td>
<td>“Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?”</td>
<td>“Whenever I want or seek it”</td>
<td>Honest, transparent and authentic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gen Xers – Changing the Nature of Work

• Accounts for 51% of leadership roles globally
• ~20 years of experience
• Comfortable/proficient with technology
  • Use social media >40 minutes more per week than Millennials
  • More likely to use cell phones at dinner table to conduct work
• Can bridge the gap between conventional/traditional leadership styles of Baby Boomers and unorthodox styles of Millennials
• “Hypercollaborators” – work with and through others to generate faster results
• Overlooked for promotions and expected to take on heavier workloads than other generations
Generation Z – “Digital Natives”

- Born 1995-2012 (now in high school and early college)
- 61 million
- More practical and financially driven than Millennials
- Prefer to learn by doing
- Want future to reflect specific, personal interests (versus Millennials who seek to make an impact on others)
- Diversity is the norm
- Social leanings are progressive
- “Innovative”, “Self Aware”, “Resilient”
- Highly entrepreneurial and reluctant to spend money
- Interested in an education they can apply and focused on the value of a degree
- Technology is indispensable but not always a net positive

More about Millennials...
Millennials = Safest Generation

- Car seats up to age 8
- Bicycle helmets
- Participation trophies
- “Stranger danger”
- Product of “helicopter parents”
Technology

- Information access (internet) is not a luxury; it’s a requirement
- No longer *nice to have* → necessary to have
- There have been more changes in technology in the last 5 years than the previous 50
- Robotics
Economic Environment

- Entering adulthood during one of the largest recessions the U.S. has ever had
  - Companies merge, acquired, and close
- Facing challenging/increasing college tuition rates
- Savvy shoppers
- Ownership of goods not a priority
  - Will invest in expensive goods, but do the research first
  - Evaluate purchases (and expenditures) carefully
  - Home ownership, automobile ownership decreasing
  - Car-2-Go; AirBnB; Uber
  - Millennials dominate rental market

Image credits: alternativeconsumer.com; Airbnb.com; uber.com
Housing market

• Baby Boomers: NIMBYism (“Not in my backyard”)
  ◦ The idea that you oppose something that might be built in your neighborhood (landfill, waste plant), but you don’t oppose it being built somewhere else.
  ◦ Boomers edging out Millennials for homes in urban areas because they can afford it
  ◦ Boomers typically have a NIMBY mentality

• Millennials: YIMBYism (“Yes in my backyard”)
  ◦ Debt, urban housing becoming too pricey, affordable housing not being built
  ◦ Millennials want smaller, Boomers have bigger
  ◦ Millennials want to do something about environmental factors (owning cars) but if they can’t buy in urban areas it forces them to rely on their own transportation

• GenX: Still in debt from 2007 housing crisis
  ◦ Wrong place at the wrong time
  ◦ Little to no equity from when they purchased their first home
Information Generation

- Access to global information
  - Tragedies happen frequently
  - Violence
  - Live video as events are happening

- Public scandals
  - National leaders
  - Sports heroes

- “Do-it-Yourself”
  - YouTube
  - Craigslist
Changing Trends...

Ownership
Community
Loyalty (jobs, political parties)
Status = success
Advocacy

Access
Globalization
Social awareness/Loyalty to a cause
Relationships/Inclusion = success
Open-mindedness
Changing Environments

- Changing jobs every 3-5 years
- YOLO
- Aversion to “old school”
- Eager to acquire more information
- Trust: must be earned, but once earned, fiercely loyal
- Entitled: brutally honest (electronic) feedback
Feedback

- Frequent feedback sought
- Product reviews
- “Rate your Doctor”
- “Likes”
- Digital Badging

![Feedback Icon]

Image credit: facebook.com

![GrubHub Rating]

Image credit: www.grubhub.com

![Review]

“If buildings could speak, this one would be screaming “Run Away!””

★★★★★ Reviewed 7 July 2013

Bits of this building (bannisters, door handles etc) will literally come away in your hands, leaving you clutching a shard of sharpened wood or metal - probably very handy if the place was overrun by zombies, but otherwise just a pain in the neck.

