

# **What It's Like to Work with Me:**

## **Generational Diversity in Office & Team Environments**

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- Brought to you by the NIH Work/Life Center

# Goals

- Increase knowledge and understanding of four generations
- Enhance comprehension of how generational differences affect people in the workplace
- Promote skills for intergenerational communication
- Develop skills for managing diverse working styles across generations

# The Generational Divide

Veterans 1922-1945 (60-83 yrs)	Baby Boomers 1946-1964 (41-59 yrs)
Generation X 1965-1978 (27-40 yrs)	Generation Y 1979-1994 (11-26 yrs)

## How does it define you?

- What is the most significant historical event in your life time?
- What has been the most significant technological advancement in your life time?
- What is the most significant musical event in your life time?
- What is the most significant entertainment event in your life time?
- Which leader or famous person defines your generation?

# **Veterans (1922-1945; 60-83 yrs)**

## *Events and Experiences*

- Great Depression
- New Deal
- World War II
- Korean War

# **Baby Boomers (1946-1964; 41-59 yrs)**

## *Events and Experiences*

- Civil Rights
- Sexual Revolution
- Cold War
- Space travel
- Assassinations

# **Generation X (1965-1978; 27-40 yrs)**

## *Events and Experiences*

- Challenger
- Desert Storm
- Energy Crisis
- .BOM
- Y2K
- Activism
- Clinton / Lewinsky

# **Generation Y (1979-1994; 11-26 yrs)**

## *Events and Experiences*

- School shootings
- Oklahoma City
- Technology
- Child focused world



# Veterans – Values & Traits

- Hard work
- Dedication & sacrifice
- Honor
- Discipline
- Conformity

# Baby Boomers – Values & Traits

- Optimism
- Team orientation
- Involvement
- Personal gratification
- Personal growth
- Loyalty
- Career driven
- Challenge and choice

# Gen X (Xers) – Values & Traits

- Diversity
- Pragmatism
- Techno literacy
- Fun and informality
- Self-reliance
- Fiercely independent
- Multitask masters
- Work/life balance

## Gen Y (Nexters) – Values & Traits

- Realism
- Feel civic duty
- Confident
- Achievement oriented
- Extreme Fun
- Respect for diversity
- Communal

# Generational Disconnect

Veterans have a tendency not to question or challenge authority or the status quo. This may cause confusion and resentment among the GenXers and GenYs who have been taught to speak up.

GenXers and GenYs may fail to actively listen to Boomers and Traditionalists thereby missing valuable information and guidance.

# Working Together

- Work assignments
- Communication
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Corporate tenure
- Motivation

# Skills to Improve Communication

- Be polite
- Use active listening skills
  - Verbal
  - Non-verbal
- Use I messages
- “Talk” frequently
- Respect differences

# Communicating with Veterans

- Use inclusive language (we, us)
- Focus more on words, not body language
- Try face-to-face or written communication
- Use more formal language
- Don't waste their time
- Slow to warm up



# Communicating with Boomers

- Use body language to communicate
- Speak in an open, direct style
- Answer questions thoroughly, and expect to be pressed for details
- Avoid controlling, manipulative language
- Present options – show flexibility
- Use face to face or electronic communication to reach out to them

# Communicating with GenXers

- Learn their language and speak it
- Use e-mail as your primary tool
- Talk in short sound bytes
- Present the facts, use straight talk
- Ask them for their feedback
- Share information immediately and often
- Use an informal communication style
- Listen! You just might learn something

# Communicating with GenYs

- Let your language paint visual pictures
- Use action verbs to challenge them
- Don't talk down to them; they will resent it
- Show respect through your language, and they will respect you
- Use e-mail and voicemail as primary tools
- Constantly seek their feedback
- Use humor. Reassure them that you don't take yourself too seriously
- Encourage them to break the rules and explore new paths or options

## Receiving Feedback

- Veterans – “No news is good news.”
- Boomers – “Feedback once a year and lots of documentation.”
- GenXers – “Sorry to interrupt but how am I doing?”
- GenYs – “Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button.”

# Corporate Tenure

- Veterans – want to know that their years of service have been appreciated, and that they are being taken care of
- Boomers – want to be rewarded for longevity and are big on equity
- Generation X – rewards for longevity don't work; corporate hoppers
- Generation Y – longevity with a company is not important, although they are very loyal

## Messages that Motivate

- Veterans – Your experience is respected.
- Boomers – You are valued. You are needed.
- Generation X –Do it your way. Forget the rules.
- Generation Y – You will work with other bright, creative people.