



You Don't Know what an Emoji is? OMG--SMH Intergenerational Relationships in the Workplace

Disentangling the Connections between
“The Generations” and Adult Developmental Tasks
and
Why It Matters



Setting the Foundation

THE “GENERATIONS”



The Generations

- The Greatest Generation
- The Silent Generation
- The Baby Boomer Generation
- Generation X
- Generation Y---The Millennials
- Generation Z



Generation name	Birth years, Ages in 2010	% of total adult population*	% of internet-using population*
Millennials	Born 1977-1992, Ages 18-33	30	35
Gen X	Born 1965-1976, Ages 34-45	19	21
Younger Boomers	Born 1955-1964, Ages 46-55	20	20
Older Boomers	Born 1946-1954, Ages 56-64	14	13
Silent Generation	Born 1937-1945, Ages 65-73	7	5
G.I. Generation	Born -1936, Age 74+	9	3

* Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=2,252 adults 18 and older.



For Your Consideration

- Think for a moment about individuals you may know or what the conventional wisdom (or stereotypes) may be about people in these generations.
- List----
 - The commonly ascribed characteristics defining this generation.
 - Identify the forces present in the lives of these generations that contributed to the formation of these qualities.

Some Broad Generalizations

TRADITIONALS

Born before 1945, they grew up dealing with economic hardships made them disciplined and self-sacrificing, with the reward being to live the American Dream. Today, most Traditionals are retired and have done their share in the workplace.

BABY BOOMERS

Born 1945 to 1964, they typically grew up amid economic prosperity, suburban affluence and strong nuclear families with stay-at-home moms. They are currently leading the American workplace, with the youngest Boomer at age 52.

GENERATION X

Born 1965 to 1980, they grew up as “latchkey” kids in a world of divorce and working moms. This led to independence, resilience, adaptability and a “I don’t need someone looking over my shoulder” attitude. As a generation, they are at times overlooked because of the two loud and large generations on their either side.

MILLENNIALS

Born 1981 to 1999, they were raised at the most child-centric time in our history. Due to the great deal of attention and high expectations from parents, they are confident and may appear cocky. Also known as Generation Y, they are the largest generation in the US workforce, and are still growing.

iGENERATION

Born since 2000, they are expected to be exceptional future employees due to their natural skills with technology and easy acceptance of new ideas. Also known as Generation Z.



Generation Z

- Cynical
- Private
- Entrepreneurial
- Multi-tasking
- Hyper-aware
- Technology-reliant

Generation Characteristics

	Veterans	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Major Cultural Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World War II • Great Depression • The New Deal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnam War • Civil Rights Movement • Woodstock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIDS Epidemic • Internet Revolution • MTV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Columbine • 9/11 • 2004 Presidential Election
General Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straightforward • Thorough • Reluctant to change • Uncomfortable with conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to please • Service-oriented • Social • Driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptable • Independent • Creative • Openly speak opinions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-taskers • Tolerant • Tenacious • Highly involved
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal • Memo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person • Telephone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct • Immediate • Email 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited In-person • Texting • Social Media
Work Ethic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard work • Respect authority • Duty • Adhere to rules and policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workaholics • Question authority • Driven to succeed • Team player 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-life balance • Self-reliant • Entrepreneurial • Telecommuting OK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for meaning • Dedicated • Goal-oriented • Desire to 'do it all'



An Alternative Perspective

INSIGHTS FROM DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY



What Does Developmental Science Suggest?

- Life-span Psychology
- Human development from conception to death
- Examines the forces that impact development across the life-cycle.



Forces on Human Development

- Development occurs across one's entire life,
- Multidirectionality and multidimensionality,
 - Think: biology, environment, interaction and beyond
- Development as growth and decline,
- The role plasticity plays in development,
 - Change can happen anytime in the life-course
- The influence of socio-cultural conditions on development,
- The interactions of age-graded, history-graded, and nonnormative historical influences on development, and
- The multidisciplinary nature of human development.



Why is This Important?

- The “Generational” approach is a blunt instrument. There may be more heterogeneity within the generation than between the generations.
- Designed initially for marketing to these “generations.”
- Obscures the common or universal features of adult life to instead emphasize peculiarities of time-bound influences on adult life.



