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Women Engineers

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Spanning Generations

Effective Management, Communication, & Working Relationships

A SWE Leadership Coaching Committee Module

Presentation Handouts

Spanning Generations

Effective Management, Communication, & Working Relationships

References:

Portions of submissions from the 2009 Region Program Excellence Award received from regions A, B, D, F, H, I & J were used in the creation of this LCC module.

IBM sponsored this award in 2009

SWE Region Programming Excellence 2009 Award Issue Background

Today's workforce is more diverse than ever. Even so generational differences are sometimes hindering communications among employees in the workplace and other organizations. With half of the current U.S. workforce born after 1965, senior management, many of whom grew up in the 60's and 70's, is finding that they are having trouble relating to the younger generations and re-evaluating what is important to their employees," says Michelle Marks, an associate professor of management in the School of Management at George Mason University, who has been studying generational differences in the workplace for the past few years.¹

There has also been tremendous growth in the number of employees who have both eldercare and childcare responsibilities at the same time, further complicating what it takes for employers and volunteer organizations to recruit and retain the best people for the job at hand. Marks notes that to foster better communications across the four generations currently in the workplace, including corporate, government and non-profit sectors, it is necessary to recognize the characteristics and values that are representative of each group.

According to Randstad's USA's annual 2008 *World of Work* survey², the four generations of workers that comprise the U.S. workforce, Gen X, Gen Y, Baby Boomers and Matures, rarely interact with one another and often do not recognize each other's skills or work ethic. This lack of knowledge sharing and transfer is a critical factor that could contribute to a very real talent shortage. U.S. businesses risk a shortage of skilled labor – not because of the lack of manpower in the wake of retiring Baby Boomers, but because of the limited transfer of knowledge.

With the ongoing generational shift in the workplace, businesses need to focus on building professional relationships with their employees while developing employees' skills.

This is true not only in the workplace, but also within professional societies, such as SWE. The relatively recent creation of the SWEFLs group is a perfect example of how we are encouraging younger members of SWE to consider leadership roles earlier and earlier in their careers.

Involvement in SWE enables future managers and leaders to develop their communications and managerial skills outside the typical workplace. With a constituency from a wide variety of industries and backgrounds, SWE can develop innovative programs for use both within and beyond SWE. To both nurture future leaders and managers, and to provide them with the background and knowledge gained by their predecessors, and to better prepare them to thrive in the evolving workforce, the 2009 SWE/IBM Region Programming Excellence Award is focused on the issue of Managing Different Generations.

¹ <http://gazette.gmu.edu/articles/12224/>

² http://www.us.randstad.com/about/WoW_Generation_PR.doc

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Articles of interest for Managing Different Generations:

The Best places to launch your career for Gen Y - ers. Business Week:

http://www.businessweek.com/print/magazine/content/06_38/b4001601.htm?chan=gl

Five ways to make your company Gen Y friendly from PC World:

http://www.pcworld.com/businesscenter/article/147611/5_ways_to_make_your_company_gen_y_friendly.html

Gen Y in the Workplace: Defense Acquisition University:

http://www.dau.mil/pubs/dam/11_12_2006/11_12_2006_spi_nd06.pdf

Limited Interactions among the four generations at work in the US. Randstad:

http://www.us.randstad.com/about/WoW_Generation_PR.doc

Workplace managers need to pay attention to generational differences:

