

Can Baby Boomers Effectively Manage the Next Generation?

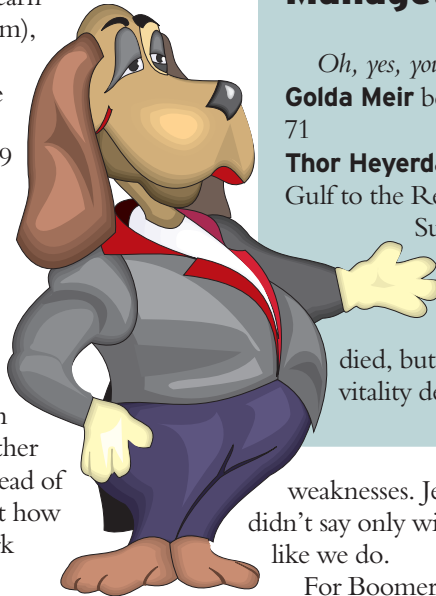
By Carolyn Thompson

YES. AND IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME LEARNING – learning for us old dogs who need to learn new tricks (ok, so now you know how old I am), and learning for the next generation, so they know what to expect from us Boomers, so we can all work together. Both of us working toward harmony (sound familiar? 1 Peter 3:8–9 – get out your Bible and read it alongside this article). Jesus tells us, in fact, that this is the distinguishing mark of his people, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:25).

To work toward harmony, we'll need to learn what *assumptions and biases* each of us has about the other, we'll need to learn about each others' values, we'll need to learn how each other *communicates*. Try this with your staff and, instead of huge differences, I bet you'll all be surprised at how much you have in common. It's tough to work with and manage people we perceive to be so vastly different than we are.

The consultants may have done us a disservice, showing us all the differences between Baby Boomers and Gen Yers. To work together in harmony, we simply need to find the things within our diversity which we have in common. In the Greek, the concept of being harmonious carries the idea of being like-minded. It's not that we all think exactly alike, but that we're unified around Christ and his teachings.

Ah, now there's something the Boomers and Gen Yers in our ministries have in common. Once we discover the many things we have in common, we can see the differences as strengths people bring to our ministries where we have



Can An Old Dog Learn New Tricks or Can Boomers Really Learn a New Way to Manage?

Oh, yes, you can:

Golda Meir became Prime Minister of Israel at 71

Thor Heyerdahl navigated from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea in a replica of an ancient Sumarian sailboat at 63

I.M. Pei designed the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame at 78

Moses was 120 years old when he died, but his eye was not dull nor had his vitality departed

weaknesses. Jesus taught us to work together, and didn't say only with people our age who think exactly like we do.

For Boomers, effectively managing the next generation is about learning to work in harmony with people who have some things in common and some that are different. Learning from each other is the key. Try a mentoring program, pairing Boomers and Gen Yers who don't report to each other. We'll all take that learning back to our relationships with our bosses/staff, and benefit from the diversity of age that creates diversity of thoughts and actions. Diversity enriches our ministries and ourselves.

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Retaining Your Gen Y Staff

You've hired the greatest person – now what to do so they want to stay:

- **They want an opportunity** to do new work, tackle new projects, learn new skills, and it doesn't matter if it's a promotion or a lateral move. They just want you to give them a chance to try, and they'll work hard to do it.
- **They want to buy into the mission** of the ministry, so they must know it before taking the job. Then they need to see it happening once they're working and have a part in meeting it. We need to be sure they can see their part; they have a huge role to play, but may need help seeing it.
- **Keep those opportunities for learning** and con-

tributing coming, because when they think they've disappeared, so does their drive to work in your ministry.

- **Be confident in your abilities** and at the same time respect and care about others, as they only respect people who do (respect is not based on age).
- **Give them the answers** to their many “Why?” questions – Why do we do it this way? Why should I do that? Why can't we try it both ways?
- **Give them responsibility** for solving problems – they're very open-minded about new ways to do things.
- **Be inclusive** – they are, and so they see few barriers of race, gender or age, and don't want you to have them either.