



Communication Across Generations

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Overview

- Defining generational communication
- Importance of learning about generational communication
- Different intergenerational perspectives
- Qualities of different generations
- Strategies for dealing with intergenerational conflict



Intergenerational Communication 2



Communicating Across Generations

- What is a generation?

*What experiences have you had communicating with different generations?
Challenging interactions?
Beneficial interactions?*

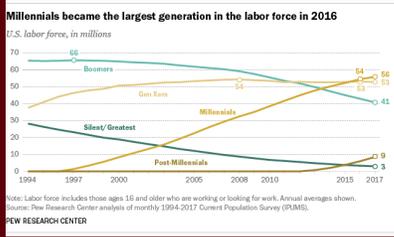


Intergenerational Communication 3



Why learn about intergenerational communication?

- Five generations currently working together:





Why learn about intergenerational communication?

- We interact with different generations everyday.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Workplace
- Differences can create obstacles.

Learning how to successfully navigate communication in various situations can make us more effective workers, family members, and friends.



Intergenerational Communication

- Two perspectives
 1. Shared events influence each generation. These events lead to similar thoughts, values, and behaviors. *These qualities differ among generations.*
 2. Differences are caused by people being in *different parts of their life or career stage.*

(Jurkiewicz & Brown 1998; Jorgensen, 2003; Yang & Guy, 2006)

Both perspectives benefit from understanding unique experiences and histories.

III

Different Generations

- The Silent Generation (Pre 1945)
- Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- Generation X (1965-1976)
- Millennials (1977-1994)
- Generation Z (1995-?)

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III

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- Influencing events:
 - WWII, Korean War, Great Depression, New Deal, etc.
 - Raised by parents of the great depression.
- Values:
 - Adherence to rules
 - Sacrifice

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III

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- Influencing events:
 - Civil Rights, Vietnam War, space travel.
 - Promised the American Dream.
- Values:
 - Optimistic
 - Competitive

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III

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- Influencing events:
 - Watergate, increase of dual income families/single parents, latchkey, energy crisis, downsizing corporations
 - First generation to not do as financial well as parents.
- Values:
 - Skeptical
 - Work-life balance

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III

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- Generation Z (1995-?)**

- Influencing events:
 - 9/11, rise of internet and technology, school shootings, war in Middle East, increasing costs for higher ed
 - First generation to grow up with internet.
- Values:
 - Self-expression
 - Flexibility

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- Influencing events:
 - Global terrorism, 2008 recession, ?
 - First generation to be born into constant media/technology.
- Values:
 - Entrepreneurial
 - More risk-adverse

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What happens when we combine multiple generations in a workplace or other interaction?

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- Each generation has unique circumstances that influence values and behaviors.
- Often, these values/behaviors clash with others.

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Stereotypes?

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Intergenerational Conflict

What sources of conflict do you see between generations?

What frustrates you about other generations?

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Intergenerational Conflict

- Older generations may see younger generations as selfish, rude, and glued to technology.
- Younger generations may see older generations as selfish, rude, and inept at technology.

How do we deal with these conflicts?

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Managing Intergenerational Conflict

Revise your story

↓

Find common ground

↓

Seek out perspectives

↓

Respect differences

↓

Strive for flexibility

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Managing Intergenerational Conflict

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    graph TD
      A[Revise your story] --> B[Find common ground]
      B --> C[Seek out perspectives]
      C --> D[Respect differences]
      D --> E[Strive for flexibility]
  
```

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Revise Your Story

- What story are you creating?
 - How are you explaining the person's behavior? Your role in the interaction?
 - Victim stories, "It's not MY fault..."
 - Villain stories, "It's really all THEIR fault..."
 - Helpless stories, "Nothing that I can do will fix this..."
- Beware of the self-fulfilling prophecy or confirmation bias
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy: a prediction that causes itself to be true
 - Confirmation bias: searching out information that confirms your beliefs.

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Revise Your Story

- Review the facts.
 - Focus on behavior, not the story.
 - Use generational differences to *explain and understand*, not critique.
- Research between generations:
 - Baby Boomers and Millennials agree on the appropriateness of using technology (Arnold et al.)
 - No differences found among Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials on personality and motivational drivers (Wong et al.)
 - Overall, research does not support claims about generational differences (DeMeuse & Miodzik)
 - Generational differences may be more individual differences or life stage differences than generational

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Managing Intergenerational Conflict

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```

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Find Common Ground

•What is your common goal?

Millennials and Older Workers Have Many of the Same Career Goals

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WITH THE FOLLOWING LONG-TERM GOALS

	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Make a positive impact on my organization	25%	21%	23%
Help solve social and/or environmental challenges	22	20	24
Work with a diverse group of people	22	22	21
Work for an organization among the best in my industry	21	25	23
Do work I am passionate about	20	21	23
Become an expert in my field	20	20	15
Manage my work-life balance	18	22	21
Become a senior leader	18	18	18
Achieve financial security	17	16	18
Start my own business	17	12	15

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Find Common Ground

•People across all generations share many *more* similarities than differences:

1. Similar values (e.g., family, generosity, etc.).
2. Everyone wants respect.
3. Trust matters.
4. People want credible and trustworthy leaders.
5. Organizational politics are a problem.
6. People dislike change.
7. Loyalty depends on context, not generation.
8. It's as easy to retain a young person as an older person, as long as you do the correct things.
9. Everyone wants to learn.
10. Most people want a coach.

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Managing Intergenerational Conflict

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```

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Seek Out Perspectives

- Ask questions and seek out information.
 - Is it a normal part of their generation?
 - Is a personality issue?
 - What is it that they want or need?

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Managing Intergenerational Conflict

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```

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Respect Differences

- Differences are neutral.
 - *Baby Boomers were told the future was theirs to own;*
 - *Gen Xers found the future disheartening;*
 - *Millennials question whether there even is a future for them.*
- How are their life experiences differences from your own? How might their perspectives be different from your own?

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Managing Intergenerational Conflict

Revise your story

↓

Find common ground

↓

Seek out perspectives

↓

Respect differences

↓

Strive for flexibility

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Strive for Flexibility

- Accommodate differences
 - Recognize and facilitate differences that help people be more productive
- Create workplace choices
 - Create options that allow workers to make choices based on working style
- Operate from a sophisticated management style
 - Be flexible and interact with each person based on their personal record
- Respect competence and initiative
 - Assume the best in people whenever possible.
- Nourish retention
 - Make your workplace a "magnet for excellence."

Zemke et al.

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Review

- Defined intergenerational communication
- Reviewed the benefits of learning about intergenerational communication
- Examined two approaches to generations
- Explored the qualities of each generation
- Overviewed strategies for dealing with intergenerational conflict

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Questions and Discussion

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