



# OK Boomer

## Strategies for Creating Dynamic Multi-Generational Teams



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# Talkin' 'Bout My Generation



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# Talkin' 'Bout My Generation

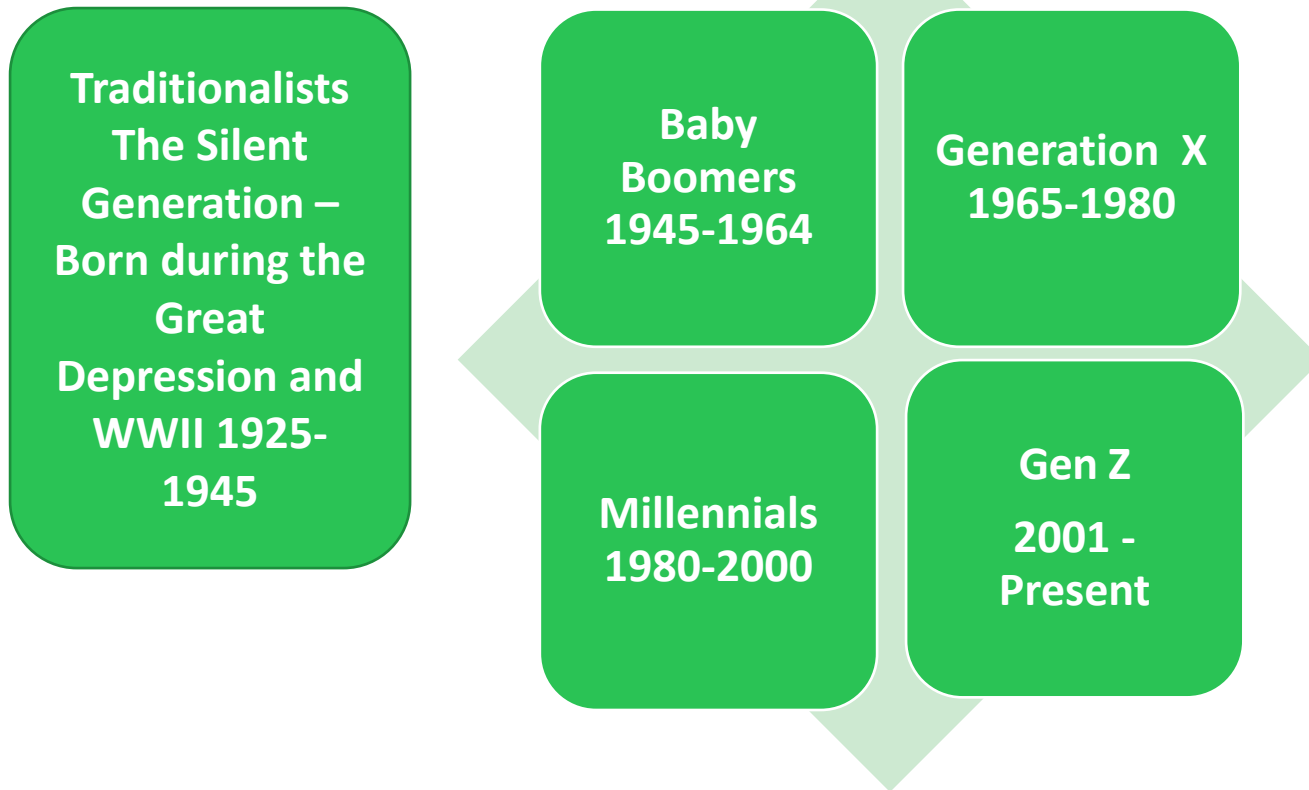
- Historically, the workplace consisted of two groups: the old-timers and the know-it-all, young hotshots.
- Today, the workplace mix is a lot more complicated. For the first time in history, there are five generations working side by side: the Traditionalist Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, the Millennials, and Generation Z.



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# What Generations?



