

## Managing the Next Generation: From Collision to Collaboration

By Emily Odegard-Jamieson

WITH FOUR GENERATIONS COLLIDING in church, business and parachurch workplaces across America, awareness of the newest form of diversity training demands our attention. Bridging the generational gap in workplaces with regard to everything from recruitment and retention to rewards and retirement plans begs managers and employees alike to humble themselves and build a comprehensive understanding of what motivates and shapes each generation.

Needless to say, the world at work is changing rapidly; job security has given way to career security; the idea of paying one's dues is near extinct; business etiquette has morphed from typed letterhead into e-cards; the frequency and content of feedback has raced from semi-annual, heavily documented feedback sessions to daily (seemingly confrontational) demands for a frank state of affairs.

And that's only the half of it. Employees of varying generations enjoy different rewards, schedules and work environments, thus making recruitment and retention a more challenging endeavor, as a "one plan fits all" no longer applies. In light of this upheaval, how do we "in humility consider others better than ourselves" when we feel our generation has it right? Paul's curt solution is this: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4 NIV).

*When Generations Collide* proves to be an invaluable resource, in which generational experts Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman offer anecdotal treatments describing "ClashPoints" between the generations, supported by research-based statistics from their "BridgeWorks" survey. Rather than perpetuating generational stereotypes, the better part of *When Generations Collide* encourages a paradigm shift in which the generations learn how to understand and engage with one another to span the gap.

Once a basic understanding of the needs, values and expectations of each of the generations is achieved, Lancaster

and Stillman suggest creating "employee value propositions." With humility at its core, this "persuasive statement of what you have to offer aimed at appealing to a particular generation... is focused on the audience, not on the organization."

While this is particularly effective for recruiting, successfully communicating employee value propositions *internally* offers the basic training managers and employees alike will benefit from, as they discover *what* it is their cross-generational co-workers value and *why* they are at work.

According to the BridgeWorks survey, "43% of Boomers said they do not have good opportunities to be mentored where they are at work." And "65% of Xers had never received training on how to *receive* feedback." Truly, there's

Traditionalists: Pre-1946 75 Million		Baby Boomers: 1946-1964 80 Million	
<b>Career Goals</b>	Build a legacy.	<b>Career Goals</b>	Build a stellar career.
<b>Rewards</b>	The satisfaction of a job well done.	<b>Rewards</b>	Money, title, recognition, the corner office.
<b>Balance</b>	Support me in shifting the balance.	<b>Balance</b>	Help me balance everyone else and find meaning myself.
<b>Retirement</b>	Reward.	<b>Retirement</b>	Retool.
<b>Feedback</b>	No news is good news.	<b>Feedback</b>	Feedback once a year, with lots of documentation.
<b>Training</b>	I learned it the hard way. You can too.	<b>Training</b>	Train 'em too much and they'll leave.
<b>CLASHPOINTS</b>			
Gen Xers: 1965-1981 46 Million		Millennials: 1982-2000 76 Million	
<b>Career Goals</b>	Build a portable career.	<b>Career Goals</b>	Build parallel careers.
<b>Rewards</b>	Freedom is the ultimate reward.	<b>Rewards</b>	Work that has meaning for me.
<b>Balance</b>	Give me balance now, not when I'm 65!	<b>Balance</b>	Work isn't everything. I need flexibility so I can balance all my activities.
<b>Retirement</b>	Renew.	<b>Retirement</b>	Recycle.
<b>Feedback</b>	Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?	<b>Feedback</b>	Feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button.
<b>Training</b>	The more they learn, the more they stay.	<b>Training</b>	Continuous learning is a way of life.

"ClashPoints" extracted from *When Generations Collide*

no better time to encourage mentoring relationships for employees at all levels. Team-oriented activities which engender a sense of community and provide environments where cross-generational interaction can organically occur are imperative. And the value of instilling in employees the simple skill of appreciative inquiry as they come into conflict over "ClashPoints" will create a healthy forum for cross-generational conversation.

Four generations, viewing the world of work from differing vantage points, demand that recruiters, employers and co-workers step out of their comfort zones and learn not only *what* those differences are, but *why* they exist and *how* to capitalize on them. What's your next step?

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