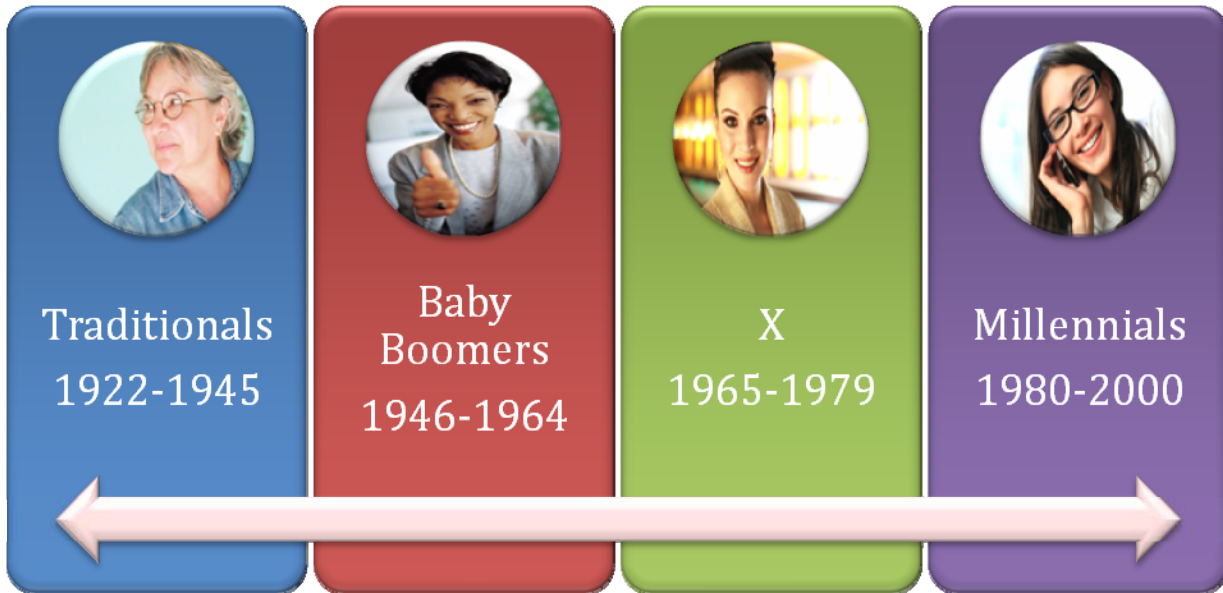
<http://gazette.gmu.edu/articles/12224/>

Further references for the handouts provided:

1. www.business.utah.edu/humis/docs/organization_958_1165591133.ppt
2. http://www.usatoday.com/money/workplace/2005-11-06-gen-y_x.htm
3. http://www.oberlin.edu/stupub/ocreview/2006/12/08/features/Understanding_Generation_Y.html
4. Alyssa Rosenberg, **Generation Gap**, February 21, 2008, arosenberg@govexec.com
5. Dan Kadlec, **The generation gap at work**, Money Magazine, November 1, 2007

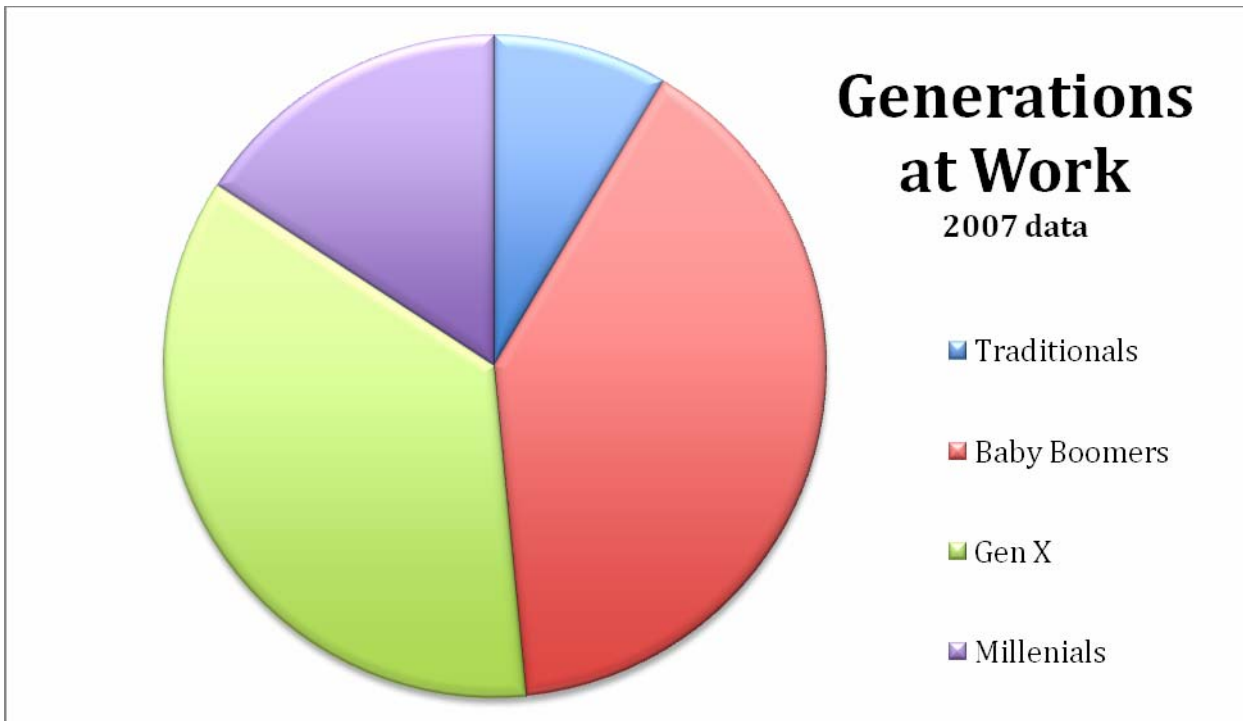
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Generations are defined by cultural events, societal values, common experiences, technology shifts and education:

