

# Engaging Across Generations

## Part 1: Unique Mindsets

### OVERVIEW

People of all ages can work well together, especially when they know and understand the unique strengths each generation has to offer. All too often the differences between generations, rather than areas of opportunity, shape how people work together. This two-part webinar series examines ways to move beyond stereotypes and potential conflict to bridge across generations which can increase creativity, problem-solving, and learning.

In Part 1 of this series, you will become familiar with the various generational groups, their unique mindsets, expectations, and work styles. We will discuss what each generational group has in common and begin to consider strategies to enhance working relationships across generations.

### A GENERATION IS...

a group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages.<sup>1</sup>

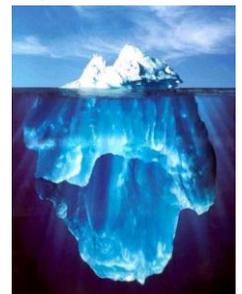
Human beings can be sorted in many ways - personality type, gender, race, ethnicity, and so on - and sorting by generation is one of these. In this program, our goal for this sorting is to *increase understanding and promote healthy relationships for improved quality of life and work.*

As we work toward greater understanding and practices to value generational diversity, we will:

- Define characteristics of generations living and working in the U.S. today
- Explain ways generations are different from and similar to each other
- Identify generational preferences for working with others
- Begin to explore ways to improve connections across generations

At the same time, keep in mind that *generational groupings don't explain all:*

- Not every person fits their generation's profile precisely.
- Generations overlap at the end points, divisions are *not* hard and fast. ("tweeners")
- Those born early in a time period tend to be the trend-setters for their generation
- Those raised in urban settings show differences from those raised in rural ones.<sup>2</sup>



As you consider generation as a way to sort people, what are some of the...

Pros?

Cons?

University of Minnesota, p.1

<sup>2</sup> Center for Generational Kinetics (n.d.) Generational Breakdown: Info about all of the generations. Retrieved from <http://genhq.com/FAQ-info-about-generations>

## GENERATIONS: WHO ARE THEY?<sup>3</sup>

In the United States, five generations are now represented among adults active in work and community life. These are:

	<b>TRADITIONALIST</b> ~1945 and before <sup>4</sup> a.k.a. "Greatest Generation", Silent, Veterans, Builders	<b>BABY BOOMER</b> ~1946-1964 a.k.a. Me Generation, Woodstock Generation	<b>GEN X</b> ~1965 -1980 a.k.a. Generation X, Busters, Post-Boomers	<b>MILLENNIAL</b> ~1981- 1995 a.k.a. Generation Y, Nexters, Internet Generation	<b>GEN Z</b> ~1996 - a.k.a. iGen, Centennials
<b>Defining Events &amp; Trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Depression</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prosperity</li> <li>• Space race</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Challenger Disaster</li> <li>• Fall of Berlin Wall</li> <li>• Single parents</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computers</li> <li>• Columbine</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tech revolution</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<b>Popularized Characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Duty, honor, country</li> <li>• Loyalty</li> <li>• Conformity</li> <li>• Patience</li> <li>• Hard times, then prosperity</li> <li>• National pride</li> <li>• Doing a good job</li> <li>• Age = seniority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work ethic = worth ethic</li> <li>• Success is visible</li> <li>• Optimistic</li> <li>• Consumers</li> <li>• Defined by job</li> <li>• Personal Development</li> <li>• Health &amp; wellness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent, Self-reliant</li> <li>• Desire for Stability</li> <li>• Diversity</li> <li>• Thinking globally</li> <li>• Techno-literacy</li> <li>• Friend of parents</li> <li>• Informality</li> <li>• Cynical</li> <li>• Pragmatic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimistic</li> <li>• Individualistic, yet group oriented</li> <li>• Social Commitment</li> <li>• Digital Native</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Instant results; constant feedback</li> <li>• Skill gaps</li> <li>• Lower expectations &amp; confidence</li> <li>• Global mindset - local reality</li> <li>• Infinite diversity unique to them</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Sources: Fry, R (2015, May 11), Millennials surpass genXers as the largest generation in U.S. labor force. Retrieved from [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/ft\\_15-05-11\\_millennialsdefined/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/11/millennials-surpass-gen-xers-as-the-largest-generation-in-u-s-labor-force/ft_15-05-11_millennialsdefined/); Center for Generational Kinetics (n.d.) Generational Breakdown: Info about all of the generations. Retrieved from <http://genhq.com/FAQ-info-about-generations/>; Lancaster, Lynne C. & David Stillman, (2002) *When Generations Collide*, New York: Harper Business; Zemke, Ron, Claire Raines, & Bob Filipczak, (2000) *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*, New York: AMACOM; Tulgan, Bruce (2013) Meet Generation Z. Retrieved from <http://rainmakerthinking.com/assets/uploads/2013/10/Gen-Z-Whitepaper.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> NOTE: Years for generations vary slightly among scholars and practitioners.

