



**Laurel and Associates, Ltd.**  
Workplace Learning and Performance:  
Building the Skills for Your Success

# **Bridging the Generation Gap**

facilitated by

**Deborah Laurel**

for the

**South Central Library System**

# Bridging the Generation Gap

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# **Bridging the Generation Gap**

Presented by: Deborah Laurel, President  
Laurel and Associates, Ltd.

## Agenda

Introduction

Identifying the Generational Gap

Defining Four Generational Cultures

Decoding Generational Miscommunications

Resolving Intergenerational Issues

Summary and Evaluation

Close

# **Bridging the Generation Gap**

## Learning Objectives

As a result of this workshop, the participants will:

1. identify the reality of the generational gap at work;
2. define four different generational cultures;
3. decode generational miscommunications; and
4. recognize and resolve real-life intergenerational issues.

## Facilitator Profile

**Deborah Spring Laurel** is the principal of Laurel and Associates, Ltd., an international human resource development training and consulting firm that specializes in enhancing interpersonal dynamics within organizations.

Deborah has been a trainer and a consultant in the areas of workplace learning and performance improvement for over thirty years. She was adjunct faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for thirty years.

She has designed and presented hundreds of different skill-building workshops on various topics, all of which have been tailored to meet the specific needs of her clients. In 1992, she was selected the Wisconsin Trainer of the Year by the Small Business Development Center.

Deborah is also a Certified Professional Consultant to Management, with over twenty-five years of experience in human resource management, organizational development, and performance consulting.

Deborah is the 2005-2006 President of the South Central Wisconsin Chapter of American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) and a certified facilitator for the three-day national ASTD Training Certificate Program. Twice published in the Training and Consulting volumes of the Pfeiffer Annuals, she has her Masters Degree from the University of Wisconsin- Madison.

Clients include the: Open Society Institute-Croatia; State of Wisconsin; State of Nebraska; State of Texas; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; University of Wisconsin; University of Alabama; Bruno; SSM Health Care System; Meriter Hospital; Harley-Davidson Motor Company; Cuna Mutual; Highsmith Corporation; Johnson Controls; Energy Center of Wisconsin; Penda Corporation; U.S. Forest Products Laboratory; SSI Technologies, Inc.; and AT&T.

## What Do You Think?

1. Bob sits at his desk while Ann, his co-worker, explains the details of a very important project. Bob turns away to type some e-mail, glancing up from the screen occasionally to make eye contact with Ann. Soon, though, she stalks off in anger, saying, "I'll tell you about this later. It's clear this isn't important to you."
  - a. Bob's behavior indicates that he doesn't care about Ann or what she is saying.
  - b. Bob was actually listening intently to Ann.
2. A company recently hired a new president. He was making his way around the building, meeting with each department. In one such meeting, an employee asked the new president where he lived. After the president responded, the employee said, "All right! I can get a ride to work with you!"
  - a. It was perfectly acceptable for the employee to say this.
  - b. The employee's behavior was totally inappropriate.
3. A supervisor gives an assignment to an employee, saying: "If you get a chance, it would be helpful if you would do this for me." Two days later, when the supervisor checks up on the employee, she finds that the task has not been completed, or even begun.
  - a. The employee is doing what she has been told to do.
  - b. The employee is refusing to take direction and has a problem with authority.
4. An employee is unhappy with a more senior team member's job performance. He is very direct and straightforward, presenting his critical comments without any concern for diplomacy or tact.
  - a. The employee is being very disrespectful to the senior team member.
  - b. The employee is treating the senior team member with respect.

## Remember When?

- A computer was something on TV from a science fiction show?
- An application was for employment and a program was a TV show?
- A cursor used profanity and a keyboard was a musical instrument?
- Memory was something that you lost with age and a CD was a bank account?
- Log on was adding wood to the fire and a hard drive was a long trip on the road?
- A mouse pad was where a mouse lived and back up was what occasionally happened to your commode?
- Cut was what you did with a pocketknife and paste you did with glue?
- A web was a spider's home and a virus was the flu?

Now they all mean different things and that really megabytes!

Drawn from multiple Internet sources.