Adult Life Stages and The Generations

Adult Life Stages

- Adolescence
- Emerging Adulthood
- Young Adulthood
- Middle Adulthood
- Late Adulthood

Generations

- Generation Z + Millennials
- Millennials
- Millennials + Gen X
- Gen X + Baby Boomers
- Baby Boomers + Silent + Greatest



Basic Developmental Tasks of Adulthood

- Identity
- Intimacy
- Career consolidation
- Generativity
- Keeper of the meaning---Wisdom
- Integrity



Bringing Life-span Theory to the Workplace

- Helps place possible “generational differences” into developmental context.
- Provides a foundation for understanding common development tasks that transcend generation.
- Brings focus to creating work environments that emphasize strengths and common goals.



Behaviors, Strengths, and Struggles

GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

HOW GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IMPACT ORGANIZATIONS & TEAMS

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	Organizational Behaviors	Workplace Strengths	Workplace Struggles
Baby Boomers	Boomers tend to be optimistic, ambitious, competitive, and focus on their accomplishments. They believe in working long hours and expect the younger generations to adopt this approach. They have ruled the workplace for years and are comfortable in the culture they created.	Team Perspective Dedicated Experienced Knowledgeable Service-oriented	Nontraditional work styles of Gens X and Y. Technology replacing human interaction. Sharing praise and rewards Balancing work and family Uncomfortable with conflict, reluctant to go against peers.
Generation X	Having seen their parents laid off or face job insecurity, they've redefined loyalty. Instead of remaining loyal to their company, they're committed to their work and people they work with. They are skeptical, risk-takers and want fun in the workplace. They seek more work-life balance.	Independent Adaptable Creative Techno-literate Willing to challenge the status quo	Career development Conflict resolution and office policies Multi-generational team projects Balancing work and family Skeptical and distrustful of authority
Millennials	Typically team-oriented, and work well in groups, as opposed to individual endeavors. Also, they're used to tackling multiple tasks with equal energy, so they expect to work hard. They're good multitaskers, having juggled school, sports and social activities.	Optimistic Able to multitask (?) Tenacious Tech Savvy Driven to learn and grow Team oriented	Respectful communication Functional literacy Need supervision and structure, especially with people issues. Reject the concept of "paying dues," expect input immediately.



What Matters

Differences

- Management Preferences
- Team Culture
- Motivation

Similarities

- Flexible Schedules
- Make an Impact
- Motivation

	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Workstyle	Strong work ethic, good communication, and emotional maturity. Strong team players, insist on involvement in decision making and influencing direction of the organization. Uncomfortable with conflict, process over results.	Prefer to work independently, work best when given a goal and not told how to accomplish it. Loyal to the work and people, not the organization. Skeptical, risk-takers, want fun at work. Seek work-life balance.	Able to multitask and expect to be able to social network on the job. Prefer to work in teams, may need structure and supervision. Reject “paying dues,” give input immediately. Flexible workplace, work anywhere any time to focus on outside interests.
Communication Preferences	Conversations over coffee or lunch. Intertwine business and relationships. Share mutual interests, seek input, connect message and team to mission, vision, values. Personal interaction.	Direct and straightforward communication, don’t want time wasted, may seem abrupt. No jargon. Email or voicemail. Give clear direction.	Be positive. Text-message or F2F. Tie message to GenY personal goals or team goals. Don’t be condescending, avoid cynicism and sarcasm. IM, blog, text, email.
Tech	Worry technology is replacing human interaction and they are being left behind.	Techno-literate worry about being outpaced by younger colleagues.	Tech-savvy, can be impatient with those who are not and can not keep up.
Values	Identity is wrapped up in work. Seek consensus, process. Personalize workplace. Struggle with nontraditional work styles. Work-life balance.	Independent, self-reliant, challenge status quo, reluctant loyalty. Adaptable, thrive in chaos and change. Seek measurable results, streamlined processes, efficiency.	Community-oriented, value diversity, see world as global, connected and 24/7. Achievement-focused, confident, may seem cocky. Informal style may see off-putting.



What's the Take-away?

- Discuss generational differences
- Seek common ground regarding communication
- Mentoring programs
- Create flexible workplace
- Respect strengths and areas of competence
- Teams are important