

when **GENERATIONS** **COLLIDE**

Are
Generational
Clashes
Hurting
Your
Company?

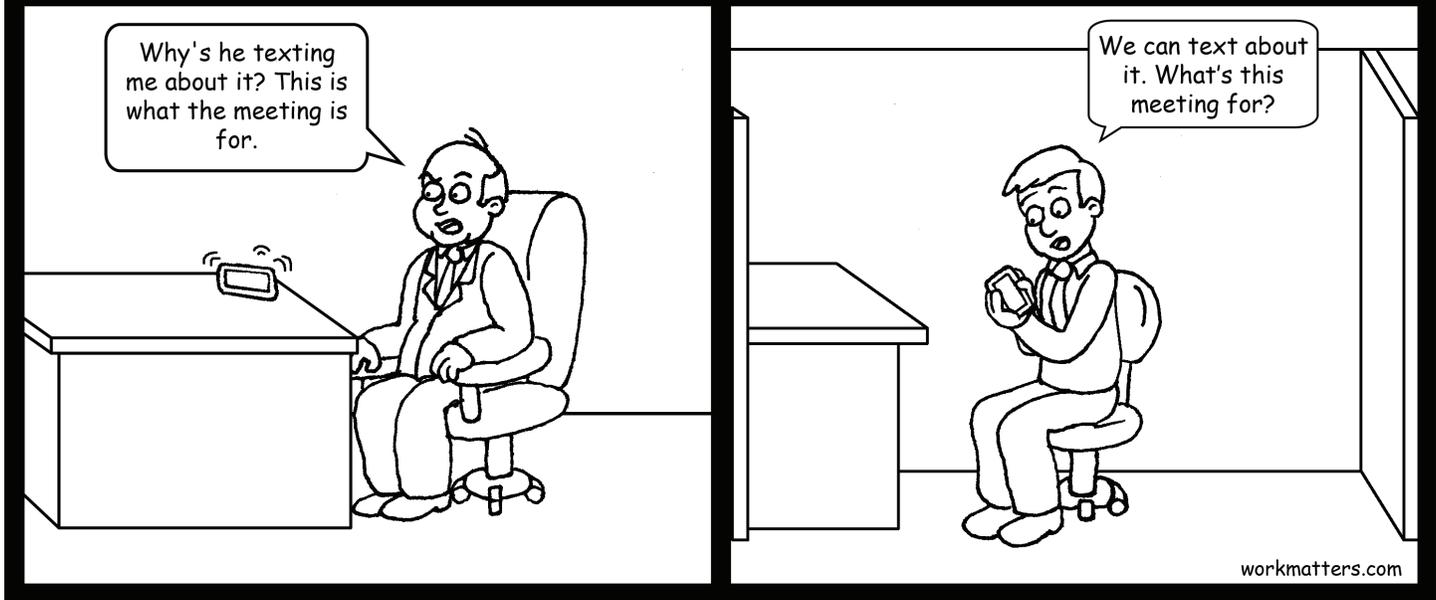
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WorkMatters

A SPECIAL REPORT



A Different Perspective



Eighty percent of polled Boomers believe Generations X and Y have a distinctly different point of view from them — the highest perceived disparity since 1969, when generations clashed over the Vietnam War and civil rights.

Gen X is a smaller generation, almost half the size of the Boomer generation. But Gen Y is large—very large. This newer generation is much larger than the 77 million Boomers. Combined, Gen X and Gen Y already outnumber the Boomers and Seniors, making the 40-and-younger crowd the largest segment of the workplace. Baby Boomers occupy most positions of power and responsibility on organizational charts, but a shift of power is coming as their retirement nears.

New graduates are knocking at HR's door in record numbers, and the next generation is eager to take the reins. This transition in power and influence is not something organizations can avoid or ignore. You must learn to leverage each generation's strengths for the benefit of all, or risk becoming less efficient and productive.

The Boomer generation will play a critical role in preparing younger workers for tomorrow's leadership roles while motivating them to be productive for business today. Their biggest challenge is in navigating the dramatic differences in generational mindsets.

