Communication between Generations in the Workplace

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Poll Everywhere

• Which generation do you fall into:
  – Silent Generation
  – Boomer
  – Gen X
  – Millennial
Today’s Workforce Has Many Generations

• Don’t all get along
  – Fueled by political climate
  – Some are anxious to leave
  – Some are anxious to take over
  – Some are caught in the middle

• Public Agencies provide a loyal workplace
  – Not a ‘college’ stepping stone job
  – Upper Management is senior/boomer generation
  – Millennials are the largest group in the workforce

Pick a partner…
  – Choose very wisely
With your partner, how many you know?

- TMI
- IDK
- TBH
- BRB
- BTW
- BFF
- LOL
- TTYL
- LMAO
- ROTFL
- BYOB
- BYOD
- BM&Y
- IMHO

Popular 60’s and 70’s Words

- Bitchin’
- Groovy
- Stoked
- Threads
- Wowzers
- Ding-bat
- Wiped-out
- Gnarly
- Bad
- Bent
- Dude
- Boogie
- Dork
- Boss
- Fuzz
- Dynomite
- Far out
- Bummer
- Funky
What Is A Generation?

A group of people born about the same time, who share the same historical experiences, beliefs and attitudes.

– The key is not to figure how OLD people are, but what was happening when they were YOUNG?

• Affects values, attitudes, choices & actions
Silent Generation

- Great depression, New Deal
- WW II, Korean War, heroes

What do they bring?

- Superb interpersonal skills
- Organization, honor
- Good work ethic, discipline, respect
- My word/handshake is my bond

Boomers

- TV, Vietnam, MLK, JFK
- Women’s and Human Rights
**Boomers**

What do they bring:
- Driven and service oriented
- Hard work/long hours is proof of commitment
- Good ‘team players’

**Areas of Conflict**
- Dealing with conflict
- May struggle with technology

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**Gen X**

- Fall of Berlin Wall & Soviet Union
- Challenger explosion
- Divorce, Latchkey kids, AIDS
- PC, Cable TV, Cell phones

You might be a Xer if…
- You wanted cable so you could ‘have your MTV’
- You watched Sesame Street (Pre-Elmo) and sang ‘Conjunction Junction– what's your function?’
**Generation X**

**What do they bring:**
- Diversity, self-reliance
  - Open to receiving feedback
  - Fun, like to socialize
  - Loyal to profession, not employer

**Areas of Conflict:**
- Job movers

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**Gen Y**

- 9/11
- Lewinsky scandal
- Internet and iPods
- Texting, Sexting

**Generation Y**
- Millennials, Nintendo Generation, Nexters
- Connected 24/7, ‘Digital Natives’
- Want immediate feedback, informal workplace
- Civic minded, want a sense of ‘purpose’
Gen Y

What they bring:
- Good at multi-tasking
- Appreciate diversity
- Very ‘tech’ savvy
- Connected 24/7
- Wanted immediate feedback
- Civic Minded: Want a purpose

Where they struggle:
- Strong parental attachment
- Need more recognition

Poll Everywhere

- Which generation do you relate to?
  (Text to all that apply)
  – Silent Generation
  – Boomer
  – Gen X
  – Millennial
What Is It About 20-Somethings?

- Completing school
- Leaving home
- Becoming financially independent
- Marrying
- Having a child

GEN X (BORN ~1960~1980)

MILLENNIAL (BORN ~1980~2000)
1. Most comfortable with a formal communication style
2. Values organized layout of communication
3. Prefer face-to-face or written communication
4. Enjoys staff meetings/in person trainings
5. Need larger font/more lighting
6. Speak slower/be patient
7. Clarify instead of assume
Our four generation workforce provides challenges

1. Most comfortable with face-to-face or telephonic communication
2. Appreciate open, direct, and honest interactions
3. Work best when presented with detailed, comprehensive plans
4. OK with email communication, but many believe valuable time is wasted:
   • due to incomplete information in email
   • emails sent back and forth (reply all) for hours when a phone call would do.

**Call me**

Baby Boomers
b. 1946-1965

Our four generation workforce provides challenges

1. Most comfortable using email as their primary communication tool
2. They have no real desire to engage in face-to-face communication
3. When talk is necessary, they prefer short, informal conversations
4. Details are not necessary
5. Do not like staff meetings
6. Prefer online training

**Email me**

Gen Xers
b. 1966-1979

**Communication is the key to success**
Our four generation workforce provides challenges

1. Most comfortable using texting, email and social media as primary communication
2. They grew up in the high-tech era. They are not big with face-to-face communication
3. They value technology and their phone is not a phone, it’s a high tech texting/selfie device
4. Prefer SHORT, direct emails and online training
5. Their project approach is different
   • They may start a project later
   • May seem disorganized
   • But, they get it done
   • Hate to be micromanaged

The Millennial generation will account for half of the workforce by 2020 and 75% by 2030.

Public Agencies will succeed in attracting, retaining and working with these younger employees only by understanding what motivates them.
How to Work with Millennials

• This generation is *SPECIAL*…
  …Or so they’ve been told all their life
  … All 75 million of them…
  - Used to getting immediate feedback
  - Constant feedback
  - How SOON do they want it???