# What Generations?

- **Traditional Generation** (born between 1925-1945)
  - They are/were hard working, economically conscience, and trusting of the government. They were very optimistic about the future and held a strong set of moral obligations.
- **Baby Boom Generation** (1946-1964)
  - 'Boomers' have a strong set of ideals and traditions, and are regarded as being very family-oriented. They are fearful of the future, relatively active and liberal socially but conservative politically.



# What Generations?

- **Generation X** (1965-1980)
  - Gen X lives in the present, likes to experiment, and expects immediate results.
  - Xers are typically cynical. They question authority and feel they carry the burden of the previous generations.
- **Millennials** (1981 - 2000)
  - The Millennial Generation is regarded as being materialistic, selfish, and disrespectful — but also very aware of the world and very technologically literate. They are trying to grow- up too quickly, and have no good role models to look towards.





# What Generations?

- **The Gen Z Generation (2001 - )**
- Some debate whether there is a difference between Gen Z and Millennials. Gen Z-ers in adulthood are detached from institutions and networked with friends. Some employers are concerned that Gen Z-ers have too great of expectations from the workplace – a result of the ‘trophy kids’ environment they grew up in.



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# Fundamental Question

- Where does your Agency fall in the following generational change spectrum?
- Level 4: “The generation of people in the top boxes is the only one that matters...the rest just need to grow up or shut up.”
- Level 3: “The generational change is an emerging issue within our organization but we haven’t done much about it.”
- Level 2: “We view generational change as an emerging opportunity.”
- Level 1: “We’re actively changing the work culture to harness the power of generational change.”



# The Challenge

“Managing multigenerational workforces is an art in itself. Young workers want to make a quick impact, the middle generation needs to believe in the mission, and older employees don’t like ambivalence. Your move.”

- Harvard Business School “Working Knowledge” Newsletter - April 17, 2006: “Can you manage different generations?”



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# Generational Divide

- Tami has a co-worker who behaves poorly as a result of what she and her colleagues perceive as “**senioritis.**”
- After 35 years with the organization, the co- worker comes in late, leaves early, takes lengthy phone calls, is resistant to change, and whines when put under pressure from her boss.
- As a result of this behavior, Tami has lost respect for her colleague.



# Generational Divide

- Ironically, in a neighboring organization, Charlene also complains of excessive lateness – but from her much younger co-workers.
- Beyond being consistently late these young colleagues fail to see how disruptive their behavior is to the rest of the team.
- When called out on their tardiness they complain to the union (or HR) that they are being harassed.



# Generational Divide

- According to a 2013 study from the American Society for Training and Development and Joseph Grenny, generational tensions like these situations are all too common in today's workplaces
- The study showed that more than 1 in 3 people waste five or more hours each week due to chronic, unaddressed conflict between colleagues from different generations.



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# Generational Divide

- The survey shows the two generations who have the most difficult time working together are Baby Boomers (58-77 years old) and Millennials (22-41 years old).
- The problems they experience most are:
  - Dismissal of past experience
  - Lack of discipline and focus
  - Lack of respect
  - Resistance to change or unwillingness to innovate



# Generational Divide

- Common misperceptions invade each group, however.
  - Baby Boomers complain that Gen X-ers and Millennials lack discipline, focus, and are distracted. They also think Millennials lack commitment.
  - Gen X-ers complain that Baby Boomers display resistant/dogmatic thinking and are
    - sexist, defensive, incompetent, resistant to change, and lack creativity.
    - They believe Millennials are arrogant.





# Generational Divide

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# Generational Divide

- The irony of some of these stereotypes is that they cut across all age categories.
- “She’s lazy because she’s old” and “She’s lazy because she’s young” are stories heard in the study that show the inconsistency.



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# Generational Divide

- But when we buy into these stereotypes, we give ourselves permission not to confront the problem.
- Part of the solution can come from a better understanding of these generational cohorts.
- Let's look at some workplace impacts and some common characteristics of each group understanding that no generalization can fit all people.



# Baby Boomers Now the Woodstock Generation

- Reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that in 2021, there were more people 55 and older active in the workforce than any time in the past 40 years.



