

# Harmonizing Office Culture: Embracing Generational Diversity

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May 24, 2018

# Agenda

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- Generations Defined
- Generational Conflicts at Work
- Benefits of Generational Diversity
- Engaging the Different Generations

# Introductions

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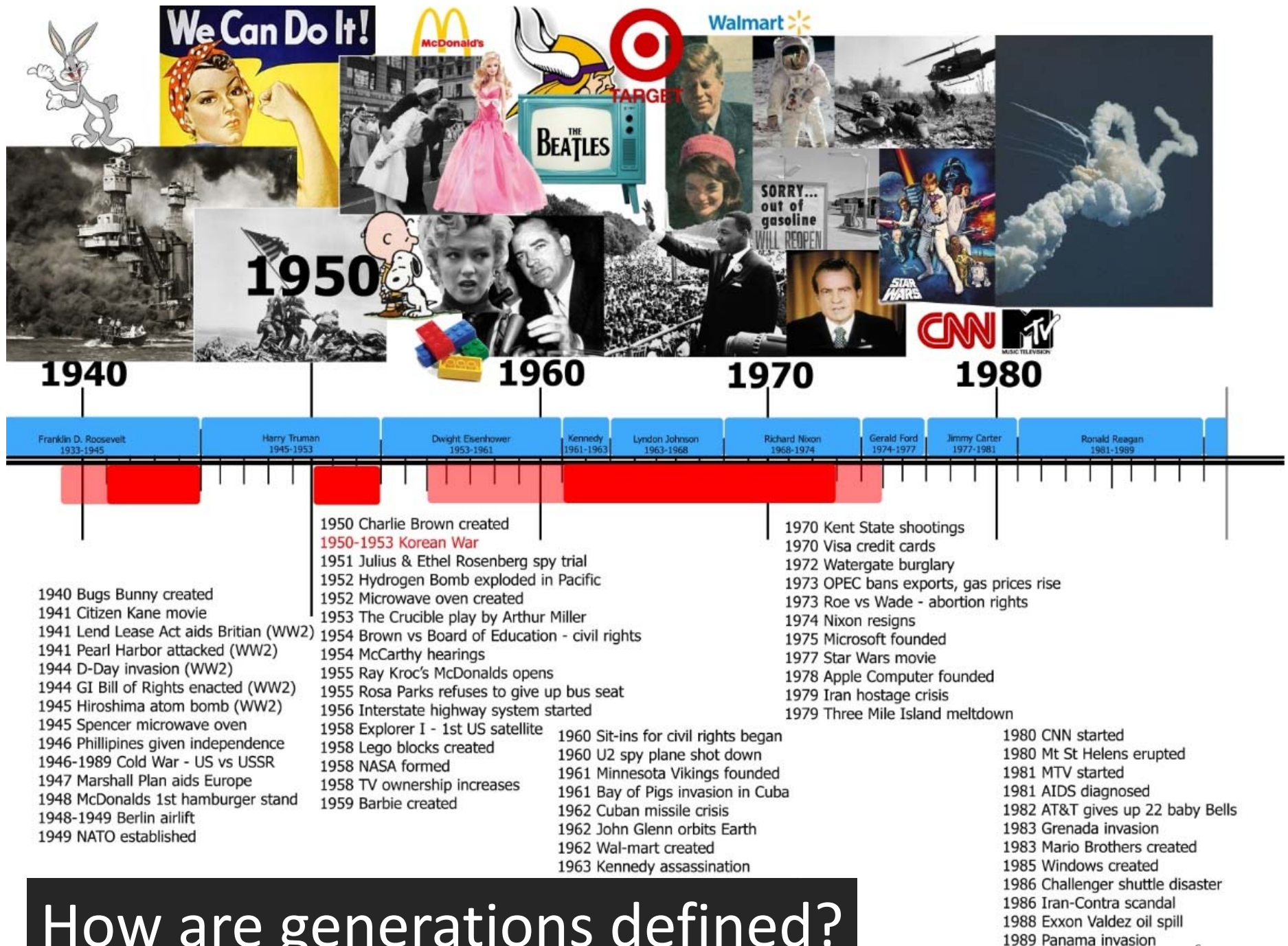
# Generations Defined

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## Common Questions

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- How are generations defined?
- Who decides what boundaries to use?
- How do generations get their names?