## WHAT MAKES YOUR GENERATION UNIQUE?<sup>5</sup>

When asked, people who identified with their generation share particular ways they see themselves. **Millennials** feel distinctive in their use of technology. **GenXers** also cite technology as their generation's biggest source of distinctiveness but far fewer -- just half (12%) of the Millennials' 24%. **Boomers'** feelings of distinctiveness coalesce mainly around work ethic. For **Builders**, it's events -- the shared experience of the Depression and WW II.

What Makes Your Generation Unique?			
Millennial	Gen X	Boomer	Silent
1. Technology use (24%)	Technology use (12%)	Work ethic (17%)	WW II, Depression (14%)
2. Music/Pop culture (11%)	Work ethic (11%)	Respectful (14%)	Smarter (13%)
3. Liberal/tolerant (7%)	Conservative/Trad'l (7%)	Values/Morals (8%)	Honest (12%)
4. Smarter (6%)	Smarter (6%)	"Baby Boomers" (6%)	Work ethic (10%)
5. Clothes (5%)	Respectful (5%)	Smarter (5%)	Values/Morals (10%)

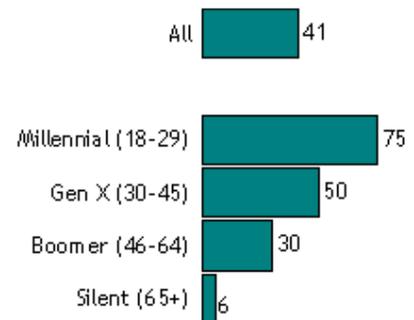
Note: Based on respondents who said their generation was unique/distinct. Items represent individual, open-ended responses. Top five responses are shown for each age group. Sample sizes for sub-groups are as follows: Millennials, n=527; Gen X, n=173; Boomers, n=283; Silent, n=205.

Pew Research Center (Jan 2010)

But it's not just the gadgets that make **Millennials** unique -- it's the way they fuse their social and work lives into them. Three-quarters have created a profile on a social networking site, one-in-five posted a video of themselves on the web, and almost 90% sleep with a cell phone. And **Millennials** more than any other generation say technology makes life easier and brings family and friends closer together.

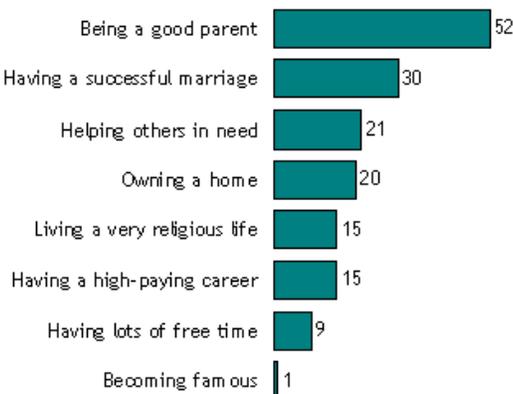
### Do You Have a Profile on a Social Networking Site?

% saying "yes"



### Millennials' Priorities

% saying ... is one of the most important things in their lives



Note: Based on adults ages 18-29.