# Baby Boomers Now the Woodstock Generation

- Prior to the Great Recession, a major concern for businesses was the coming brain drain, which would be caused by Boomers retiring in droves from the workplace, and taking with them their vast technical skills, historical knowledge, and honed industry-specific abilities.
- It appears now that many Boomers stayed in the workforce longer as a result of the recession and the slow economic recovery.



# Baby Boomers Now the Woodstock Generation

- As the Boomers stay put, it may further limit the advancement opportunities of the generations beneath them. The reverberations of these choices may have financial impacts for years to come, particularly on Generations X & Y.
- However, government workers are still likely to retire on time, as they have access to defined benefit pension plans.



# Baby Boomers Now the Woodstock Generation

- Boomers will need to stay current with technology and the utilization of social media in order to be respected by their younger supervisors.
- The Boomer generation that pushed tolerance and diversity in the '60s will also be required to stretch its own tolerance limits in order to accept young co-workers with new ideas about what is acceptable in the workplace.





# Baby Boomers Now the Woodstock Generation

- Legal note to the wise:
  - Age bias can be subtle or overt, but either way, it violates the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, which protects individuals age 40 or above, with very few exceptions.
  - We must not tolerate name calling or labeling in any way, but when it comes to those over 40 there are real legal impacts to allowing it in the workplace.



# Summary of Workstyle

- **Baby Boomers**

- Confidence in tasks
- Emphasize team-building
- Seek collaborative, group decision making
- Avoid conflict
- Disapprove absolutes and structure
- Sensitive to feedback
- Personal gratification

Motivated by  
respect and  
loyalty



# Poor Gen X-ers the Latchkey Generation

- Gen X-ers spent less time with their parents than previous generations of children had. First recognized as latchkey kids, this generation found themselves home alone and taking care of themselves and their siblings, while their parents worked.
- Autonomy and self-reliance, rather than respect for authority, was a natural byproduct of the Generation X childhood.



# Poor Gen X-ers

- As Gen X finds themselves in the sandwich period – caring for adult parents and children – they have responded overwhelmingly to flexible work arrangements.
- Work/life balance draws their attention to avoid the imbalance they saw in their childhood.



# Poor Gen X-ers

- When they started their careers, X-ers tried to emulate the Baby Boomers to be taken seriously. They dressed like them, wore their hair like them, wore sensible shoes.
- Now there is pressure to emulate the peppy younger Millennial colleagues – especially in technology or creative fields. To be taken seriously they need to wear jeans, sneakers and hipster t-shirts. Unless they're lawyers 😊



# Poor Gen X-ers

“There’s a lot of pressure to look young and hip,” says Brynna Donn, who is an IT executive at Yahoo. “Yahoo is crawling with Millennials, which is awesome because they are super creative, but the pressure is really high to not look old and out of touch.”



# Poor Gen X-ers

- Shedding one's corporate uniform, which for many convey status and hierarchy, can be stressful.
- Consider staying stylish and sharp, even if you are letting go of dressing up
- Inevitably, though, just be you. Your talent and expertise will show through.



# Summary of Workstyle

## Gen X

- Balance between work and life—work to live not live to work
- Flexible work hours/job sharing appealing
- Free agents
- Thinking globally
- Comfortable with authority but not impressed with titles
- Technically competent

Motivated by the prospects of independence, the lack of corporate structure and lack of rigidity.





# Millennials and Gen Z the Entitled Generation

- There seems to be no hotter topic than the slacker mentality given to Gen Y & the Millennials.
- They want too much, too fast. They aren't loyal. They're pampered and need too much feedback. They feel entitled.
- For this generation, work is temporary and unreliable. They are less committed to an employer, sensing that employers are less committed to long-term employment.



# Millennials and Gen Z

- Since statistics show that by 2030, 3 out of every 4 workers globally will be Millennials – we need to figure this demographic out, and fast!
- The good news is that there are just as many positives about this generation as there are perceived negatives.