Who Are the Generations?

1 Veterans

(52 million people — born between 1922 and 1945)

This cohort was born before or during World War II. Earliest experiences are associated with this world event. Some also remember the Great Depression.

2 The Baby Boomers

(77 million people — born between 1946 and 1964)

This generation was born during or after World War II and was raised in an era of extreme optimism, opportunity and progress. Boomers, for the most part, grew up in two-parent households, with safe schools, job security and post-war prosperity. They represent just under half of all U.S. workers. On the job, they value loyalty, respect the organizational hierarchy and generally wait their turn for advancement.

3 Generation X

(70.1 million people — born between 1965 and 1979)

These workers were born during a rapidly changing social climate and economic recession, including Asian competition. They grew up in two-career families with rising divorce rates, downsizing and the dawn of the high-tech/information age. On the job, they can be fiercely independent, like to be in control and want fast feedback.

4 Generation Y/Millennials

(80–90 million people — born between 1980 and 2000)

This generation was born to Boomer and early Gen Xer parents and grew up in our current high-tech, neo-optimistic world. They are the most technologically adept, fast learners and tend to be impatient. Much of the conflict in the workplace occurs between Boomers and Millennials, and that's because the gap in mindset is greatest between these two. Let's take a moment to see what Millennials want from work.

WHAT MILLENNIALS WANT FROM WORK

MILLENNIALS CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

- 94% Agree their generation does not support the status quo, when it comes to the current model of economic and career success.
- 72% Say they would be somewhat or very interested in working for a corporation or big business someday
- 48% Say "their ideal career path would include working for only one or two companies."
- 43% Are motivated to create a career in which they define success for themselves and work according to their own rules

MILLENNIALS HAVE THEIR OWN DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

- 84% Say "Making a difference in the world is more important to me than professional recognition."
- 79% Say "My work environment will be more important than the size of my paycheck."
- 77% Say "My personal life will take priority over my professional goals" applies to them very or somewhat well.
- 48% "Aren't willing to sacrifice control over their own personal fulfillment just to achieve success at a job."

MILLENNIALS ON LEADERSHIP

- 78% Say "I aspire to a leadership role in whatever field I ultimately work," applies somewhat to very well to them.
- 53% Say the word "leader" describes them well or very well.
- 34% Say taking a leadership role would take away too much time from other areas

WHAT'S IN THE WAY OF MILLENNIALS' SUCCESS?

- 33% Said the fear of failure (most cited reason)
- 30% Said the difficulty of self-promotion
- 30% Said difficulty networking
- 27% Said the desire to avoid conflict

These results were the product of a survey taken of 1000 randomly selected Millennials, conducted by Darshan Goux, PhD. of Bentley University.

The results of this survey hold true across race, income, and other demographic groups. This is the identity of generation Y.

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Most of today's corporate management practices still reflect the systems and values of their predecessors, the veterans. But now, more than ever, American workers born after 1965 want to forge their own path. They have different workplace values and definitions of success than their elders. And that's why your company can't afford to keep doing things the way they've always been done.

The social media revolution continues to change the mode and pace of communication. Other new technologies are creating economic opportunities and are changing the way we do business. These culture-shifting trends, however, are not without

**Will Your
Company Keep
Up With The
21st Century?**

foreseeable generational clashes. Younger adults (18 to 29) report disagreements with older adults over lifestyle, views, family, relationships and dating; the older adults, in turn, criticize their "sense of entitlement." Gen X and Y tend to be more tolerant on cultural issues, while Boomers cite manners as the greatest source of conflict.

Older generations' complaints about the next generation are nothing new. Conflicts replay throughout every decade. What we all must realize is that no generation is better or worse than another, and prevailing attitudes are neither right nor wrong — just decidedly different.

But learning how to work, live, and play together is crucial. You must learn how to bridge generational gaps to survive, and if you do, perhaps you'll thrive. Now let's explore some of the key issues that arise from generational differences, and how leaders need to handle them.