PewResearchCenter

The generation gap is relatively narrow among the different generations in weighing life's priorities. **Millennials** (like older adults) place parenthood and marriage far above career and financial success. But they aren't rushing to tie the knot -- just one in five are married now, half the share of their parents' generation at the same stage of life.

<sup>5</sup> Pew Research Center Publications (2010). *The Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change*, (2010). Adapted by Catherine Rasmussen, University of Minnesota Extension.

## DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS OF WORK BY GENERATION<sup>6</sup>

	TRADITIONALISTS	BOOMERS	GEN XERS	MILLENNIALS
<b>Work ethic</b>	Hard working	Workaholic	Only work as hard as needed	Work hard
<b>Attitudes towards authority/ rules</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value conformity, authority &amp; rules, &amp; a top-down management approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Love/hate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comfortable with authorities, not impressed with titles</li> <li>Natural to interact with their superiors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Believe that respect must be earned</li> </ul>
<b>Expectations regarding respect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deference</li> <li>Special treatment</li> <li>More weight given to their opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deference</li> <li>Special treatment</li> <li>More weight given to their opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want to be held in esteem</li> <li>Want to be listened to</li> <li>Do not expect deference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Want to be held in esteem</li> <li>Want to be listened to</li> <li>Do not expect deference</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback &amp; supervision</b>	Attitudes closer to boomers'	May be insulted by continuous feedback	Immediate and continuous	Immediate and continuous
<b>Attitudes regarding loyalty to their employer</b>	Considered among the most loyal workers	Value company commitment and loyalty	Less loyal to companies than previous generations, but loyal to people	Committed and loyal when dedicated to an idea, cause, or product
<b>Work/life balance</b>	Sacrifice personal life for work	Sacrifice personal life for work	Value work/life balance	Value work/life balance
<b>Perceived elements of success in the workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meet deadlines (84%)</li> <li>Willingness to learn new things (84%)</li> <li>Get along with people (81%)</li> <li>Use computers (78%)</li> <li>Speak clearly and concisely (78%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use computers (82%)</li> <li>Willingness to learn new things (80%)</li> <li>Get along with people (78%)</li> <li>Meet deadlines (77%)</li> <li>Organizational skills (78%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use computers (79%)</li> <li>Meet deadlines (75%)</li> <li>Willingness to learn new things (74%)</li> <li>Speak clearly and concisely (72%)</li> <li>Get along with people (71%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use computers (66%)</li> <li>Meet deadlines (62%)</li> <li>Multitasking (59%)</li> <li>Willingness to learn new things (58%)</li> <li>Speak clearly and concisely (55%)</li> </ul>
<b>Preferred leadership attributes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Credible (65%)</li> <li>Listens well (59%)</li> <li>Trusted (59%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Credible (74%)</li> <li>Trusted (61%)</li> <li>Farsighted (57%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Credible (71%)</li> <li>Trusted (58%)</li> <li>Farsighted (54%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listens well (68%)</li> <li>Dependable (66%)</li> <li>Dedicated (63%)</li> </ul>

<sup>6</sup> Tolbize, A. (2008) Generational differences in the workplace. Research and Training Center on Community Living, University of Minnesota, p.8-9. Retrieved from [http://rtc3.umn.edu/docs/2\\_18\\_Gen\\_diff\\_workplace.pdf](http://rtc3.umn.edu/docs/2_18_Gen_diff_workplace.pdf). Summary drawn from research See report for complete listing

**REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS ON  
DIFFERENCES IN VIEWS OF WORK BY GENERATION**



What catches your attention as you review generational differences in views of work?

What are you learning from reflecting on these differences? What are you noticing that could be useful to you in your efforts after this program?