## Veterans

BIRTH DATES:	Between 1922-1943.
OTHER NAMES:	Traditionalists, Matures, Silents, Loyalists, G.I. Joes, Seniors, Builders, and War Generation.
OUTLOOK:	<p>“A rendezvous with destiny.” “The difficult we do at once; the impossible takes a bit longer.”</p> <p>“Tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace.”</p>
VALUES:	Dedication/sacrifice; hard work; law and order; consistency and conformity; respect for authority; duty before pleasure; adherence to rules; honor.
BEHAVIOR:	<p><u>Pluses</u>: Stable; detail-oriented; thorough; loyal; hardworking; reliable.</p> <p><u>Minuses</u>: Uneasy with ambiguity and change; reluctant to buck the system; uncomfortable with conflict; reticent when they disagree.</p> <p>Will adapt behavior as requested, but not their attitude.</p> <p>Used to “hurry up and wait” situations, in which killing time with idle chatter and socialization are acceptable, and independent initiative is not.</p>
DEFINING MOMENT:	Pearl Harbor, 12/7/41.
MIND-SET:	Civic-minded, with a focus on secular achievement and reward.
PREFERENCES:	Knowing what to expect, what the policies are, and who’s who.

Drawn from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak. (New York: AMACOM, 2000) pp. 29-62.

## Baby Boomers

BIRTH DATES:	Between 1943-1960.
OTHER NAMES:	Beat Generation, Hippies, Yippies, Yuppies.
OUTLOOK:	“To boldly go where none has gone before.” “Age is a state of mind. You are only as old as you think.” “It’s not <i>what</i> you know but <i>who</i> you know.”
VALUES:	Optimism; team orientation; personal gratification; health and wellness; personal growth; youth; work; involvement.
BEHAVIOR:	<u>Pluses</u> : Service-oriented; driven; willing to “go the extra mile;” good at relationship; want to please; good team players.  <u>Minuses</u> : Not naturally “budget-minded;” uncomfortable with conflict; reluctant to go against peers; may put process ahead of result; overly sensitive to feedback; judgmental of those who see things differently.
DEFINING MOMENT:	President John Kennedy’s assassination, 11/22/63.
MIND-SET:	Idealistic, with a focus on vision and values.
PREFERENCES:	Work environments that are democratic, humane, and casual.  Managers who treat their employees as equals, and let them feel they are in charge of something- or at least empowered to dabble in everything.  Opportunity and training.

Drawn from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak. (New York: AMACOM, 2000) pp. 63-91

## Gen Xers

BIRTH DATES:	Between 1960-1980.
OTHER NAMES:	Baby Busters, Slackers, Twentysomethings, Post-Boomers, The Thirteenth Generation, Gold Collar Workers.
OUTLOOK:	“Just tell me, is this going to be on the test?” “Be careful out there. It’s a dangerous world.” “Always ask, ‘Why?’” “I want to have a life.”
VALUES:	Diversity; thinking globally; balance; techno-literacy; fun; informality; self-reliance; pragmatism.
BEHAVIOR:	<u>Pluses</u> : Adaptable; technoliterate; independent; unintimidated by authority; creative; ability to multitask.  <u>Minuses</u> : Impatient; poor people skills; inexperienced; cynical.
DEFINING MOMENT:	Challenger Disaster, 1/28/86.
MIND-SET:	Reactive, with a focus on survival and adventure.
PREFERENCES:	A fun, flexible, educational, non-micromanaged work atmosphere with a variety of projects to keep them engaged.  Avoid corporate politics and have a life.

Drawn from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak. (New York: AMACOM, 2000) pp. 93-126.

## Millennials

BIRTH DATES:	Between 1980-2000.
OTHER NAMES:	Generation Y, Internet Generation, Nintendo Generation, Nexters, Echo Boomers, Generation 2001, N-Gen.
OUTLOOK:	“There are no absolutes.” “What’s the scoop on getting along with the teacher?”
VALUES:	Optimism; civic duty; confidence; achievement; sociability; morality; street smarts; diversity.
BEHAVIOR:	<u>Pluses</u> : Collective action; optimism; tenacity; heroic spirit; multitasking capabilities; technological savvy; resilience. <u>Minuses</u> : Need for supervision and structure; inexperience, particularly with handling difficult people issues.
DEFINING MOMENTS:	Columbine High School Killings, 4/20/99 World Trade Towers Bombing, 9/11/01.
MIND-SET:	Civic-minded, with a focus on secular achievement and reward.
PREFERENCES:	Attention and structure from the authority figure. For employees to be treated like customers.

Drawn from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak. (New York: AMACOM, 2000) pp. 127-150.

## Connecting Generations

**PURPOSE:** To increase your understanding of generations so that you can be more effective in work and family situations.

**TO WIN:** First, your table must collect 5 cards of each color. Then, the table that collects the most cards in the allotted time wins.