# How are generations defined?

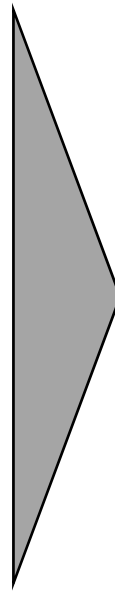
Image Credit: <http://hopes-and-dreams.net/img/US-history-timeline1950.jpg>

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# Who Decides What Boundaries to Use?

- Social scientists mostly. There are no hard and fast dates – mostly general agreed upon timeframes.

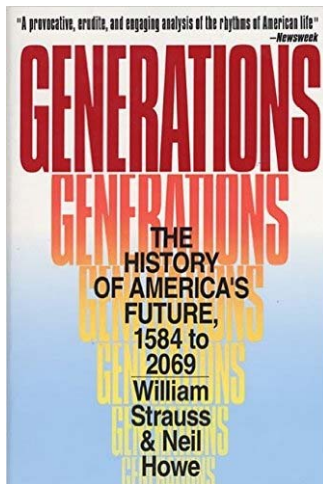
*The Atlantic*



# How Do Generations Get Their Names?

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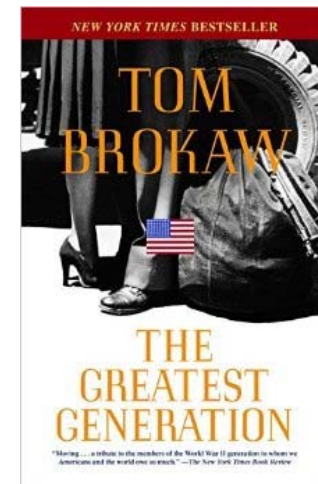
- Mostly the media. And popular culture.



Howe & Strauss  
1991

Pre-WWII Generation Names:

~~GI Generation~~  
Vs  
The Greatest Generation



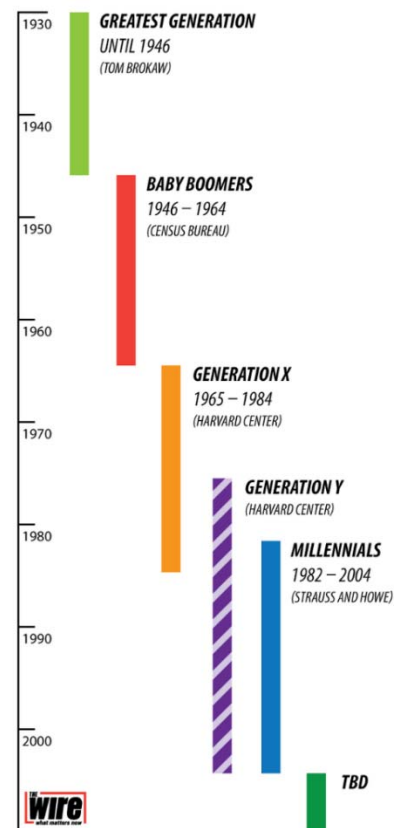
Brokaw  
1998



# Generations – At a Glance

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## GENERATION, BY BIRTH YEAR



<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/03/here-is-when-each-generation-begins-and-ends-according-to-facts/359589/>

# Generations – At a Glance

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	Approximate Birth Years	Composition of Labor Force
Greatest Generation	Prior to 1945	2%
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	29%
Generation X	1965-1980	34%
Millennials	1981-2000	35%

Source: The Pew Research Center

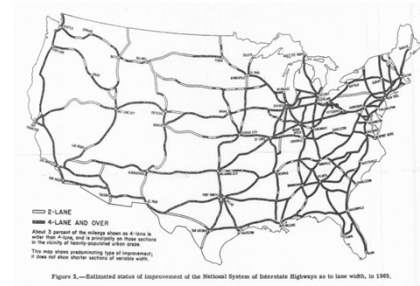
# Generations Overview Video

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnzzwpWV1Fw>

# Traditionalists/Greatest

- Experienced hard times while growing up which were followed by times of prosperity.
- Key Influences/Events
  - Great Depression
  - WWII
  - Post-War Economic Boom
  - Korean War
  - Rise of Corporations
- Family Experience: Traditional, Nuclear

