

## THE GENERATION GAP

Just the title makes me feel like the old person sitting on a porch with their friends starting the conversation with “kids now days”. For those of you who have not ventured into any learning about the changing generations I challenge you to open your eyes and your mind before you get blindsided by how different we are. Every one of us has heard someone older than us make a comment about our work habits. Are the work habits of others truly bad or is it we just don’t understand them? I want to share with you just a little about the different generations and then I challenge you to get more information about it from books, articles, or observation. I truly believe the more you learn the better you’ll be able to understand and interact with others. If you are in any type of leadership role, be it in the work place or in a church or school environment you need to understand the differences in the generations.

Let’s first define the groups:

Group	When they were born
Radio Babies	1930-1945
Baby Boomers	1946-1965
Generation X	1965-1976
Generation Y	1977-1990
Millennials	1991 and later

Most Radio Babies are no longer in the workforce. They are retired and told us many stories about walking uphill to school both ways. School to them was a privilege not a given. We think of this generation as old and set in their ways. Think of what these people experienced in their lives, War, invention of television, drastic changes to automobiles, getting information via theaters rather than newscasts. This generation had advantages to retire because of pensions and loyalty of companies.

The Baby Boomers are the biggest population out there. Everyone one of these people will be able to tell you where they were when Kennedy was shot. They remember feeling the loss and the patriotism for their country at that time. They also began to feel unrest and distrust because of Vietnam. They voiced their opinions and the Civil Rights movement began. They are well educated and want to be respected for their knowledge. Those nearing retirement may be unable because of medical insurance and income needs because they will live longer. Many also are supporting their children or their children’s children.

Generation Xer’s are the smallest group out there. This is the generation of divorce, dual incomes, and independence. We had to fend for ourselves and many of the role models we had came from TV. Not only are we independent but we have trust issues because we saw government lie and companies layoff. We remember life before remotes (even though if you were the youngest child like myself and my sister in law, we were the remotes) and rotary phones. We began seeing the quick and drastic changes in technology.

Generation Y’s were born with all the advantages technology had to offer. This generation was entertained and babysat by video game and television. If they need knowledge they go to the computer and find it. They experienced divorce and dual income families but they are the generation with much different parenting styles. This

group played sports where they all won trophies. They got time outs instead of spankings. This generation has been plagued with violence in places they should feel safe so they are very fearful.

Millennials are the generation where it is all about them. Their parents are worried about their college education and get tutors before they hit kindergarten. Parents sacrifice their lives to be the taxi driver, coaches, and enablers to their children's growth and activities. They are techno savvy and are the ones we call to navigate the computer. These kids are also concerned with the environment, politics, and having me time. Most have a cell phone and email and communicate this way rather than face to face.

Just looking by seeing the short description of each generation raises workplace concerns.

Baby boomers may still need to work but don't feel appreciated for their experience and their knowledge. Some must continue to work for income and insurance but don't feel they must work the long hours, they have already paid their dues. They also are learning the techno stuff but it does not come as easy to them as to the other generations.

Generation Xer's are very independent and short on patience. They feel all should work as they do and they are managers not babysitters so when I tell you once you should do it. They are distrusting so they are covering themselves just in case.

Generation Y's need coaching, attention, and the ability to win. Discipline to them is difficult to absorb and things need to be explained and followed up. They also need to feel safe and protected. If they are managed by Generation Xer's there are some major clashes.

Millennials will want to work where there is new and exciting technology. If your company isn't moving forward they will move out. They will also want me time and to have fun. They will not understand why they can't check email and keep their cell phones with them at all times. Confrontation with this you group will be difficult face to face, that type of communication will go thru email.

Know the people working for you. Know how to motivate and communicate with them and your workplace will be prosperous. If you believe they must conform to you, your business will suffer and you will not attract the future leaders to your company. On May 25<sup>th</sup> 60 Minutes had a great segment on the Millennials and how companies are paying to have consultants come in and work with their management. Readers Digest also has an article on Millennials in their May magazine. There is also a great book called Bridging the Generation Gap by Linda Gravett and Robin Throckmorton. Educate yourself, your future and your company's future is dependent on this.