**TO PLAY:**

1. Roll the die. Move the number of spaces indicated, in any direction you choose.
2. Land on a space and ask the player to your left to take the top card from the corresponding deck and read everything except the answer to all players at the table.

**Events cards** test your knowledge of the most influential events of each of the four generations' formative years.

**Characteristics cards** test your understanding of the ways in which each generation's formative era shaped their perspective.

**Situations cards** offer situations that require knowledge of generational differences, people skills, and common sense.

Remember that when situations involve someone of another generation, we are most effective when we communicate in the other generation's style.

3. Discuss the question with everyone at your table except the reader and agree on an answer.
4. Ask the player on your left to read the answer.
5. Begin a stack of "correct" cards for your table if you answer correctly. Place the card at the bottom of the deck if you answer incorrectly.

## The Way They See The World

	<b>VETERAN</b>	<b>BOOMER</b>	<b>GEN XER</b>	<b>MILLENNIAL</b>
Outlook	Practical	Optimistic	Skeptical	Hopeful
Work Ethic	Dedicated	Driven	Balanced	Determined
Authority	Respectful	Love/Hate	Unimpressed	Polite
Leadership	Hierarchy	Consensus	Competence	Pull Together
Relationships	Personal Sacrifice	Personal Gratification	Reluctant to Commit	Inclusive
Turnoffs	Vulgarity	Political Incorrectness	Cliche, Hype	Promiscuity

Drawn from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak (New York: AMACOM, 2000) p.155.

## Translation, Please

1. A Veteran says: *“An honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay.”*

What the Veteran means:

What this means to a Boomer:

What this means to a Gen Xer:

What this means to a Millennial:

2. A Boomer says: *“You have to get along to get ahead.”*

What the Boomer means:

What this means to a Veteran:

What this means to a Gen Xer:

What this means to a Millennial:

3. A Gen Xer says: *“I have a life.”*

What the Gen Xer means:

What this means to a Veteran:

What this means to a Boomer:

What this means to a Millennial:

4. A Millennial says: *“I’ll check that out.”*

What the Millennial means:

What this means to a Veteran:

What this means to a Boomer:

What this means to a Gen Xer:

## Focus Question

**What are the current or potential  
intergenerational challenges  
in your workplace?**

## Meeting Intergenerational Challenges

<b>CHALLENGE</b>	<b>RESOLUTION STRATEGIES</b>
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

## Two Keys to Success

There are two keys to creating a successful intergenerational workforce:

1. Aggressive Communication, and
2. Difference Deployment.

In **aggressive communication**, generational conflicts and potential conflicts are anticipated and surfaced. Generational differences are based primarily on unarticulated assumptions and unconscious criteria; therefore, surfacing them takes a giant step toward resolving them.

**Difference deployment** is the tactical use of employees with different backgrounds, experiences, skills, and viewpoints to strengthen project teams, customer contact functions, and at times, whole departments and units.

Drawn from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak (New York: AMACOM, 2000) p. 153.

## The ACORN Imperatives

Successful cross-generational friendly companies have six specific similarities or common approaches to making their environments generationally comfortable and focusing their people's energies on the business of the business. They:

### **1. Accommodate employee differences.**

They treat their employees as they do their customers. There is a real effort to accommodate personal scheduling needs, work-life balance issues, and non-traditional lifestyles. Each generation's icons, language, and precepts are acknowledged, and language is used that reflects generations other than those "at the top."

### **2. Create workplace choices.**

They allow the workplace to shape itself around the work being done, the customers being served, and the people who work there. Dress policies tend to be casual. The height and width of the chain of command tend to be foreshortened, and decreased bureaucracy is taken on a clear goal. "Change" is an assumed way of living and working. In all these companies, the atmosphere could be described as relaxed and informal. There's an element of humor and playfulness about most of their endeavors.

### **3. Operate from a sophisticated management style.**

The managers are a bit more polished than the norm; they operate with a certain finesse. They tend to be more direct. They give those who report to them the big picture, specific goals and measures, then they turn their people loose- giving them feedback, reward and recognition as appropriate.

There are seven attributes that characterize their flexibility:

- (1) Their supervisory style is not fixed. Control and autonomy are a continuum, not solitary options.
- (2) Their leadership style is situationally varied.
- (3) They depend less on positional than on personal power.