## SIMILARITIES IN VIEWS OF WORK BY GENERATION<sup>7</sup>

	TRADITIONALISTS	BOOMERS	GEN XERS	MILLENNIALS
<b>Concerns related to change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing the same work with fewer resources</li> <li>• Changes in both the internal and external environment</li> <li>• Technology changes</li> <li>• Change that is disorganized, unnecessary, or both</li> <li>• Resistance to change</li> </ul>	Similar	Similar	Similar
<b>Reasons for staying with an organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to advance within the organization</li> <li>• Learning and development</li> <li>• Respect and recognition</li> <li>• Better quality of life</li> <li>• Better compensation</li> </ul>	Similar	Similar	Similar
<b>Attitudes regarding flexibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom to set own hours if the work gets done (76%)</li> <li>• Working full-time for a firm (64%)</li> <li>• Full-time job with extended time off as needed for personal reasons (46%)</li> <li>• Four day workweek with 10-hr days (44%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom to set own hours if the work gets done (74%)</li> <li>• Working full-time for a firm (64%)</li> <li>• Four day workweek with 10-hr days (58%)</li> <li>• Full-time job with extended time off as needed for personal reasons (56%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom to set own hours if the work gets done (73%)</li> <li>• Working full-time for a firm (63%)</li> <li>• Full-time job with extended time off as needed for personal reasons (59%)</li> <li>• Four day workweek with 10-hr days (52%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freedom to set own hours if the work gets done (63%)</li> <li>• Full-time job with extended time off as needed for personal reasons (53%)</li> <li>• Working full-time for a firm (50%)</li> <li>• Four day workweek with 10-hr days (32%)</li> </ul>

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<sup>7</sup> Tolbize, A. (2008) Generational differences in the workplace. Research and Training Center on Community Living, University of Minnesota, p.8-9. Retrieved from [http://rtc3.umn.edu/docs/2\\_18\\_Gen\\_diff\\_workplace.pdf](http://rtc3.umn.edu/docs/2_18_Gen_diff_workplace.pdf). Summary drawn from research. See report for complete listing

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## SIMILARITIES IN VIEWS OF WORK BY GENERATION<sup>8</sup>

	TRADITIONALISTS	BOOMERS	GEN XERS	MILLENNIALS
<b>Most important aspects of workplace culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair (90%)</li> <li>Ethical (90%)</li> <li>Straightforward (74%)</li> <li>Professional (74%)</li> <li>Collaborative/team feeling (65%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair (86%)</li> <li>Ethical (84%)</li> <li>Straightforward (76%)</li> <li>Professional (70%)</li> <li>Collaborative/team feeling (70%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair (87%)</li> <li>Ethical (83%)</li> <li>Straightforward (74%)</li> <li>Collaborative/team feeling (71%)</li> <li>Friendly/social (66%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair (66%)</li> <li>Ethical (66%)</li> <li>Friendly/social (59%)</li> <li>Straightforward (54%)</li> <li>Professional (48%)</li> </ul>
<b>Top values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family (46%)</li> <li>Integrity (46%)</li> <li>Love (26%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family (45%)</li> <li>Integrity (32%)</li> <li>Love (27%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family (67%)</li> <li>Love (32%)</li> <li>Integrity (24%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family (73%)</li> <li>Love (49%)</li> <li>Spirituality (28%)</li> </ul>
<b>Top reasons for happiness in the workplace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling valued (88%)</li> <li>Recognition &amp; appreciation (84%)</li> <li>Supportive environment (70%)</li> <li>Leadership I can relate to (69%)</li> <li>Shared vision, values, &amp; pride (63%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling valued (87%)</li> <li>Recognition &amp; appreciation (78%)</li> <li>Supportive environment (71%)</li> <li>Leadership I can relate to (71%)</li> <li>Capable workforce (64%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling valued (84%)</li> <li>Recognition &amp; appreciation (74%)</li> <li>Supportive environment (69%)</li> <li>Capable workforce (68%)</li> <li>Leadership I can relate to (66%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling valued (85%)</li> <li>Recognition &amp; appreciation (74%)</li> <li>Supportive environment (73%)</li> <li>Capable workforce (72%)</li> <li>Being part of a team (68%)</li> </ul>