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# Millennials and Gen Z

- The generation that grew up with the cellphone and the personal computer sees itself as much more independent than older generations.
  - They are technologically savvy.
  - They have a collaborative spirit.
  - They are team players who are extremely self-expressive.
  - They have been educated in an era of “a village raising a child” and “no child left behind”.



# Millennials and Gen Z

- According to 2020 U.S. Census data the Gen Millennials and Gen Z are the most diverse generation in American history.
  - Just 43% are non-Hispanic whites.
  - This diversity underscores the rapidly changing face of our country.



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# Millennials and Gen Z

- A 2012 Pew study show some areas that might seem like they are the grounds for differences in the workplace with other generations. Millennials are:
  - Less likely to be married by the age of 32;
  - Less likely to be religiously affiliated;
  - Less likely to call themselves patriotic.



# Millennials and Gen Z

- But detachment from traditional institutions doesn't mean the generation is completely detached:
  - They are creating their own networks through technology.
  - They believe it is acceptable to use a cell phone in almost any setting (family dinner, meeting/class, etc.).



# Summary of Workstyle

## Millennials / Gen Z

- Exceptional multi-taskers
- Need flexibility
- Seek work in teams
- Want everything instantly
- Expects to influence the terms and conditions of their job
- Feeling of entitlement
- Seek to balance lifestyle and work, with more focus on lifestyle

Motivated by a challenge  
and work well as team  
members



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# Strategies for Creating Dynamic Teams

- **Understand work styles.** Baby Boomers don't like to be micromanaged, while Millennials and Gen Z-ers crave specific, detailed instructions about how to do things and are used to hovering authorities.
- **Consider generational values.** Each generation is protecting a distinct set of values, and conflict may threaten these values. For example, Baby Boomers value teamwork, cooperation, and buy-in, while Gen X-ers prefer to make a unilateral decision and move on— preferably solo.





# Strategies for Creating Dynamic Teams

- **Share perceptions.** When employees of two or more generations are involved in a workplace conflict, they can learn a great deal by sharing their perceptions. A Baby Boomer may find the lack of formality and manners of a Gen Z-er offensive, while a Gen Z-er may feel “dissed” when this older employee fails to respect his or her opinions and input.
- **Find a generationally appropriate fix.** You can’t change people’s life experiences, but you can work with the set of workplace attitudes and expectations that result. If there is a knowledgeable Boomer who is frustrated by the lack of experience of a Millennial or Gen Z-er, coupled with his or her sense of entitlement, turn the Boomer into a mentor.



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# Strategies for Creating Dynamic Teams

- **Find commonality.** Gen Y employees tend to value security and stability. Boomers resist change. But both crave training and development. Gen X and Millennial employees place a high value on workplace flexibility and work-life balance. Boomers and Millennials are most comfortable with diversity and alternative lifestyles. Millennials and Gen Z-ers are technologically adept and committed to socially responsible policies.
- **Learn from each other.** Each generation has valuable lessons to teach the next. Boomers have a wealth of knowledge and tricks of the trade that younger workers need. Gen X employees are widely known for their fairness and mediation abilities. Gen Z workers are technology wizards. And Millennials hold clues to future workplace, marketing, and business trends.



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# Strategies for Creating Dynamic Teams

- **Hire people that share the same Mission, Vision, and Values as the organization.** Finding people with the right skillsets that also find reward in the same way your organization measures success is important. A lot of differences can be overlooked when everyone is working toward the same Mission.
- **Set Goals and Expectations. Each generation approaches work differently.** Clear goals and expectations level the playing field for all generations. This also helps eliminate the need to micromanage anyone.
- **Share the future.** Tell them where the company is headed, where they fit in, and what they can do for continued success. Employees work harder to achieve the company's goals when they see how it aligns with their personal and professional goals.



# Career Development

Lastly, not everyone wants rewarded in the same way. Understand where your people are before discussing career development.

Traditional Generation	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Millennials / Gen Z
I am happy to be where I am	My dedication and service have to be rewarded	It is about time to reward me	What do you mean I cannot be promoted yet?



# Parting Thought

“We need to remember across generations that there is as much to learn as there is to teach”

Gloria Steinem



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