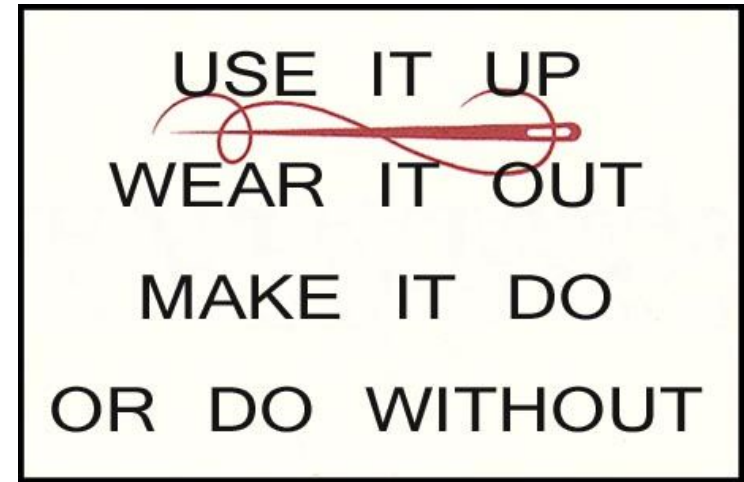


# Greatest Generation

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## ***Core Values & Attributes***

- Loyal
- Adhere to rules & conform
- Dedication & Sacrifice
- Delayed Reward
- Discipline & Hard Work
- Trust in Government
- Don't question authority
- Family Focus



# Greatest Generation

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## ***Attitudes toward Work***

- Dedicated
- Pay your dues
- Work hard
- Respect Authority
- Hard work
- Age=seniority
- Company first

## ***Work/Life Balance***

- Work hard to maintain job security

## ***Business Focus***

- Quality

# Greatest Generation

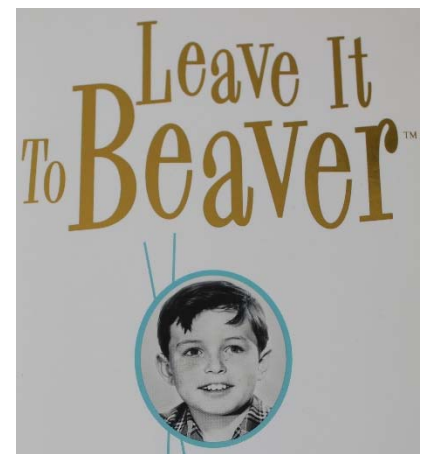
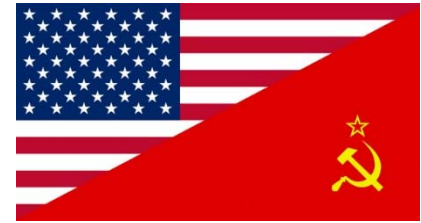
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Work Assets	Work Liabilities
Bring value to the workplace with their experience, knowledge	Don't adapt well to change
Consistent	Don't deal well w/ ambiguity
Disciplined	Hierarchical
Dependable	Typically take a top down approach modeled by the military chain of command
Detail Oriented	Avoid conflict, right or wrong
Hardworking	
Loyalty	
Stable	
Thorough	

# Baby Boomer

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- Grew up during times of relative prosperity. Developed a distrust of government.
- Key Influences/Events
  - Civil Rights Movement
  - Vietnam War
  - Sexual Revolution
  - Cold War/Russia
  - Space Travel
  - Suburbia
- Family Experience
  - “Cleaver Family”
  - Mom stayed home
  - Beginning to “Disintegrate”





# Baby Boomer

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## ***Core Values & Attributes***

- Anti-Establishment
- Challenge Authority
- Equal rights & Equal Opportunity
- Personal Gratification
- Question Everything
- Team Oriented
- Consensus Leadership
- Want to “make a difference”
- Live to work
- Loyal to careers and employers
- Strong work ethic