WWII Great Depression Radio Loyal, Faithful	Vietnam, Human Rights TV Optimistic	AIDS Tabloids & MTV Personal Computer Skeptic	School Shootings 9-11 Internet & Texting Realistic
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Spanning Generations

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Questionnaire: Circle the answer that best fits you.

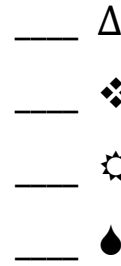
1. What is your ideal work schedule:
 - △ 9am-5pm (i.e. fixed, 40 hrs/week)
 - ❖ 9am-5pm plus additional hrs as needed
 - ☼☿ Flexible schedule, ~40 hrs/week
2. What is your preferred method of communication:
 - ❖ In person
 - △ Hand written/memo
 - ☼☿ Email or phone
 - ☿ Text message
3. What does “work” mean to you:
 - ☿ Means to an end
 - △ Obligation
 - ☼ Necessity
 - ❖ Exciting adventure
4. How important is a “fun” work environment to you:
 - ❖ Work is not meant to be fun
 - △ Not very important
 - ☼ Important
 - ☿ Requirement
5. Which best describes your ideal supervisor feedback:
 - ☿ Continuous and immediate
 - ☼ Regular and casual evaluation
 - ❖ Detailed annual reviews
 - △ No news is good news
6. Characteristics of my ideal manager/professor:
 - ❖ Considerable years of experience
 - ☼☿ Tech-savvy, innovative, and energetic
 - ❖△ Someone older & more knowledgeable
 - ☼☿ Someone with the drive to make things happen.
7. I would expect to receive an increase in salary or a promotion:
 - △❖ Yearly or every couple of years
 - ❖△ As I gain broad experience in my field
 - ☼☿ After a particularly brilliant contribution to the company
8. To start a new project, you prefer:
 - ❖ A very thorough outline (no missing details)
 - △ A complete outline of objectives with regulations
 - ☼ A rough outline subject to modifications
 - ☿ To be involved in creating the outline
9. I went to college...
 - ❖ Because it was there.
 - △ I was lucky to have the chance.
 - ☼ In order to get ahead.
 - ☿ Because I had to.
10. My financial philosophy is mostly...
 - ☿ Spend what I make
 - △ Pay cash & save a lot
 - ☼ Invest it wisely
 - ❖ Charge it

Questionnaire Results

Give a point to the symbol you selected for the 10 questions and add up the points for each symbol below:

For question #'s 1, 2, 6 and 7, if you selected an answer with two symbols, each selected symbol gets a point for that answer.

The symbol with the most points represents the workforce vision and ideals of the generation that best fits you. If you have the same value for two or more symbols, your vision of "work" and your ideal work environment do not necessarily match the common trend of a single (or even your own) generation. Your workforce vision and ideals are a mix of multiple generations.



