

Communication and Generations



TALKING ACROSS THE GAP

A Montana Superhost Webinar

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Nice to meet you!



- Kristin Donahue
- Human Resources consultant and trainer
- Focus is employee engagement and retention
- Contact me if you have any questions about materials!



Objectives



- Explore generational communication styles
- Identify potential pitfalls between each of the generations
- Discuss effective communication strategies between members of each generation
- Consider application of generation communication to tourism and customer service

Communication Touchpoints



- Audience – who will be watching
- Location – where are you
- Timing – what else is going on
- Message – what are you trying to say
- Body Language – how are you saying it
- Intent – what is the purpose behind your message

All of these will impact the message you are delivering!

Traditionalists



- 1922-1945
- 60's to 80's
- Typical Characteristics:
 - Reliable
 - Patriotic
 - Traditionally hardworking
 - Act based on moral obligation
 - Work for the good of the group



Traditionalists as Employees



- Will want to speak privately and formally
- More likely to think through message and timing
- Body language will be controlled and proper
- Will rely on policy and hierarchy
- Typically will build the “story” around what they are saying or place the issue in some type of context

What do others say about Traditionalists?



- **Baby Boomers**

- *“They’re dictatorial”*
- *“They’re rigid”*
- *“They’re narrow”*

- **Xers**

- *“Jeez, learn how to use your email, man!”*

- **Millennials**

- *“I can trust them”*
- *“They are good leaders”*

**From “Generations at Work”*

Serving Traditionalist Customers



- Be respectful to them
- Slow down and take the time to listen
- Visit with them
- Ask about their experience; be genuine in your interest

Baby Boomers



- 1945-1964
- 40s to 60s
- Typical Characteristics:
 - Team oriented
 - Focus on process
 - Driven
 - Work comes first
 - Earn privileges ; experience should have rewards



Boomers as Employees



- Will include consideration for feelings and the relationship as part of the communication
- Will communicate to an entire group, sometimes as a means to reach only one or two people
- Respectful of traditional hierarchies
- Will use inclusive and non-confrontational body language
- Comfortable with politics

What others say about Boomers



- **Traditionalists**

- *“They talk about things they ought to keep private”*
- *“They are self-absorbed”*

- **Xers**

- *“They’re too political – always trying to figure out what to say. . .to whom. . . And when”*
- *“Get outta my face!”*

- **Millennials**

- *“They’re cool – we like the same kind of music.”*

**From “Generations at Work”*

Serving Boomer Customers



- Provide something “special, just for them”
- Recognize their loyalty and continued business
- Find ways for them to connect with other guests
- Use “you’ve earned it” language

Generation X



- Born between 1965 and 1980
- Late 20s to early 40s
- Typical Characteristics
 - Work is a means to an end
 - Independent
 - Impatient with traditional processes
 - Feel results and efficiency should be rewarded



Communicating with Xer Employees



- Communicate directly and specifically, no fluff
- Will use electronic over in-person
- Like to keep it short and simple, avoid pleasantries
- Will identify specific people or issues and not retreat from talking about the tough stuff
- Not concerned with protocol or heirarchy

What others say about Xers



- **Traditionalists**

- *“They don’t follow procedure”*
- *“They don’t respect experience”*

- **Boomers**

- *“They are rude and lack social skills”*
- *“They spend too much time on email and internet”*

- **Millennials**

- *“Cheer up”*

**From “Generations at Work”*

Serving Xer Customers



- Be quick and efficient; don't add to the process
- Use technology to make things easier for them
- Don't try to get their life story unless they want to share it
- Offer plenty of opportunities to increase or customize their experience (“go big, or go home!”)

Millennials



- Born after 1980
- 28 and younger
- Workplace Characteristics
 - Want to make a difference AND have fun
 - Need lots of learning experiences
 - Need a connection to their workplace and coworkers
 - Constant technology and communication
 - Immediate rewards



Millennials



- Will focus on positive and potential
- Respectful of diversity, different than other generations
- Willing to follow the system, as long as it doesn't take too long
- Like electronic communication, but also like face to face
- May be doing multiple things while also communicating with you

What others say about Millennials



- **Traditionalists**

- *“They have good manners”*
- *“They need to toughen up”*

- **Boomers**

- *“They need more discipline from their parents”*
- *“Can they help me with my web page?”*

- **Xers**

- *“Here we go again. . . Another self-absorbed generation of spoiled brats”*

**from “Generations at Work”*

Serving Millennial Customers



- Have a fun atmosphere
- Use technology to add value
- Customize their experience (unique to the individual)
- Remember them and their preferences
- Make it simple but entertaining
- Incorporate their family and friends

Hot Buttons



- Words that set you off
- Ignite a response or set of feelings
- Shut down communication
- Cause you to stop listening and/or stop caring about the conversation
- Over time, cause a relationship to degrade

What are some hot buttons?

- For each generation. . .
 - Consider what hot button words or phrases might set them off
 - Share via the “chat” feature on your control panel



Discussion Option #1

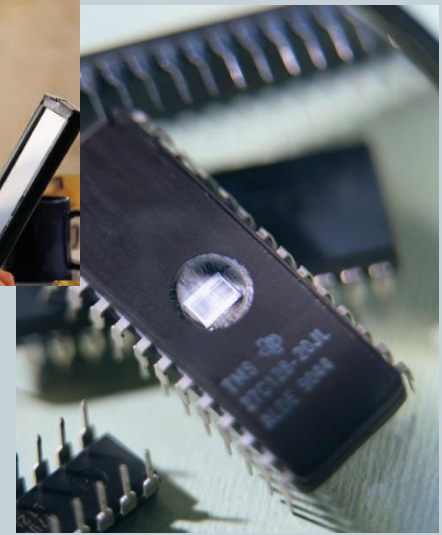


- Tim, a Boomer manager, and his work group have daily staff meetings. Tim's employees are mainly Xers and Millennials. Tim holds the daily staff meetings to help everyone get on track and start the day right. He gets frustrated because it seems like many of his team members are “checked out” during the meetings.
- Is there a potential generational element to this concern?
- What are some potential solutions?

Discussion Option#2



- How do you use technology in your workplace?
- How do you use technology to reach your customers?
- Is there a way you could capitalize on technology or social networking to reach additional markets?



Discussion Option#3



- Emma is a Millennial who is new to the work group. She is unmarried and doesn't have children. The work group, composed primarily of Xers and Boomers, prides itself on offering flexible schedules. The staff all cover for each other when someone needs to take a family member to the doctor, care for a sick child, or leave early for a Little League game. The department's motto is "family comes first" and they make sure to support each other in this focus. The whole team is shocked when Emma resigns. Her reason, "I don't feel like there is enough flexibility here."
- Is there a potential generational element to the conflict?
- What are some possible solutions?

Discussion Option#4



- Consider each generations needs as customers
- What could your business do to better meet those needs?
- Are there ways you could customize portions of your service to address generational differences?

Keep Talking!



- Check out
 - “Generations at Work” by Zemke, Raines and Filipczak
 - “Millennials Incorporated” by Orrell
 - “When Generations Collide” by Lancaster and Stillman
 - “Motivating the ‘What’s in it for me?’ Workforce” by Marston
- Open discussions with your team members
- Call me!

Call me to brainstorm!



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