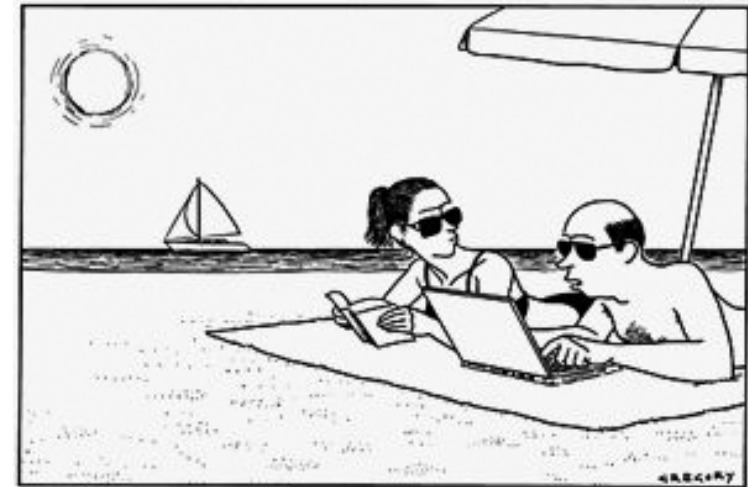


# Baby Boomer

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## ***Attitudes toward Work***

- Workaholic-60 hr work weeks
- Work long hours to establish self-worth, identity, and fulfillment
- Work ethic = Worth ethic
- Quality



*"I am not a workaholic. I just work to relax."*

## ***Work/Life Balance***

- Were hesitant of taking too much time off work for fear of losing their place on the corporate team. As a result, there is an imbalance between work and family.

## ***Business Focus***

- Long Hours

# Baby Boomer

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Work Assets	Work Liabilities
Anxious to please Challenges the status quo Good at seeing the big picture Good team players Mission oriented Politically Savvy-gifted in political correctness Service oriented Will go the extra mile Works hard	Expect everyone to be workaholics Dislike conflict Don't like change Challenge Authority of Greatest Generation Judgmental if disagree Not good with finances Peer loyalty "Process before results" Self-centered

# Generation X

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- First generation exposed to “modern” technology. Often left alone to own devices.
- Key Influences/Events
  - Watergate
  - Dual Income families and single parents
  - First Generation of Latchkey Kids
  - Y2K
  - Corporate Downsizing
  - End of Cold War & Fall of Berlin Wall
  - PC
- Family Experience
  - Latch-key kids
  - Women widely expected to work outside the home
  - The first “day care” generation



# Generation X

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## ***Core Values/Attributes***

- Independent & Self-Reliant
- Confident
- Balance
- Entrepreneurial
- Highly Educated
- Informality
- Lack of organizational loyalty
- Skepticism/Cynical
- Techno literacy
- Adaptable/Flexible

- Results driven
- Self-starters
- Unimpressed with Authority



Image Credit: Toledo Blade

# Generation X

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## ***Attitudes toward Work***

- Balance
- Work smarter and with greater output, not work longer hours.
- Eliminate the task
- Self-reliant
- Want structure & direction
- Skeptical



## ***Work/Life Balance***

- Because of parents who are Boomer workaholics, they focus on clearer balance between work and family. Do not worry about losing their place on the corporate team if they take time off.

## ***Business Focus***

- Productivity

# Generation X

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Work Assets	Work Liabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Adapt well to change</li><li>Consumer mentality</li><li>Direct communicators</li><li>Don't mind direction but resent intrusive supervision.</li><li>Eager to Learn, Very Determined</li><li>Good task managers</li><li>Good short term problem skills</li><li>Highly educated</li><li>Multitaskers</li><li>Not intimidated by authority</li><li>Thrive on flexibility</li><li>Technologically savvy</li><li>Value "information"</li><li>Want feedback</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Built "portable" resume</li><li>Cynical, skeptical</li><li>Dislike Authority</li><li>Dislike rigid work requirements</li><li>Impatient</li><li>No long term outlook</li><li>Respect Competence</li><li>Mistrusts Institutions</li><li>Rejects rules</li><li>Don't understand the optimism of Boomers and Gen Y</li></ul>

# Millennial

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- Electronics-filled and increasingly online and socially-networked world.
- The most ethnically diverse generation and tends to be tolerant of differences.
- “You are special.”