Add this question to get a little closer to matching up with your generation.

Which of these statements were you most likely to hear in high school:

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|--|
|  | "You go, girl!" |  | "Like, oh my gaud, she is totally ..." |
|  | "Don't be such a party pooper!" |  | "Let's split. This place is a real drag" |

: **Millenials**

Also known as "Generation Y", Millenials refers to those born between 1981 and 2000+. They have been heavily immersed in the digital world, and their youth was influenced by Y2K, the OJ Simpson trial, reality television, and so forth. They are known to be good at multitasking and more technically and financially savvy than their predecessors. They are more racially and culturally tolerant and have strong environmental concerns. At work, they desire constant feedback and recognition for their work done, and active participation. They also prefer more casual work attire.

: **Generation X**

Also known as "Latch-key Kids", Generation X refers to those born between 1965 and 1980. Their youth was influenced by such events as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the creation of MTV. They are known to be independent, adaptable and diverse. They have a high priority on personal and professional life balance, and they are typically skeptical of institutions. At work they desire structure, direction and flexibility.

: **Baby Boomers**

Also known as the "Me Generation", Baby Boomers refers to those born between 1945 and 1964. They are known to be free-spirited and experimental, and their youth was influenced by such events as the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War. At work they desire a feeling of fulfillment and quality. They have a high priority towards work and commonly do not have a good balance between their professional and personal lives. They are also known for inventing the 60-hour work week and annual reviews.

: **Traditionals**

Also known as the "Veterans", the Greatest Generation refers to those born between 1922 and 1945. Their youth was influenced by such events as the Great Depression and World War II, and they are known to be loyal and hard working. At work they are more accustomed to a top-down management approach, and their idea of feedback is "no news is good news". They view work as an obligation and believe in duty before fun.

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Personal & Lifestyle Characteristics	Traditionals (1922-1945)	Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	Gen X (1965-1979)	Millennials (1980-2000+)
Core Values	Respect for authority Conformers Discipline	Optimism Involvement Teamwork Workaholics	Skepticism Fun Informality	Realism Confidence Extreme Fun Social
Family	Traditional Nuclear	Disintegrating	Latch-key kids Dual income parents	Merged families Dual income
Education	A dream	A birthright	A way to get there	A requirement with an incredible expense
Communication Media	Rotary phones Face Time Write a memo	Touch-tone phones Call me anytime	Cell phones Call me at work	Internet iphones Email, texting, Facebook, Utube, Blogging
Dealing with Money	Put it away Pay cash (Great Depression)	Buy now, pay later	Cautious Conservative Save (Dot com bust)	Earn to spend (recession tempered)
Work and family life	Separate	Work to live (work-life integration)	Work-life Balance	Work-life Balance
Work Ethic and Values	Hard Work Respect authority Sacrifice Duty before fun Adhere to rules	Workaholics Work efficiently Crusading causes Personal fulfillment Desire quality Question authority	Eliminate the task Self-reliance Want structure and direction Skeptical	What's next? Multitasking Tenacity Entrepreneurial Tolerant Goal oriented
Work is....	An obligation	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge A contract	A means to an end Fulfillment
Leadership Style	Directive Military Hierarchical	Consensual Collegial	Equality Challenge others Ask why	TBD
Interactive Style	Individual	Team player Loves to have meetings	Entrepreneur	Participative
Communications	Formal memo	In person	Direct Immediate	Email, texting Voice mail
Feedback and Rewards	No news is good news Satisfaction in a job well done	Don't appreciate it Money Title recognition	Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing? Freedom is the best reward	Whenever I want it, at the push of a button Meaningful work
Messages that Motivate	Your experience is respected	You are valued You are needed	Do it your way Forget the rules	You will work w/ other bright, creative people

Modified from : <http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/05ws/generations.htm>

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Mixed Generation Teams and Communication

