

## Leading a Multi-generational Workforce



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## Benefits of the multi-generational team

- Enhances recruitment, retention and profitability
- Team is more flexible
- Decisions are stronger because they're broad-based with multiple perspectives
- Team is more innovative and creative
- Can relate more effectively

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## Four generations working together

- Schwarzkopfers/Veterans – 6.5% (pre-1943)
- Baby Boomers – 41.5% (1943-1964)
- Generation X – 29.5% (1963-1980)
- Generation Y/Millennials – 22.5% (1978-1990)

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## By 2011

- Millions of workers, now age 65 and up, will disappear from the workplace taking with them an important store of skill, knowledge, history, wisdom, institutional memory, relationships and “old school” work ethic.

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## By 2010

- The number of prime age workers, 35-45, from whom organizations draw the majority of mid-level managers, will decrease by 10% leaving organizations with a shrinking pool of leadership candidates.

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## Who will do the work?

- Not enough Gen-Xers and Millennials to replace the retiring Schwarzkopfers and Baby Boomers
- Every skilled worker of every age is needed in every organization
- Too young or too old are invalid points

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## Overview of the four generations and characteristics

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## Schwarzkopfers/Veterans

- Dedication, sacrifice, hard work, conformity, law and order, respect for authority, patience, delayed reward, duty before pleasure, adherence to rules, honor
- Work assets:
  - stable, detail oriented, thorough, loyal, hard working
- Work liabilities:
  - inept with ambiguity and change, reluctance to buck the system, uncomfortable with conflict

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## Seminal events for this generation

- 1937 – Hindenburg tragedy
- 1937 – Disney's first animated feature (Snow White)
- 1941 – Hitler invades Russia
- 1941 – Pearl Harbor; US enters WWII
- 1945 – WWII ends in Europe and Japan
- 1947 – Jackie Robinson joins major league baseball
- 1950 – Korean War begins

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### Compelling messages from formative years:

- Make do or do without
- Consider the common good
- Stay in line
- Sacrifice
- Be heroic

Popular Technology of the era that shaped them:




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### Baby Boomers

- Optimism, team orientation, personal gratification, health and wellness, personal growth, youth, work and involvement
- Work assets:
  - service oriented, driven, willing to "go the extra mile," good at relationships, want to please, good team players
- Work liabilities:
  - not naturally "budget minded," uncomfortable with conflict, reluctant to go against peers, may put process ahead of result, overly sensitive to feedback, judgmental of those who see things differently, self-centered

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### Seminal events for this generation

- 1954 – First transistor radio
- 1960 – Birth control pills introduced
- 1962 – John Glenn circles the earth/Martin Luther King, Jr. leads march on Washington
- 1963 – President Kennedy assassinated
- 1965 – US sends troops to Vietnam
- 1969 – US moon landing/Woodstock
- 1970 – Women's liberation demonstrations




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### Compelling messages from formative years:

- Be anything you want to be
- Change the world
- Work well with others
- Live up to expectation
- Duck and cover

Popular technology of era that shaped them:




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### Generation X

- Diversity, thinking globally, balance, techno-literacy, fun, informality, self-reliance, and pragmatism
- Work assets:
  - adaptable, techno-literate, independent, not intimidated by authority, creative
- Work liabilities:
  - impatient, poor people skills, inexperienced, cynical

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### Seminal events for this generation

- 1973 – Global energy crisis
- 1976 – Tandy & Apple market PC's
- 1979 – Mass corporate layoffs
- 1980 – John Lennon killed
- 1981 – AIDS identified
- 1986 – Chernobyl/Challenger disasters
- 1989 – Exxon Valdez oil spill/Berlin Wall falls




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### Compelling messages from formative years:

- Don't count on it
- Heroes don't exist
- Get real
- Take care of yourself
- Always ask "why"



Popular technology of era that shaped them:

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### Millennial/Generation Y

- Optimism, civic duty, confidence, achievement, sociability, morality, street smarts, and diversity
- Work assets:
  - collective action, optimism, tenacity, heroic spirit, multi-tasking capabilities, technological savvy
- Work liabilities:
  - need for supervision and structure, inexperience – particularly with handling difficult people issues

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### Seminal events for this generation

- 1990 – Nelson Mandela released
- 1993 – Apartheid ends
- 1995 – Bombing of Federal Building in Oklahoma City
- 1997 – Princess Diana dies
- 1999 – Columbine High School shootings
- 2001 – World Trade Center attacks
- 2003 – War begins in Iraq
- 2004 – Tsunami in Asian Ocean
- 2005 – Hurricane Katrina




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## Compelling messages from formative years:

- You are special
- No one left behind
- Connect 24/7
- Achieve now!
- Serve your community

*Popular technology of the era that shaped them:*


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## Workplace Characteristics

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## Schwarzkopfers/Veterans

- They prefer to work with managers who:
  - are direct and identify a clear direction
  - take a logical approach
  - set long-term goals
  - are fair and consistent
  - spell out clear job expectations
  - are respectful