## ***Key Influences/Events***

- Digital Media
  - Coddled by Parents/child focused world
  - School Shootings
  - AIDS
  - 9/11 & terrorist attacks
  - Expanded technology
  - Natural disasters
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- ***Family Experience***
    - Helicopter Parents
    - Everybody gets a trophy





# Millennial

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## ***Core Values/Attributes***

- Avid consumers
- Civic Duty/Patriotic
- Diversity/Multiculturalism
- Fun! Now!
- High morals
- Highly tolerant
- Very competitive
- Like personal attention
- Self confident
- Most educated generation
- Extremely techno savvy
- Optimism
- Focus on change using technology
- Sociable -Makes workplace friends



# Millennial

## *Attitudes toward Work*

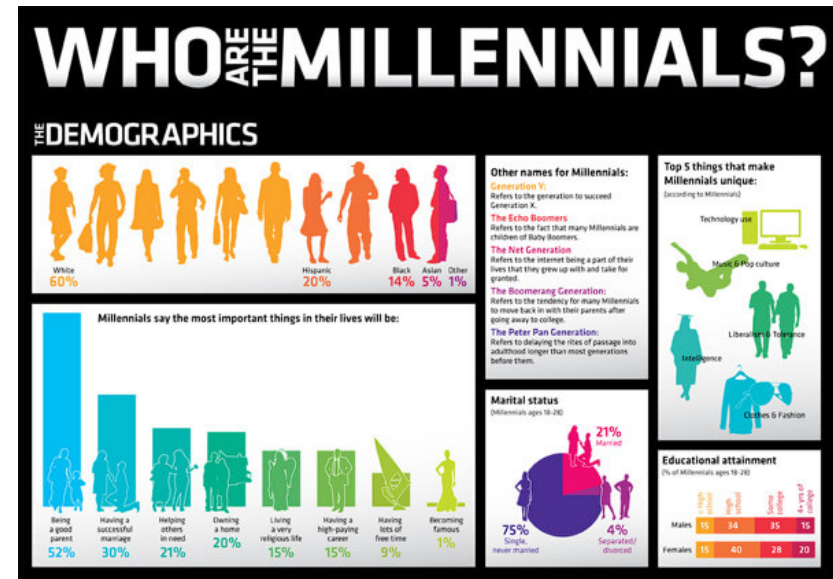
- Ambitious
- What's next?
- Multitasking
- Tenacity
- Entrepreneurial

## *Work/Life Balance*

- Not only balance with work and life, but balance with work, life, community involvement, and self development. Flex time, job sharing, and sabbaticals will be requested more by this generation.

## *Business Focus*

- Contribution



# Millennial

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Work Assets	Work Liabilities
Consumer mentality	Distaste for menial work
Collaboration	Inexperienced
Goal oriented	Need supervision
Highly educated	Need structure
Multitask Fast	Lack discipline; Impatient
Optimistic	High expectations
Positive attitude	Lack of skills for dealing with difficult people
Technical savvy	Respond poorly to those who act in an authoritarian manner
Tenacious	

# Generational Conflicts at Work

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	<b>BABY BOOM</b> 1946–1964	<b>GENERATION X</b> 1964–1980	<b>GENERATION Y/MILLENNIALS</b> 1980–2000
<b>BUSINESS ICON</b>	Bill Gates	Jeff Bezos	Mark Zuckerberg

Different generational cohorts come of age during different time periods.

<b>DEFINING MOMENTS</b>	Vietnam War Watergate	Fall of the Berlin Wall O. J. Simpson trial	September 11, 2001 Rise of social media
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Thus different social, economic, and cultural contexts.

<b>BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGY</b>	Fax machine	Personal computer	Smartphone
<b>WORKPLACE TRAITS</b>	Hardworking and goal oriented, comfortable in hierarchies	Crave work-life balance, skeptical of authority	Prefer flexible work structures, having direct input in projects

As a result, they end up with noticeably different values.

<b>CONTACT METHOD</b>	Call me	E-mail me	Hit me up on Facebook
<b>IT'S 9 P.M. I'M...</b>	...in the office	...home with the family	...out with friends but checking e-mail

These values then clash in the way we do work, and we end up getting angry and blaming, rather than just working it out.

In other words, we have conflict. And that is not unique to any specific generation.



Image credit: <http://decisiontreemediation.com/files/bigstock-Two-angry-business-colleagues-48986036.jpg>

# Boomers

vs.

# Gen X

Baby Boomers are loyal to a fault and have a strong belief in the group or the collective. They like teamwork.

Gen Xers were largely left along growing up. They tend to prefer independent work.

When Baby Boomers want to get involved, Gen Xers feel micromanaged.

They react negatively and the Boomers feel they are not “team players.”