Cultural Differences From Generation To Generation Are Strong

Gen Xers and Gen Yers (also known as Millennials) each present unique challenges for Boomer managers. They aren't often interested in time-honored traditions or "the way things have always been done." Rather, they're single-mindedly focused on what it takes to get ahead to reach their perceived career destination. This can cause significant frustration from Boomers, who have decades of experience more than their Millennial counterparts.



**This is the case for
Journalist Caitlin Kelly:**

“I’ve been working in my field (journalism) since 1978, so I am a Boomer.

One of the issues that drives BBs nuts is working with people who seem to have no idea how the place that just hired them came to be, or its values or its underlying principles. In the elevator at the New York Times, a place many younger workers now see as “just another job”, (while a place Boomers aspired to work at for decades, if not still), I overheard three Millennials whining about the televisions that are on in the newsroom, quietly, at all times. (Yes, Twitter is now more likely a useful source of breaking news.) They couldn’t figure out why a newsroom would bother to have televisions. Because it’s a “news” room, not a “content” room.”

Mature workers and Boomers in managerial and leadership positions struggle to understand Millennials' differing values and beliefs, and wonder about the best way to motivate their younger colleagues.

If promotions, raises, and bonuses fail to motivate, then what will?

The four most common clash points at work involve generational differences in the definition of work, modes of communications, meetings and learning.

★ Clash Point #1: How We View Work

By 2021, Gen X will be the senior members of the work force, and both Gen X and New Millennials will be in leadership positions. Big changes are already beginning to appear and, in 10 years, the world of work will be significantly different.

Older workers talk about "going to work" and have always had a specified work schedule like 9-to-5. Younger workers view work as "something you do," anywhere, any time. They communicate 24/7 and expect real-time responses. The rigidity of set work hours seems unnecessary and even unproductive in the information age.

To younger workers, success isn't defined by how many hours you spend at a desk or by rank or seniority. Younger workers want to cut to the chase, define their true value, and make a difference in the world. They don't want to be paid in exchange for their time; they want to be compensated for their valuable services and skills.

For younger employees with working spouses and children, work-life balance and flexible conditions have greater priority.



★ Clash Point #2: Communications

Ask anyone over the age of 40 about younger workers, and you'll hear stories about texting, cell phones and ear buds. Common complaints include:

- They can't spell or write.
- They multitask, and are unable to focus for long.
- They expect instant feedback and email responses.

Tech-immersed young workers are frustrated too, as older workers think setting up a team meeting is the answer, when a few text messages could get faster results.

Jen is a member of Generation Y, and she has grown accustomed to the instant nature of modern technology. Rick, a Baby Boomer, grew up having to churn his own butter for his popcorn. Not really, but when it comes to how long is reasonable to wait to solve an issue or reply to an email, these two may have very different definitions of patience because of the different environments in which they were raised.

Communication expectations in your company should be well-defined to avoid conflict.

★ Clash Point #3: Meetings

Older workers expect a phone call or visit on important issues and will immediately schedule and plan a meeting to involve significant stakeholders. This frustrates younger workers, who want to meet as soon as possible.

They see nothing wrong with texting superiors and peers instead of scheduling face-to-face meetings, and they like to communicate and solve problems virtually. When faced with a need to meet, they try to contact everyone immediately to solve the issue on the fly with videoconferencing, chatting, texting, or talking.

Older colleagues prefer to find a time and day that fits everyone's schedule—which can delay meeting for days or weeks. They fit things into their routines and calendars. But to Gen Y, this ritual of workplace scheduling is stifling, unproductive and a waste of time.

The younger generation may have a point. But to older colleagues, a seat-of-the-pants approach is irritating because it doesn't give them enough time to think things through.

★ Clash Point #4: Learning

Older generations are linear learners; they're comfortable sitting in classes, reading manuals and absorbing relevant materials before implementing new programs.

Newer workers like to learn "on demand," which to Boomers means they just want to "wing it," figuring things out as they go. Gen-Y learning is interactive, and they use search engines, Wikipedia, blogs, and other online resources to find answers.