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## Schwarzkopfers/Veterans

- Motivation
  - actions connect to overall good of organization
- Messages to motivate
  - “Your experience is respected.”
  - “It’s valuable to the rest of us to hear what has and hasn’t worked in the past.”
- Rewards
  - plaques/certificates
- Preferred method of communication
  - memos, letters and personal notes

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## Schwarzkopfers/Veterans

- Managers who drive them crazy:
  - seem too “touchy-feely”
  - are indecisive
  - worry about making unpopular decisions
  - use profanity and slang
  - use experimental, trendy management style
  - are disorganized

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## Baby Boomers

- They prefer to work with managers who:
  - are consensual and treat them as equals
  - take a democratic approach
  - work with the group to define a mission
  - show warmth and caring
  - assure them they are making a difference

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## Baby Boomers

- Motivation
  - leaders that get them involved/show how they can make a difference
- Messages to motivate
  - “Your opinion is valued.”
  - “You can work as long as you want.”
  - “Your contribution will be recognized.”
  - “We need you.”
- Rewards
  - personal appreciation, promotion, recognition
- Preferred method of communication
  - phone calls, personal interaction

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## Baby Boomers

- Managers who drive them crazy:
  - aren't open to input
  - are bureaucratic
  - send a “my-way-or-the-highway” message
  - are brusque
  - don't show interest
  - practice one-upmanship

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## Generation Xers

- They prefer to work with managers who are:
  - competent, direct and straightforward
  - genuine
  - comfortable with giving them a deadline and turning them loose to meet it
  - informal
  - supportive of training and growth opportunities
    - flexible
    - results-oriented

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## Generation Xers

- Motivation
  - allow to get job done on their own schedule
- Messages to motivate
  - "Do it your way."
  - "We've got the newest hardware and software."
  - "There aren't a lot of rules around here."
- Rewards
  - free time, upgraded resources, opportunities for development, bottom line results, certifications to add to their resume
- Preferred method of communication
  - voice mail, e-mail

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## Generation Xers

- Managers who drive them crazy:
  - micro-manage
  - don't walk the talk
  - spend too much time on process and too little on results
  - are flashy
  - are bureaucratic
  - schmooze

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## Millennials/Generation Yers

- They prefer to work with managers who are:
  - educated and know own personal goals
  - positive
  - comfortable with coaching and supporting
  - collaborative
  - organized/reasonable structure
  - achievement-oriented
  - motivational

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## Millennials/Generation Yers

- Motivation
  - managers connect actions to personal and career goals
- Messages to motivate
  - “You will be working with other bright, creative people.”
  - “You and co-workers can help turn this company around.”
  - “You can be a hero here.”
- Rewards
  - awards, certificates, tangible evidence of credibility
- Preferred method of communication
  - instant messages, blogs, text messages, e-mails

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## Millennials/Generation Yers

- Managers who drive them crazy:
  - are cynical and sarcastic
  - treat them as if they are too young to be valuable
  - are threatened by their technical savvy
  - are condescending
  - are inconsistent and disorganized

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## Six principles for managing

1. Initiate conversations about generations
2. Ask about needs and preferences
3. Offer options
4. Personalize your style
5. Build on strengths
6. Pursue different perspectives

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## When communicating with the generations

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## Schwarzkopfers/Veterans

- Words and tone of voice respectful
- Good grammar
- Clear diction
- No slang or profanity
- Message should relate to company history and long-term goals

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## Baby Boomers

- Conversation should be relational
- Relationship and business results intertwined
- Ask about mutual interests
- Make conversation participative
- Link message to team or individual mission, vision and values

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## Generation Xer

- Be positive
- Be direct and straightforward
- Avoid corporate-speak
- Send a clear e-mail or voice mail
  - what you want, how it will serve the Gen Xer, and when you want it

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## Millennial/Generation Yer

- Be positive
- Send a text message or meet face-to-face
- Tie message to Gen Yer's personal goals or goals of the team
- Don't be condescending
- Avoid cynicism and sarcasm

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## What are the similarities

- Personal fulfillment and satisfaction
- Workplace culture is important
- Supportive environment is important
- Career development a high priority
- Flexibility is important

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## Things to remember

- Remember the commonalities but differences are what cause the conflict
- Generations overlap
- Many people don't fit profile of their generation
- Knowing the individual is important

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## To find out more

- Raines, Claire. *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook for a New Workplace*. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications, 2003.
- Raines, Claire, and Jim Hunt. *The Xers & the Boomers*. Boston, MA: Course Technology, 2000.
- Families and Work Institute. "Generation and Gender in the Workplace." <http://familiesandwork.org>
- AARP. "Leading a Multigenerational Workforce." [http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/articles/money/employers/leading\\_multigenerational\\_workforce.pdf](http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org/articles/money/employers/leading_multigenerational_workforce.pdf)

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## More information

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