And conflict ensues.

# Gen X

vs.

# Millennials

Millennials have grown up in “child-centric” environments. They are also used to being “connected” at all times.

Gen Xers (who are managing Millennials) do not see the need for extra attention and constant updates.

But the Millennials crave the ability to work with groups and to connect more with those up in the hierarchy.

And conflict ensues.



# Boomers

vs.

# Millennials

Boomers spend most of their career with one employer. Work hard and get recognized through promotion and pay raises.

Millennials will have multiple employers in their career. They want access to higher-ups early in their career to help that.

Boomers don't believe they have earned the attention of company leaders.  
"They haven't been here long enough."

But Millennials just want to learn and contribute to things they see as meaningful.

And conflict ensues.

# Benefits of Generational Diversity

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# Benefits of Diversity

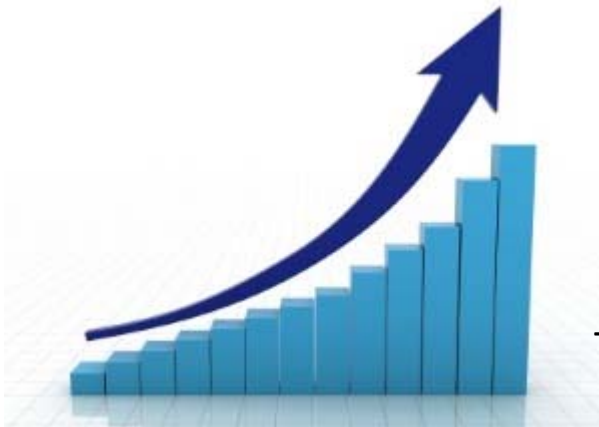
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Drive Innovation  
& Creativity  
- HBR, 2013



Solve Complex  
Problems  
- UMich, 2004



Perform Better  
Financially  
- McKinsey, 2012

# Become an Employer of Choice

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**2/3** PEOPLE CONSIDER  
DIVERSITY IMPORTANT  
WHEN DECIDING  
WHERE TO WORK



- 2014 Survey

Retention of people of all ages and experience levels has its advantages.

I want the best talent. Period. I don't care how old they are.

People generally want to work with good people. Candidates will come.

# Younger Workers Gain Professionally

Diverse workforces contain many different types of people.



Interaction with those that are different provides learning that isn't always possible outside of work.

Less experienced employees learn by example and gain a strong foundation – lifting their future ceiling as contributors.

Diversity Journal, 2012. Image credit: [http://www.3r-strategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/services\\_job\\_leveling.jpg](http://www.3r-strategy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/services_job_leveling.jpg)

# Each Generation Learns From the Others

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Generation X and the Millennials benefit from the Boomers' hardworking values, professional experience, and institutional knowledge.

Generation X's value of a balanced life benefits Baby Boomers, who may work too much. Their realistic approach to work benefits the Millennials, whose tenacious, goal-oriented approach to work can sometimes result in misplaced effort.

Millennials are early adopters of technology and have influenced Baby Boomers and Generation X to follow suit, allowing companies to stay competitive while leaning in more on technology to help streamline and systemize our work.

# Each Generation Learns From the Others

	Boomers	Gen X	Millennial
Hardworking Values	✓	x	x
Professional Experience	✓	x	x
Institutional Knowledge	✓	x	x
Balanced Life	x	✓	x
Realistic Approaches toward Work		✓	x
Technology-Orientation	x		✓

Diversity Journal, 2012



# Engaging the Different Generations

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# Engaging the Boomers

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- ☐ Want to be viewed as mentors
- ☐ Value their experience
- ☐ Ask; don't tell
- ☐ Give credit for achievements

# Engaging Generation X

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- ☐ Like freedom and autonomy
- ☐ Believes few rules & flexibility = creativity
- ☐ Work/Life Balance
- ☐ Don't micromanage, but do give feedback

# Engaging Millennials

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- ☐ Long hours  $\neq$  Productivity
- ☐ Work because they enjoy social interaction
- ☐ Expects performance rewards, pay increases, bonuses, and advancement opportunities
- ☐ Collaborative Supervisors
- ☐ Don't treat like children, but do give them mentors and training

# Questions

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# Thank you

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Natalie Stubblefield

Plante Moran

Natalie.stubblefield@plantemoran.com