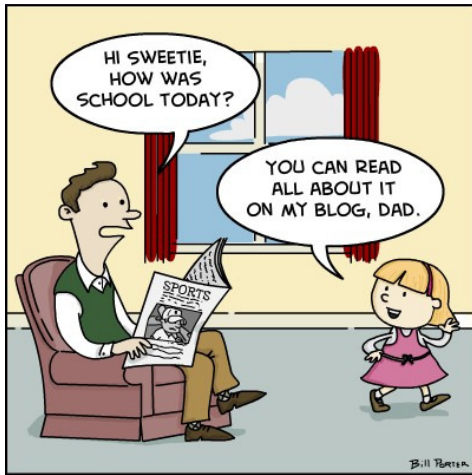


# Bridging The Gap



I was very fortunate to attend a breakfast seminar this week and hear a fabulous speaker. Her name was Avril Henry and she spoke about the impact of generational change, specifically in the workplace. It was a fantastic talk and she not only got me thinking, but also inspired me to want to share my new found knowledge. I know this information will help everyone because we are all a part of one of the generations ... I am a baby boomer and proud of it! As Avril says about us baby boomers – we think we are cool, even if no-one else does!

It is true – I do think I am cool and I really don't care what anyone else thinks!! Are there any other super-cool boomers that feel the same way? So what are the generations and which ages do they encompass? The **Veterans** are people born prior to 1946. **Baby Boomers** are born between 1946 and 1964 (I just snuck in!). Then there are the **Gen X's** who are born between 1965 and 1979, the **Gen Y's** born between 1980 and 1995 and the finally The **Gen Z's** born after 1996. Where do you fall?

## You are what you are

One of the first things Avril said about the generations is that we are the way we are for a reason. The way we are is due to the period that we were born into and all the influences on our lives at that time. We were influenced by what our parents were going through and doing at that time. We were/are heavily influenced by technology, by politics, terrorism, the environment, economic situations and other cultural and current experiences. In other words we have seen what we have seen, experienced what we have experienced and **we are who we are!**



I know as a baby boomer there are times that I would love to change Gen Y's and they would like to kill me. The Veterans and baby Boomers often think Gen X and Y's are lazy. The Gen X & Y's firmly believe that the Veterans and Baby Boomers work far too hard and there has to be far more efficient way to get things done. This can often be a cause for conflict because rather than accept and work with the differences between generations we often try to change the other person, the other generation, to our way of thinking. **Here is a news flash ... it isn't going to happen!**

So, can we accept here and now that all the generations are different? Can we also accept that all the generations have strong points and strengths? Finally, can we learn to work with the strengths, rather than get frustrated by the differences? I say YES!

### Understanding what motivates the generations



The bottom line is that the generations can work brilliantly together if they know what motivates each other. Avril spoke a lot about the different generations in the workplace and it was very interesting. When we think about the people who lead many families, groups, organisations, clubs they will often fall into the Veteran or Baby Boomer generations. These generations are generally motivated more by security, time on the job, and financial strength & stability. This means that they will put emphasis on these things as character traits and values they expect from their family, team or their employees. The big issue is that the workforce, clubs and teams are primarily made up of generation X & Y's – in fact over 60%! So how do you think the Veterans and Boomers leadership/management style will work? ... Not well at all!

This is where there is often a massive disconnect in many situations because the things that drive the 'oldies' (I can say that, because I am one of them!) is not what largely motivates Gen X's & Y's or the Gen Z's coming through. Keep in mind this quite general and there are exceptions to every rule – but studies indicate what motivates Gen X's is effective leadership from people with integrity & credibility. The X's also want to be challenged and like taking risks. What motivates Gen Y's is inspiring leadership – they want to be involved with leaders who love what they do and are willing to share their knowledge. The Y's are strongly motivated by a supportive and collaborative environment and, whilst they often have great work ethic, like to work smarter NOT harder!

The disconnect and conflict comes when the older generations, in leadership positions, try to force their beliefs about their way (the only way in their eyes) to do things on the younger generations. It also comes when the younger generations don't work with and try to understand where the older generations beliefs have come from.

### Together the combination is powerful!

Just think about it ... if the Veterans and Boomers focus on security and financial stability could be combined collaboratively with the X's and Y's passion for working together, risk taking and finding more efficient and effective ways of doing things that help other people ... Imagine what we could achieve in the world.

It's time to bridge the gap. It's time we came together and made the effort to understand and work with the incredible strengths that each of the generations possess. Why not start this today and turn your country into a GenerNation (I just came up with that!!).

Have a great week.

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