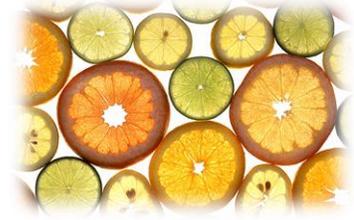
All generations have similar values; they just express them differently...*How people express their values is often different by generation, just as it is often different by culture. For example, wearing jeans to work may be considered to be an expression of disrespect for the work site to a Silent or an Early Boomer who thinks that jeans are too informal for work, but to employees from the Early or Late Xer generations, wearing jeans at work is not necessarily an expression of disrespect – they just want to wear jeans.*

- Jennifer Deal<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Tolbize, A. (2008) Generational differences in the workplace. Research and Training Center on Community Living, University of Minnesota, p.8-9. Retrieved from [http://rtc3.umn.edu/docs/2\\_18\\_Gen\\_diff\\_workplace.pdf](http://rtc3.umn.edu/docs/2_18_Gen_diff_workplace.pdf). Summary drawn from research. See report for complete listing

<sup>9</sup> Deal, J. (2007). *Retiring the generation gap: How employees young and old can find common ground*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p. 21-22

**REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS ON  
SIMILARITIES IN VIEWS OF WORK BY GENERATION**



What catches your attention as you review generational similarities in views of work?

What are you learning from reflecting on these differences? What are you noticing that could be useful to you in your efforts after this program?

## IDEAS FOR ENGAGING ACROSS GENERATIONS

**Start with respect** - people in all generations want to be respected though they define it in differently.



- **Be aware** that U.S. culture supports deference to older people, that older people get to make the rules and younger people are supposed obey them. This can be the source of conflict in intergenerational settings.
- **Questions** don't necessarily mean disrespect - in fact, they can mean an idea is being taken seriously enough to ask more about it. Assume good intent and explore the question. Research shows better decisions result when people are able to freely ask questions.
- **Ask what respect means** to those involvement- in communication, in feedback, etc. - talk it over and work toward shared understanding and agreed upon expectations, then practice it - respect works best when it goes both ways

**Understand Differences and Similarities** - keep in mind that while there may be different expressions, respect, fairness, feeling valued, getting recognition, and more are similar across generations.

- **Use your awareness** to build respectful, productive relationships.
- **Keep learning** - approaching challenging situations in refreshed ways can foster the energy and thoughtfulness to get to better results.

Ideas and notes:

## RESOURCE LIST ON GENERATIONS

## RESOURCES



Beloit College Mindset List - [www.beloit.edu/mindset/](http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/)

Brinkerhoff, Peter. (2007) *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit*, St Paul: Fieldstone Alliance.

Center for Generational Kinetics - <http://genhq.com/>

Deal, J. (2007). *Retiring the generation gap: How employees young and old can find common ground*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

- Excellent research as well as specific ideas and examples

Dorsey, Jason (2015, November 18) What do we know about the generation after millennials? *TEDxHouston*. Podcast retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4f16o9Q0XGE>

Gallup. (2016). *How Millennials Want to Work and Live*. Retrieved at <http://www.gallup.com/reports/189830/millennials-work-live.aspx>

Howe, Neil and William Strauss. (2000) *Millennials Rising* New York: Random House.

ICMA Next Generation Initiatives - <http://icma.org>

- Local government resources for developing talent for future managers and leaders

Kaye, Beverly & Sharon Jordan-Evans (2002) *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay*, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Lancaster, Lynne C. & David Stillman. (2002) *When Generations Collide*, New York: Harper Business.

Pew Research Center - <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/millennials>

Raines, Claire. (2003) *Connecting Generations: The Sourcebook for a New Workplace* Crisp Publications. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Publications

Rainmaker Thinking - [www.rainmakertalking.com](http://www.rainmakertalking.com)

Generations at Work- [www.generationsatwork.com](http://www.generationsatwork.com)

Strauss, William & Neil Howe. (1997) *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy – What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny*, New York: Broadway. Also see website at <http://www.fourthturning.com/>

Tolbize, Anick. (2008). *Generational Differences in the Workplace*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Research and Training Center on Community Living

Zemke, Ron, Claire Raines, & Bob Filipczak, (2000) *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*, New York: AMACOM.

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