The bathroom itself resembled a dirty cupboard designed by the inventor of Tetris - everything was jammed in at bizarre angles in order to make it fit. One would need to be a master contortionist to use the sink or the shower. Brilliantly, the toilet wasn't actually fixed to the floor, like some kind of canning broodly-egg for the weary contortionist defecator.

Image credit: matadornetwork.com
Get out of your comfort zone...
Potential Challenges

Within your group think of examples when you have had challenges working with a member of another generation in some of the following areas:

- Productivity
- Engagement
- Learning Styles
- Mentorship
- Recognition
- Feedback
- Communication
- Professionalism
Discussion Questions

• What are ways to bridge the generations?

• How is your work environment adapting to different generations?

• In what ways could you effectively communicate your expectations for any generation employee?

• What management strategies might best fit a generation different than yours?

• Provide an example of a way that you would give feedback to an employee who is a Baby Boomer vs. a Gen-Xer vs. a Millennial
## Working with Baby Boomers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>THINGS TO CONSIDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large generation</td>
<td>Recognize their experience as a valuable asset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimistic</td>
<td>Use them as mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skewed work-life balance</td>
<td>Recognize role overload and conflicting demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brought up in competitive environment</td>
<td>Assist with time demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will revolutionize retirement</td>
<td>Not always comfortable with working at speed of technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Work ethic” and “loyalty” are synonymous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Working with Generation X

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>THINGS TO CONSIDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated to people, projects, ideas and tasks, but not longevity and lifetime employment</td>
<td>They like and want flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel thinkers</td>
<td>Want to be developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent and resourceful</td>
<td>Enjoy engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfortable with diversity</td>
<td>Want affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct with feedback and requests</td>
<td>Want others to “lighten up”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting of change</td>
<td>Want to be appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Want balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Working with Millennials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>THINGS TO CONSIDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using computers since Pre-K</td>
<td>May change jobs every 2-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Learners</td>
<td>More free agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a state of continuous partial attention</td>
<td>Hop-scotch approach will replace linear career pathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to instant communication and feedback</td>
<td>Expect to work 8-10 years then seek extended time off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accustomed to giving feedback</td>
<td>Technology allows them to work remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cautiously optimistic</td>
<td>May not want to work traditional hours but will be dedicated to completing a task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oriented toward collective action/team-oriented</td>
<td>Don’t force them to fit your definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>They don’t respect authority <em>just because</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Myers KK, 2010
Attracting Millennials to your Workplace

- Millennials like perks, but culture is most important
- Perks can help attract, engage and retain employees
- Millennials are assessing workplace culture, the value of their own role and whether they believe in management or not

“Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients.” Richard Branson
Working with Millennials: Do’s

• Group work/collaborative projects
• Specific tasks and outside the box – grab info from various sources
• Have a plan for their long term goals
  • Make sure timeframe is short enough for them to envision
• Time sensitive projects – efficient
• Creativity/fun environment
• Feedback – direct, frequent, meaningful
  • Electronic is fine (email, text, digital badge, etc.)
Working with Millennials: Don’ts

• Try not be defensive when questioned
• Don’t break promises – they will become jaded
• Don’t guarantee anything
  • Nothing is a guarantee in their world
• Self-centered work ethic but dedicated to completing a task
• Not interested in climbing corporate ladder
• Promises of promotions and titles don’t interest them
• Using technology is not necessarily disrespectful
• Don’t expect them to fill downtime
• Don’t expect loyalty, longevity in a job
• If not stimulating they will move on
Bottom Line

• Wishing people were more like you is not a good strategy
  • Adapt
• How will interact with, motivate and reward all generations at your workplace?

“To better understand who your Millennial employees are and what drives them to succeed, perhaps it's easiest to understand who they are not. You.”

~Cam Marston, leading expert on generational change
Questions?

Thank you for your attention!
References


References


References


• The Physician Foundation 2014 Survey of America’s Physicians. 

• The Physician Foundation 2014 Survey of America’s Physicians. 

• 2014 National Pharmacist Workforce Study. 

References