- Immediate response to questions/requests
  - Texts, emails…no phone calls
    - ANSWER them! Develops **trust**.
    - Calendar your follow up with them (to email or text)
    - Deliver on promises
  - Everybody gets one
    - What you do for one, consider doing for all
  - Think, pair, share…
    - Orientations
Effectiveness and Millennials

Engage, you must...

Be Positive, enthusiastic – Listened, I have
Be Personal, supportive – Understand, I do

Millennials want a broader ‘SAY’ in the organization
Help them find balance

Do you understand what they are saying...

Said no one ever...

I Know, Right??

Literally dying...

Stop It Right Now...

Savage...

Legit

Really tho...

Of course

Srsly

Obviouly

Selfies

Rude...
Millennial Speak…

• When Millennials keep it short, something's up!

• When Millennials keep their responses to a minimum, they're trying to tell you something.
  – They were raised by parents who trained them to be very sensitive to people's feelings.
  – They don't like conflict—especially at work!
  – They'll do whatever they can to avoid confrontation and uncomfortable conversations.

Millennial Speak…

1. "That could work."

Real Meaning: "I don't think that will work at all, but I don't want to be rude and tell you it's a bad idea."

• Millennials were raised to be highly collaborative.

• This tactful response is meant to allow them to open up the conversation to alternatives you can discuss and agree upon.
Millennial Speak…

2. "I'd like your feedback."

Real Meaning: “Explain specifically what I’m doing right (appreciation) and how I could be better (advancement)”

– They aren't asking for a fake compliment like "nice job" or "that's great."
– Don't rip them to shreds.
– They're asking for you to pay attention to their career.
– They're asking for coaching—something they've been given their whole lives. They expect it.
– Coaching in NOT a sign of weakness, it is a PATH to greatness.

Millennial Speak…

3. "Maybe we should try it like this”

Real Meaning: "I think your idea isn't good, and I don't want to hurt your feelings, so I'm going to suggest an alternative."
Millennial Speak…

4. "Sure."

Real Meaning: "I'll do it, but I'm not psyched about it."

– Millennials want to do meaningful work all the time.

– When given a task that doesn't thrill them, they can't hide their feelings that well. Notice when their response is one word.

Millennial Speak…

5. "Why do we need to do this again?"

Real Meaning: "Help me understand the bigger picture here, because I'm not seeing how this is a good use of my time."

– When coached your entire life, things are often explained by how it relates to personal success.

– If a Millennial can't see how this contributes to their career growth or professional success, they'll want some help seeing it.
Millennial Speak…

6. "That's interesting."

Real Meaning: "Actually, it's not interesting at all and I don't want to get into a conversation with you about it."

– This is a conversation shut-down tactic.
– Expand on what you're sharing so they can see the connection.
– They aren't always going to understand what you're saying and why you're excited, but they don't want to look ignorant.

Generational CLASH points

• Working with and motivating others:

  – It's hard to motivate, coach, work with someone you:

    • don't understand,
    • don't think you understand or
    • haven't taken the time to understand.

http://www.commitment.com/getalong.html
Generational CLASH point

• Boomers and Micro-managing
  – Boomers tend to talk the talk but don’t walk the walk
    • In their mind: They have a more hands-off, participative, management style than they actually practice.
    • Reality: They don't mean to be controlling, but they have a vision of how things ought to look so they tend to insist things be done a certain way.

Generational CLASH point

• View of Authority
  – Silent Generation:
    • Respect for authority
    • Seniority and job titles are respected
  – Boomers
    • Challenge authority
  – Gen X
    • Respect competence and skills over seniority
    • Unimpressed by authority
  – Gen Y
    • Respect authority who demonstrate competence
Sneak Peak at Gen Z

They are just barely finishing high school
• In the early stages of defining

**Millennials:**
- Raised in boom times & relative peace of 1990s
- Sunny world was dashed by 9/11 and two economic crashes 2000 and 2008
- Theirs is a story of innocence lost

**Gen Z:**
- Has had its eyes open from the beginning
- Arriving in aftermath of the war on terror and Great Recession
- More grounded, conscientious, hard working, anxious about future

Sneak Peak at Gen Z

**Millennials:**
- Technology: iPods/Nintendo
- Multi-tasking
- TEXT everything
  - I am sad ;-(
- Blast ‘fantastic’ lives on Facebook-eating, drinking
- Multi-Cultural and Accepting

**Gen Z:**
- Technology: Smart Phone
  - Phigital generation
- Multi-tasking: Takes info instantaneously… Loses interest just as fast.
- IMAGE focused
  - Selfie, Surface tablet
- Privacy/Anonymous
  - Secret, Whisper (disappear)
- Multi-Racial
  - Mixed race kids
Sneak Peak at Gen Z

The privacy, the caution, the focus on sensible careers —
Generation Z starts to look less like the brash millennials and more like their grandparents (or, in some cases great-grandparents)

Those children of the late 1920s through the early ’40s, (so-called Silent Generation), were shaped by war and the Depression and grew up to be the diligent, go-along-to-get-along careerists of the ’50s / ’60s

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