- (4) They know when and how to make personal policy exceptions, without causing a team riot.
- (5) They are thoughtful when matching individuals to a team or a team or individual to an assignment.
- (6) They balance concern for tasks and concern for people.
- (7) They understand the elements of trust and work to gain it from their employees. They are perceived as fair, inclusive, good communicators, and competent in their own right.

#### **4. Respect competence and initiative.**

They assume the best of their people. They treat everyone, from the newest recruit to the most seasoned employee, as if they have great things to offer and are motivated to do their best. It is an attitude that has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

#### **5. Nourish retention.**

On a daily basis, they are concerned and focused on retention and on making their workplaces magnets for excellence. They offer lots of training, from one-on-one coaching opportunities to interactive computer-based training to an extensive and varied menu of classroom courses. Not only do they encourage regular lateral movement within their organizations, but they have broadened assignments.

#### **6. Market internally.**

They spend time learning how to become the employer of choice in their industry and region, and they continually “sell the benefits” to retain the best and brightest of their employees.

Adapted from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak (New York: AMACOM, 2000) pp. 155-159.

## Cross-Generational Inventory

### *How Cross-Generationally Friendly Is Your Organization?*

#### Accommodating Employee Differences

1. There is no one successful “type” in this organization: Managers, leaders and those in the most desirable jobs are a mix of ages, sexes, and ethnic backgrounds.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

2. When a project team is put together, employees with different backgrounds, experiences, skills, and viewpoints are consciously included.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

3. Employees are treated like customers.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

4. There is lots of conversation- even some humor- about differing viewpoints and perspectives.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

5. We take time to talk openly about what different generations- and the individuals within them- are looking for on the job...what makes work rewarding...which environment is most productive...what types of work load, schedule, and policies work best.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

### Creating Workplace Choices

6. Our atmosphere and policies are based on the work being done, the customers being served, and the preferences of the people who work here.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

7. There is not any behind-the-back complaining, passive-aggressive behavior, or open hostility among groups of employees.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

8. There is a minimum of bureaucracy and “red tape” here.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

9. The work atmosphere could be described as relaxed and informal.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

10. There’s an element of fun and playfulness about most endeavors here.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

### Operating From a Flexible Management Style

11. Managers here are a bit more “polished” or professional than in most companies.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

12. Managers adjust policies and procedures to fit the needs of individuals and the team.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

13. Managers here are known for being straightforward.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

14. Managers give those who report to them the big picture, along with specific goals and measures, then turn their people loose.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

Respect for Competence and Initiative

15. We assume the best of and from our people; we treat everyone- from the newest recruit to the most seasoned employee- as if they have great things to offer and are motivated to do their best.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

Nourishing Retention

16. We are concerned and focused on retention on a daily basis.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

17. We offer lots of training, from one-on-one coaching to a varied menu of classroom courses.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

18. We encourage regular lateral movement.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

19. Work assignments here are broad, providing variety and challenge, and allowing each employee to develop a range of skills.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

20. We market internally, “selling” the agency to employees and continually looking for ways to be the employer of choice.

1	2	3	4	5
Completely false	Somewhat false	Somewhat true/some- what false	Somewhat true	Completely true

### If Your Score Was

- Under 70 Your organization is in danger. The high costs of losing, recruiting, and training employees will seriously damage your bottom line, if they haven't already.
- 70-79 You're typical of most organizations. Although you're doing some good things, you must make major improvements to your work environment if you're going to survive and thrive in today's competitive market.
- 80-89 Your turnover is probably lower than the industry average. You're doing a good job, but there's room for improvement.
- 90-100 Congratulations! Not only is turnover lower than the average for your industry, but the work atmosphere you've created is so attractive to employees that recruiting nearly takes care of itself. Good job.

Adapted from Generations at Work, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak (New York: AMACON, 2000) pp. 253-257.

## Something of Value

Since I would like to effectively bridge the generation gap, it will be useful for me to remember the following ideas or techniques from today's workshop:

# **Bridging the Generation Gap**

## **Evaluation Sheet**

### **I. Personal Significance of Workshop**

1. Of the ideas, concepts and/ or principles covered, which do you consider to be of the most use to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. List one or two ways in which you can apply something learned during this training experience to your current situation.

### **II. Quality of Presentation**

1. Please comment on the method of presentation (i.e. use of audio visuals; mix of lecture, group and individual work; sufficiency of time for questions and discussion; value of group exercises, etc.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What was your overall impression of the presenter? (Please consider such areas as the handling of group discussion; interaction with group; knowledge of subject; general pace of instruction; degree of openness, spontaneity, and humor.)

### **III. General comments**