- 1). Discuss & agree upon:
 - Frequency of communication
 - Type (weekly or biweekly meeting in person, telecon, written reports) – adjust to fit the various generations
- 2). Everyone has a voice.
 - Practice, practice, practice getting input from everyone.
 - You may have to invite newer or quieter folks to speak:
“Yolanda, you are working on this part of the design. Do we need to adjust the schedule against the customer’s requested deadline?”
“Does anyone else have concerns we haven’t covered?”
- 3). Communication adjusted by generation improves results
 - Gen Y Just a few years out of school –explicit instructions, locations of data, suggested procedure to be followed, required date
“You may already know this, but here’s what has worked in the past...”)
 - Gen X responds better to:
“Here’s the desired outcome. Please send me a project plan and schedule based on the procedure you plan to follow.”
 - Baby Boomers / Matures: Just do it may be enough
“This needs to be done”
- 4). Conflict engagement:
 - Conflict can ignite new ideas and lead to collaboration and creative problem solving
 - Develop and exercise a process for raising issues and voicing different perspectives
- 5). Adjust Rewards based on generation:
 - Instant recognition vs 6 months later; Time off vs Promotion; Money vs More responsibility; Title vs Window office; New technological gadgets
- 6). Avoid assuming that because people are a certain age they will act a certain way.
 - There are generational trends and norms but there are a lot of people in each generation that don’t fit like...
 - the 70 year old computer whiz who designs websites and blogs,
 - the 25 year old who is not computer literate,
 - the 55 year old who runs marathons,
 - the 45 year old who volunteers 20 hours a week at the women and children’s shelter.
- 7). Instead of treating others as you like to be treated, find out how they like to be treated and respect them by honoring that.
i.e. When working with someone older than you, this means not automatically addressing them by their first name, as you may prefer to be called. Instead, ask such individuals whether they want to be called by their first name or their last.
- 8). Acknowledge age difference
 - Talk about how you can learn from each other and help each other be more successful.
 - You may be surprised by some of the things you have in common as well as each others different experiences.
- 9). Cross Generation Mentoring:
 - Twice a month communication and idea exchange.
 - Great way to learn/teach and encourage future leaders.
 - Future aspirations and opportunities for your global workforce.
 - Offer insight into organization’s or company’s strategic directions
 - “I’m interested in what and how you are doing”
- 10). While learning about differences among groups helps us work together better... get to know people as individuals if you want to work most effectively with them.

Top 10 Tips

1. Establish agreed upon methods
2. Get input from everyone
3. Tailor communication to generation
4. Conflict engagement
5. Adjust award by generation
6. Don’t assume generation = behavior
7. The platinum rule
8. Acknowledge age differences
9. Cross-generation mentoring
10. Get to know the individual

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EXERCISE

Describe a situation where you worked with someone from a different generation.

- What was your/their generational background?
- How did it influence their actions?
- How did your background influence your own opinions and actions?
- Any problems, arguments arise because of the differences? Any potential problems?
- Would you handle it differently today? How?

Or Use These Scenarios for Discussion

Scenario No. 1

Bob, a baby boomer, has been with the company for over 25 years. He has recently been asked to return to a department that he had worked in over 12 years ago. When in that department, he was considered one of the brightest engineers, and did very well. He has been asked to return to that department to help out on a project that is similar to ones that he worked on 15 years ago. Now, upon his return, he wants to prove to these new engineers that he “still has it”.

He will be working with Jane and John. Jane is a gen X'er who has been with the department for 5 years. Before coming to this company she had worked on a similar project as the new one that she will be working on with Bob. John, a millennial, and the newest one who is in the department, has some knowledge about some new technology that is on the cutting edge, and thinks it could be of benefit to this upcoming project.

How should each of these three individuals handle the first meeting for the project?

Scenario No. 2:

At annual appraisal time, a manager from the Traditional generation gives out a nice bonus for a project well done. The Generation X employee says, “Why didn't I get this six months ago, when the project was completed?”

A Generation X manager is surprised to see his Boomer employee seems unhappy when she is told she has been working too hard and should take time off to take the family on vacation.

Why were these employees unhappy? What techniques could be employed to tailor a reward strategy to individuals from each of the four Generations?