Successful Leadership Across the Ages
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Generational Differences in Current Literature
- Bridging the Generation Gap: How to Get Radio Babies, Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Yers to Work Together and Achieve More (Gravett & Throckmorton, 2007)
- Motivating the “What’s In It For Me” Workforce: Manage Across the Generational Divide and Increase Profits (Marston, 2007)
- The Generational Imperative: Understanding Generational Differences in the Workplace, Marketplace, and Living Room (Underwood, 2007)

What’s In a Label?
The nomenclature used to label the generations is not standardized

Can We Agree to Disagree?
There is also significant disagreement among the various authors about which span of years should be encompassed within any one generation.

Our Challenge
With these inconsistencies, are generational differences even relevant? Some would argue that the different “generations” are simply descriptions of differences based on life stages and that these generalizations cannot be applied to individuals.

Consensus
- Most experts argue that generations are shaped much more by history than by chronological dates.
- Generational cohorts in this country are influenced by historical trends and influential social forces that have tended to produce noticeably different attitudes and values from one generation to the next.
Attributes that more clearly identify the nature of a generation than birth year

- Perceived Membership
- Common Beliefs and Behaviors
- Common Location in History

Perceived Membership

The self-perception of membership within a generation that begins during adolescence and coalesces during young adulthood.

Common Beliefs and Behaviors

The attitudes (toward family, career, personal life, politics, religion, etc.) and behaviors (choices made in regard to jobs, marriage, children, health, crime, sex, drugs, etc.) that characterize a generation.

Common Location in History

The turning points in historical trends (e.g., from liberal to conservative politics) and significant events (e.g., the Vietnam War) that occur during a generation’s formative years (adolescence and young adulthood).

Reflection

Think about significant historical events that have shaped your worldview, and how those events have influenced important decisions in your own life

Generational Labels

- <1946 Matures
- 1947-1964 Baby Boomers
- 1965-1980 Gen Xers
- 1981-1995 Gen-Y; NetGen; Millennials
- 1995-present: Post-Millennials
Our Membership

This presentation will focus on the three middle generations (Boomer, Gen X, and Millennials), as these generational cohorts will dominate membership in our professional associations over the next 5-15 years.

Baby Boomers

- Work-centric; motivated by perks, prestige
- Independent, self-reliant
- Goal-oriented; achievement focused
- Competitive; equate work and position with self-worth; value face-to-face time with colleagues

Gen-Xers

- Individualistic; independent; resourceful; self-sufficient; resent being micro-managed
- Adept at technology
- Flexible
- Value work-life balance; like to incorporate fun with activities at work

Millennials

“According to a survey conducted in the spring of 2006, the career goals of today’s Millennial college graduates are “to balance their personal and professional life (59 percent), pursue further education (46 percent), build a sound financial base (32 percent) and contribute to society (27 percent).”

(According to Stone, 2006)

A Promising Future for Millennials

“As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. More important, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct.”

(Howe and Strauss, 2000)

Millennials

- Have an innate ability to use technology, are comfortable multitasking while using a diverse range of digital media, and literally demand interactivity as they construct knowledge.
- Lack the workaholic drive of their burned-out predecessors, but they compensate by using many technologies — often simultaneously — to get the job done quickly and have a personal life as well.

(Schooley, 2005, Executive Summary)
A Promising Future? Maybe Not!

"I see no evidence that today’s young people feel much attachment to duty or to group cohesion. Instead, as you’ll see in the following pages, young people have been consistently taught to put their own needs first and to focus on feeling good about themselves. This is not an attitude conducive to following social rules or favoring the group’s needs over the individual’s... Our childhood of constant praise, self-esteem boosting, and unrealistic expectations did not prepare us for an increasingly competitive workplace and the economic squeeze created by sky-high housing costs and rapidly accelerating health care costs. After a childhood of buoyancy, GenMe is working harder to get less."

(Twenge, 2006)

The existence of generational differences is acknowledged, but there is not agreement about what to do with them.

So, Where Do We Go From Here?

Group Activity

• Identify an important historical event that happened in your formative years

• Discuss how it shaped your worldview and how it has influenced important decisions in your life.

Re-Think

The first level of rethinking is the realization that your own generation has impacted your view of the world in more ways than you think. Your core values and views of “the way the world is” were given shape when you came of age, and they usually feel fairly absolute.

(T. Reeves, 2006)
Also

• Recognize that there may be differences between generational cohorts
• Adapt the culture of your organization to reflect generational diversity
• Establish and promote an atmosphere of open communication
• Know the difference between leadership and management

Knowledge is Power

What do you need to do differently and, more importantly, what do you need to rethink in order to make generational differences an asset to your organization?

Knowledge is Power

What do you need to rethink regarding knowledge, conversations, and leadership in the context of generational diversity?

Managing Generational Diversity

• It’s all about communication!
• Revisit your organization’s mission statement
• Define your purpose
• Make sure all parties are on board and know what is expected of them
• Promote flexibility
• Resist the temptation to micromanage
• Try to mix business with pleasure
• Team digital natives with digital immigrants

Managing Generational Diversity

• Support work/life balance; Consider Generation X’s focus on work-life balance, in comparison to the Baby Boomers, who are more work-centric
• Think about when your meetings are scheduled (weekends, evenings, etc.)
• Think about meeting format (live, conference call, email exchange)
• Rethink your convention format (weekend vs. evening)
• Other?

Be Inclusive

Consider establishing a mentoring relationship between “old guard” leadership and new members
Identifying Talents

- Who recognizes talent?
- What is your (or your organization’s) definition of talent?
- When and how do you approach a potential leader?
- Where do your potential leaders start within your organization?
- Ask: Why would they want to do this????

Mining for Talent

- Use social media for recruiting
- Use surveys (informal to formal) to find out why individuals join/maintain membership
- Establish Focus Groups at convention
- Universities are the front-lines of the mines!
- CSAP referrals

Why Do We Do What We Do?

- Self-reflection facilitates the process of identifying potential leaders for your organization
- How do others perceive you as a leader?
- Do you make your role look rewarding, or as a cross you have to bear?

Teaching to Lead

- You are the role model!
- Provide opportunities for shadowing (ASHA Minority Leadership Program)
- Incorporate leadership training as part of your orientation for new leaders
- Consider leadership seminar/session at your convention

Harnessing Talents

- Rely on the observations of other leaders within your organization
- Offer opportunities for self-discovery and reflection on the part of your newly identified leaders
- Facilitate and support mentoring

Putting Talents to Work

- Ensure the presence of clearly defined goals and outcomes
- Support flexibility and ongoing communication between all parties involved in your mission
- Offer encouragement throughout the process
- Continue to promote opportunities for self-reflection and critical thinking
Preventing Burn-Out

- Develop checklists and timelines for assigned tasks in a collaborative atmosphere
- Check in frequently to offer support and to ensure timelines are being met
- Use critical reflection and trouble-shoot, as needed, during the process
- Continue to offer encouragement along the way

As you continue to explore the nuances of generational diversity, be sure to take the time to challenge your own thinking about the issues. Get clearer on exactly what you think, and why. The goal is not to read the literature to decide what generation you are, or to change your thinking to match your generational profile. It is simply to challenge assumptions you make, to uncover your own thought processes and patterns, and to shine the light on areas of your thinking that have previously been ignored. Use this topic to gain a better understanding of who you are.

(T. Reeves, 2006)

The Legacy of Your Leadership

- What, specifically, do you want to leave behind you?
- How do you make that happen?

The Legacy of Your Leadership

What lasting contributions to your organization do you want to make?

The Legacy of Your Leadership

How do you want your role as a leader to be remembered?