





Generations in the Workplace

Characteristics *Stereotypes*

Traditionalists 	Early 1920s to mid 1940s	Hardworking; Dedicated; Respectful of rules and authority; Conservative	Old-fashioned; Behind the times; Rigid/Autocratic; Change/Risk averse
Baby Boomers 	Mid 1940s to Early 1960s	Youthful self identity; Optimistic; Team player; Competitive	Self-centered; Unrealistic; Political; Power-driven; Workaholic
Generation X 	Early 1960s to Early 1980s	Balanced (work/life quality); Self-reliant; Pragmatic	Slackers; Selfish; Impatient; Cynical
Generation Y 	Early 1980s to Early 2000s	Fast pace/Multitasking; Fun-seeking; Technology savvy	Short attention span; Spoiled and disrespectful; Technology dependent

Source: VisionPoint Webinar, 10/21/2008

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Key Workplace Dimensions

	Traditionalist	Boomer	Gen X	Gen Y
Work Style	By the book; <i>how</i> is as important as <i>what</i> gets done	Get it done—whatever it takes—nights and weekends	Find the fastest route to results; protocol secondary	Work to deadlines—not necessarily to schedules
Authority/Leadership	Command/control; rarely question authority	Respect for power and accomplishment	Rules are flexible; collaboration is important	Value autonomy; less inclined to pursue formal leadership positions
Communication	Formal and through proper channels	Somewhat formal and through structured network	Casual and direct; sometimes skeptical	Casual and direct; eager to please
Recognition/Reward	Personal acknowledgement and compensation for work well done	Public acknowledgment and career advancement	A balance of fair compensation and ample time off as reward	Individual and public praise; opportunity for broadening skills
Work/Family	Work and family should be kept separate	Work comes first	Value work/life balance	Value blending personal life into work
Loyalty	To the organization	To the importance and meaning of work	To individual career goals	To the people involved with the project
Technology	"If it ain't broke, don't fix it."	Necessary for progress	Practical tools for getting things done	What else is there?

Generational Perspectives - Generalizations

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y
Outlook	Practical	Optimistic	Skeptical	Hopeful
Work Ethic	Dedicated	Driven	Balanced	Can-Do
View of Authority	Respectful	Love/Hate	Unimpressed	Equality
Leadership by...	Hierarchy	Consensus	Competence	Pulling Together
Relationships	Personal Sacrifice	Personal Gratification	Reluctance to Commit	Inclusive
Money	Save	Spend	Hedge	Spend Parents

Source: Generational Values, found in 52 Activities for Exploring Value Differences, 2003 / Dr. Glynis Fitzgerald, Associate Professor of Communication, Central Connecticut State University

Best Practices

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y
Communication	Formal, good grammar	Ask them, don't tell them	Keep it brief; just the facts	Keep it real; interactive
Development	Focus on experience and long term goals	Acknowledge accomplishments	Let them drive it	Focus on Group Learning
Coaching	Respected leaders	Friendly Equals	Demonstrated Authority	Other Gen Y's
Feedback	Subtle – no news is good news	Formal, periodic, well-documented	Frequent	Immediate
Reward	Recognition of a job well done	Money, title, praise	Freedom and flexibility	Work that has meaning

Source: Generations at Work, 2010/ Dr. Glynis Fitzgerald, Associate Professor of Communication, Central Connecticut State University



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