

# Productive Communication with Homeowners



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*Be The Change. Volunteer.*



# Objectives

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- Identify the four generations of consumers and clients in the US.
  - Traditionalists - Born between 1922–1945
  - Baby Boomers - Born between 1946-1964
  - Generation Xers - Born between 1965-1980
  - Millennials – Gen Y - Born between 1981-1994
- Identify differences in value systems that can cause conflict for the different generations.
- Identify how personal value systems affect communication between the generations.



# Communication and the Generation Gap

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**As we deal with others we need to**  
analyze and understand the  
differences between the generations  
and how they view issues and tasks  
differently because of different value  
systems and life experiences.



# Generations of Volunteers

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## **Compiled during BridgeWorks' Generational survey:**

65% of respondents agreed that generation gaps make it hard to get things done at work.

24% of Traditionalists, 30% of Baby Boomers and over 60% of Generation Xers said they feel their generation is viewed negatively.

90% of Generation Xers said they want feedback immediately or within a few days. But 30% of Xers said they receive their phone bill more often than they get relevant feedback.

Only 14% of survey respondents chose Generation X as the generation they felt most comfortable managing and this included the Xers themselves!



# Traditionalists

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The Traditionalists, sometimes referred to as veterans or pre-boomers, are the oldest of the four generations. They were born before 1946.

Current ages: 63 – 86 year olds

Tom Brokaw calls them *The Greatest Generation*.



# Traditionalists

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## Defining Events:

- Depression, stock market crash
- World War II & Korea
- New Deal
- Radio and film
- Low divorce rate

Term: “loyalty” generation



# Traditionalists

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Work styles:

Born between 1922–1945 tend to:

- believe in conformity, authority and rules
- have a very defined sense of right and wrong
- be loyal, disciplined, logical, detail-oriented
- view an understanding of history as a way to plan for the future
- dislike conflict
- seek out technological advancements
- prefer hierarchical organizational structures



# Baby Boomers

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## Defining Events:

- Vietnam war
- Protests and sit ins
- Civil Rights movement
- Women's movement
- Television
- Space race

Term: “optimists” we can change the world



# Baby Boomers

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## Work Styles:

Born between 1946-1964 (44-62 year olds) tend to:

- long hours at the office, including evenings and weekends
- building their career over the long term and loyalty to their employer
- viewing themselves and their career as one and the same
- commitment to quality and doing a good job
- “hanging tough” through difficult work situations and policies
- finding solutions to problems
- being in charge and respecting authority



# Gen X

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## Defining Events:

- Challenger explosion
- Moon landing
- End of the Cold War
- Watergate
- The fall of the Berlin wall
- Aids
- Latchkey kids
- Computers/technology

Terms: “Skepticism” and “self-sufficient” everything changed



# Gen X

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## Work Styles:

Born between 1965-1980 (28-43 year olds) tend to:

- set and meet goals and are very productive
- multitask
- balance work and life; like flexible working hours, job sharing
- see themselves as free agents and marketable commodities
- be comfortable with authority but not impressed with titles
- be technically competent
- value ethnic diversity
- love independence



# Millennials

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## Defining Events:

- 9-11
- Oklahoma City bombing
- Columbine and Virginia Tech – school children gunned down
- Y2K
- Multiculturalism
- records on Wall Street
- Service-Learning initiatives

Terms: “Realism” – “in limbo”



# Millennials

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## Work Styles:

Born between 1981-1994 (14-27 year olds) tend to prefer:

- effecting change and making an impact
- expressing themselves rather than defining themselves through work
- multitasking all the time
- active involvement
- flexibility in work hours and appearance; a relaxed work environment
- teamwork
- on-the-job training
- getting everything immediately
- a balance of work and life



# Generations of Volunteers

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## How Does It Affect Communication?

### Authority: Chain of /Leadership

Traditionalists - chain of command – title –  
hierarchy – structure

Baby Boomers - change of command – best  
person – consensus – more data

Generation Xers - self command – self directed  
– competence – access to info

Millennials - don't command – collaborate –  
teammate



# Generations of Volunteers

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## **How Does It Affect Communication?**

### *Feedback*

Traditionalists - no news is good news

Baby Boomers - formal meeting please

Generation Xers - immediate (sorry to interrupt,  
but how is it going?)

Millennials - instantaneous feedback please –  
before you leave my house....



# Conclusion

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Each generation grew up in different times, with different historical and cultural events shaping them in their formative years to become who they are today.

The key of communicating with each generation is to structure information based on the individual needs of the customer and to not assume that our preferred way is the same as the customer.



# Communication Tips

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## Traditionalists:

- Like formal communication
- Clear, concise messages are good
- Short, curt messages seem rude
- Mailed letters or face to face contact work well
- Phone calls are okay
- E-mail and cell phones are most common in urban areas

## Baby Boomers:

- Like messages that clearly explain what is happening
- Do not appreciate messages that sound controlling
- They like to be invited to share rather than watch
- They want their questions answered without too many conclusive, direct statements
- They respect letters, but prefer e-mail, phone calls and answering machines



# Communication Tips

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## Gen Xers:

- Likes messages in short understandable bites
- May not deal well with letters, they are not a writing generation
- E-mail is perfect and almost all of this generation has access to it
- They like places for feedback and want to feel a part of whatever they are asked to do
- Informal communication is preferred
- They use cell phones and depend upon answering machines or voice mail

## Millennials:

- Likes concise action words
- Emphasize that whatever you ask them to do is worth their time
- Humor can be used with this group to get a message across, but this group's humor may not be understood by other generations



# Communication Tips

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## Millennials:

- Like concise action words
- Emphasize that whatever you ask them to do is worth their time
- Humor can be used with this group to get a message across, but this group's humor may not be understood by other generations
- This group likes all senses to be stimulated with colors, movement and music
- They want to respond quickly so e-mail is fine
- Instant messaging is the communication choice of this group
- It is rare to find a millennial without a cell phone



# Scenarios

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Identify a reporter and a recorder at your table.

Read through the scenario and answer the questions that follow the scenario.

On the reverse side of your scenario will be a copy of communication tips for the generation related to your scenario.



# Sources

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- When Generations Collide, Lancaster & Stillman
- Generations at Work, Zemke, Raines, Filipczak
- The Greatest Generation, Tom Brokaw
- [www.bridgeworks.com](http://www.bridgeworks.com)
- [www.generations.com](http://www.generations.com)