

## **Embracing Generational Differences**

### **Objectives**

- ✓ Define generational characteristics
- ✓ Review impacting factors of 4 generations
- ✓ Relate importance of generational attributes and awareness
- ✓ Relay generational impacts on families, organizations and businesses

### **Advance Preparation**

- ✓ Review the provided material (typically two hours of preparation time)

### **Materials Needed**

- ✓ Projection device
- ✓ The enclosed Power Point Presentation
- ✓ Generational Pre-test (Attachment 1)
- ✓ Worksheet - Generational Traits (Attachment 2)
- ✓ Writing Instruments
- ✓ Water color markers
- ✓ News print or poster board
- ✓ Recorded music and CD player

### **Time Needed**

- ✓ 1 hour

### **BACKGROUND**

There is an old adage that says, "Everyone is part of something larger than ones self". There is great truth in that comment. Each of us is or has been a part of a family, neighborhood, city or country. We may also be a part of groups, organizations, religions, fraternities and work forces. But larger than any other affiliation each of us belongs to a generation.

A generation can be defined as a group of people born roughly within a twenty year time period during the same era in history. (Codrington & Marshall, 2004) Members of each generation share similar social conditions, historical events, economic trends and technological advancements. They are influenced by noted personalities and cultural changes within that time period. The birth population of each generation also plays a dynamic impact on the groups' competitive bids for education and workforce positions. Together all of these influences help to mold and shape the groups' values, thinking and personalities. To identify the persona of a generation look for three attributes: perceived membership in a common generation; common beliefs and behaviors; and a common location in history. (Howe & Strauss, 2000) When you can identify these things, you will find the Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and the Millennials.

One should keep in mind that generational beliefs are not absolute. Significant differences may vary from rural to urban settings and low to high economic backgrounds. It is also important to note that being born early or late in a generational era may also alter ones viewpoints and opinions. Persons born within two to three years of a generational divide are referred to as "Cuspers" and may favor and display

characteristics from the past, next or even both relative generations. They are the folks that cement generations together. They function as mediators, translators and mentors. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003)

While specific generational age groups vary from research to research it is important to understand that there is no specific birth or cutoff dates that truly define each group. Generations are more readily defined by their personalities. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003) Each group is equally important; making lasting contributions and setting the stage for the successes and problems of the following generations.

Understanding the personalities of each group is valuable tool as to what makes each so discerning with reference to education, work, parenting, politics, religion, home, economics, leisure and retirement. Generational knowledge gives us a timeless approach and foundation as we interact with family members, strengthen relationships with different groups, manage the workforce and set the stage for the future.

### **INTEREST APPROACH**

Participant activity: Divide participants into evenly divided groups. Using markers, poster board or newsprint; direct each group to draw pictures identifying their assigned generational group. Encourage them to highlight songs, modes or travel, technology, fashion and noted activities.

### **LESSON**

1. Slide 1, Introduction of topic
2. Slide 2, Share quote from Homer's *Iliad*
3. Slide 3, Definition of a generation
4. Slide 4, Generation Identification
5. Slide 5, Definition of "Cusper"
6. Slide 6, What Makes People Tick?
7. Slide 7, Charting Generational Timelines
8. Slide 8, Generational Identity quote
9. Slides 10-16, The Traditionalists
10. Slides 17-22, The Baby Boomers
11. Slides 23-28, Generation X
12. Slides 29-32, The Millennials
13. Complete Generational Worksheet
14. What Generation Are You? (Fun Test)
15. Slide 33, So what, Big Deal, Who Cares?
16. Slide 34, quote from *When Generations Collide*

### **APPLICATION**

All of us have been guilty of thinking or saying "What were they thinking?" or "People just don't work the way they used to." The way we think, act and react to situations with respect to our families, work and leisure can be attached to our generational place in history. We respond to situations accordingly with what we have learned, witnessed and anticipated. How will you bridge the generation gaps? Will you make an effort to coach, mentor or even change your opinion about someone, how they dress or go about doing business? Maybe in doing so they will change their opinion about you.

### **REFERENCES**

Codrington, Graeme and Marshall, S. (2004). *Mind the Gap*. Penguin, SA

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