

When Generations Collide ... How to Solve the Generation Puzzle

People resemble their times more than
they resemble their parents
-- music, heroes, passions, common history --

Generations

- GIs (1901-1921)
- Traditionalist (1922-1945)
- Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- Gen X (1964-1980)
- Millennials (1980-present)

Traditionalist (1922-1945)

“I will cope”

- Veterans, Silents
- Similar to prior generations
- Government oriented
- Consistency, Uniformity, grand scale, conformers
- Stable, thorough, loyal, private, hardworking
- Cautious, unadventurous, unimaginative
- Duty before pleasure, patient, formal
- Conformers: takes orders/follows Leader

Traditionalist (1922-1945)

- **Heroes**
 - Superman, FDR, General Patten, Lt. General Eisenhower, Churchill, Babe Ruth, Joe DiMaggio
- **Memorabilia**
 - Kewpie dolls, Mickey Mouse, Flash Gordon, Wheaties, Tarzan, Jukeboxes, Blondie
- **Sports**
 - big team sports with highly specialized rules and roles for each member -- baseball, football

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

“I will be satisfied”

- “me” generations, Rock n Roll generation
- TV generation, first divorce generation
- Individual rights prevail over common good
- Self-reliant, independent, optimistic, team-oriented, relational
- Looking forward to retirement
- Willing to “go the extra mile”
- Indulgent, self-absorbed, buys on credit
- Materialism, well educated, thrive on change

Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

- **Heroes**
 - Gandhi, Martin Luther King, John and Jacqueline **Kennedy, John Glenn**
- **Memorabilia**
 - “Ed Sullivan Show”, fallout shelters, poodle skirts, pop beads, slinkies, TV dinners, “The Laugh-in”, Hula Hoops, The Mod Squad, the peace sign
- **Sports**
 - Teams that are small and whoever has the ball is in charge: Soccer and basketball

Gen X (1965-1979)

“We will be authentic in relationships with others”

- “I” Generation, “L” Generation
- Often defined by what they are NOT
- Survivors, Grew up in single parent home
- Unlimited Prosperity, “Want it NOW”
- Computer savvy, mobil, independent, casual, self-reliant, risk takers, creative
- Unpredictable, conversationally shallow, inexperienced
- Rejects authority, DON’T have to wait their turn

Gen X (1965-1979)

- **Heroes**
 - NONE
- **Memorabilia**
 - “The Brady Bunch”, Pet Rocks, Platform shoes, “The Simpsons”, Dynasty, ET, Cabbage Patch Dolls
- **Sports**
 - Tend toward solitary sports having some risk: rock climbing, roller blading, parachute jumping, mountain biking

Millennials (1980-present)

“It’s a hard world”

- NeXters, Internet Generation, “Buy it now” Generation
- Most diverse group of parents, hyper-parents
- Internet/computer knowledge, very connected, “street savvy”, very confident, optimistic
- Apathetic, unmotivated, self-interested
- Wants to have an impact on the world
- Flexible hours, having lots of responsibility
- Less important: job prestige/high salary

Millennials (1980-present)

- **Heroes**
 - Michael Jordan, Princess Diana, Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Mother Teresa, Bill Gates, Tiger Woods, Christopher Rives
- **Memorabilia**
 - Barney, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle, Tomagotchi, virtual pets, Beanie Babies, Pogs, American girl dolls, Oprah, Ellen, The Spice Girls, The X Games, Reality TV shows
- **Sports**
 - Expect to see a resurgence of large-team sports with this group

Traditionalist

What other generations say about them

- Baby Boomers
 - They're dictatorial.
 - They're rigid. They need to learn flexibility and adapt better to change.
 - They are inhibited.
 - They're technological dinosaurs.
 - They are narrow.
- Gen Xers
 - They're too set in their ways.
 - Jeez learn how to use your email, man!
 - They too shall pass.
 - They've got all the money.
- Millennials
 - They are trustworthy.
 - They are good leaders.
 - They are brave.

Baby Boomers

What other generations say about them

- Traditionalist
 - They talk about things they ought to keep private ... like the intimate details of their person lives.
 - They are self-absorbed..
- Gen Xers
 - They're self-righteous.
 - They're workaholics.
 - They're too political, always trying to figure out just what to say ... to whom... and when.
 - They do a great job of talking the talk, But they don't walk the walk.
 - Get outta my face.
 - Lighten up; it's only a job.
 - What's the management fad this week?
 - They're clueless.
- Millennials
 - They're cool. They're up to date on the music we like.
 - They work too much.

Gen Xers

What other generations say about them

- Traditionalist
 - They're not educated.
 - They don't respect experience.
 - They don't follow procedure.
 - They don't know what hard work is.
- Baby Boomers
 - They're slackers.
 - They are rude and lack social skills.
 - They're always doing things their own way, instead of the proscribed way (our way).
 - They spend too much time on the Internet and e-mail.
 - They won't wait their turn.
- Millennials
 - Cheer up!

Millennials

What other generations say about them

- Traditionalist
 - They're smart little critters.
 - They need to toughen up.
 - They watch too much TV ... with crude language and violence.
- Baby Boomers
 - They need more discipline from their parents..
 - They can set the time on the VCR!
 - They need to learn to entertain themselves; they need too much attention.
 - Can they do my web page for me?
- Gen Xers
 - Neo Boomers.
 - Here we go again .. Another self-absorbed generation of spoiled brats.
 - What do you mean, "What's an album?"

Clashpoint Around Job Changing

Traditionalist: “Job changing carries a stigma.”

Baby Boomers: “Job changing puts you behind.”

Gen Xers: “Job changing is necessary.”

Millennials: “Job changing is part of my daily routine.”

Clashpoint Around Job Changing

What are the reasons members of each generation stay?
NOT compensation!!!

Traditionalist: Loyalty to clients/customers; the amount of time off they had

Boomers: Idealism and wanting to put their stamp on things; no second place winner

Gen Xers: Autonomy (being a part of the big picture with more responsibility); “good schedule” and time off.

Millennials: Change the world (social concerns); personal time

Clashpoints around Feedback

Traditionalist: “No news is good news. If I am not yelling at you, you’re probably doing fine.”

Boomers: “Feedback once a year, with lots of documentation.”

Gen Xers: “Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?” Gen Xers want feedback frequently. 90% of Xers said they want feedback immediately or within a few day of completing a project.

Millennials: “Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button.”

Comparing Generations

- **Traditionalist**
 - Assets: stable, detail oriented, thorough, loyal, hard working
 - Liabilities: inept with ambiguity and change, reluctant to buck the system, uncomfortable with conflict, reticent when they disagree
- **Baby boomers**
 - Assets: service oriented, driven, willing to “go the extra mile”, good at relationships, want to please, team players
 - Liabilities: not budget minded, uncomfortable with conflict, may put process over result, overly sensitive, judgmental, self-centered
- **Gen X**
 - Assets: Adaptable, technoliterate, independent, unintimidated by authority, creative
 - Liabilities: impatient, poor people skills, inexperienced, cynical
- **Millennials**
 - Assets: Collective action, optimistic, tenacity, heroic spirit, multitasking capabilities, technosavvy
 - Liabilities: need for supervision and structure, inexperienced (particularly with handling difficult people)

What's next?

Today's American workforce is unique and singular. Never before has there been a workforce and workplace—so diverse in so many ways. The mix of race, gender, ethnicity, and generation in today's workplace is stunning.

There is a growing realization that the misunderstandings and resentment between older, not so old, and younger employees in the workplace is growing and problematic.

Learning more about each generation's wants, needs and desires, helps us understand each other and be more tolerance of those that are not like us.