Gen Y doesn't hesitate to call a friend or send an email directly to the CEO. They ask questions and get their information instantaneously. They are easily bored by training sessions, manuals and programs that spoon-feed information over time.



Considerations Beyond Generational Differences

Understanding and leveraging generational differences is a key to creating high performing teams and a thriving workforce. But these issues are complicated by other factors at play. **Here are other differences to consider:**

► Behavioral, communication or personality styles

People are wired differently. Each person possesses a unique mix of characteristics. Some styles are more compatible than others, but different styles are needed to make a stronger team.

Personality trait examples: introverted, extraverted, driven, analytical, etc.

► Motivational factors

It's a common leadership error to assume that all people are motivated by the same things. What motivates you is not necessarily what motivates other people.

Motivating examples: the opportunity to learn and be challenged, helping others, making a difference (feeling important), power incentives, monetary incentives, etc.



► Gender differences

Men and women work and lead differently. Men tend to lead through a hierarchical approach. Women tend to lead through collaboration.

► Corporate culture

People are often shaped by the cultures or business environment in which they are used to operating. Some people like open, entrepreneurial types of cultures where they can take risks. Some like formal, structured types where they don't rock the boat. Some business environments are fast-paced. Other environments are slow to change.

Other differences may include educational and religious background, work experience, or birth order. Some might even argue differences according to astrological signs!

Final Thoughts

Clash points at work are inevitable. How you choose to learn from them and address them sets you apart as a leader. Increasing awareness of these issues in your business will help you make needed changes. If you succeed, your business will be more productive and profitable.

What's a leader to do?



- **Notice a person's unique strengths and talents.**

Pay attention to what they do well—those talents that seem to come naturally. Many people may not even recognize their own strengths.

Even team members who are not performing well have strengths that may be hidden, underutilized or underdeveloped.

- **Avoid stereotyping.**

It might be tempting to characterize a person as a high "D" or low "C." We like to label or categorize, but people are multidimensional. Assessment tools, when used correctly, can be invaluable. When used improperly, people may feel pigeon holed.

- **Create opportunities to openly discuss differences.** Instead of allowing misunderstandings or frustrations to bubble under the surface, create a safe place for constructive dialogue.

- **Create ALIGNMENT.**

Ideally people should do work that aligns with their strengths and aspirations. As a leader, this is one of your most important responsibilities. They may need help finding the right fit.

As you seek to better understand those you lead, you can also help people better understand themselves. Much of my work with organizations and teams involves helping people gain insights about themselves as much as those with whom they work. As a result, they are able to work best together to achieve important results. Working with and through people is a critical leadership skill.

Effective leaders want to understand how to best motivate and manage other people. By studying differences they can better leverage their strengths and achieve better results.

About Gayle Lantz

Gayle Lantz is a leadership expert and founder of WorkMatters, Inc., (www.WorkMatters.com) a consulting firm dedicated to helping leaders think and work smarter.

A sought-after consultant, executive coach, facilitator, and speaker, Gayle works closely with executives and leadership teams to expand their vision, think and act strategically, and inspire change. Together, they increase business results and help make work matter at every level of the organization. Among her clients are NASA, Microsoft, MassMutual, Southern Company, Lockheed Martin, BBVA Compass Bank as well as small and mid-sized firms.

Gayle runs senior executive roundtable groups comprised of executives from non-competing industries. Participants meet regularly to exchange ideas, sharpen executive leadership skills and gain objective perspective to help them grow their business.

Gayle is author of the award-winning book *Take the Bull by the Horns: The Busy Leader's Action Guide to Growing Your Business... and Yourself*.

Before starting her own business in 1998, Gayle worked as an executive in the insurance, financial services and investment industry. She most recently held an officer level position with TIAA-CREF, a leader in its industry, serving those in the academic, medical, cultural and research fields.

Gayle's articles and/or quotes have been featured in a variety of national and global business publications including BusinessWeek, Harvard Management Update, Wall Street Journal Online, FastCompany.com, CEO Online and The New York Times.

Gayle is a graduate of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. She lives in Birmingham, Alabama, and has been honored as one of Birmingham's Top 10 Women in Business.



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