

# **Generational Difference in Hiring, Managing and Retaining Boomer, Gen X and Gen Why Employees**

2009 NHRMA Conference

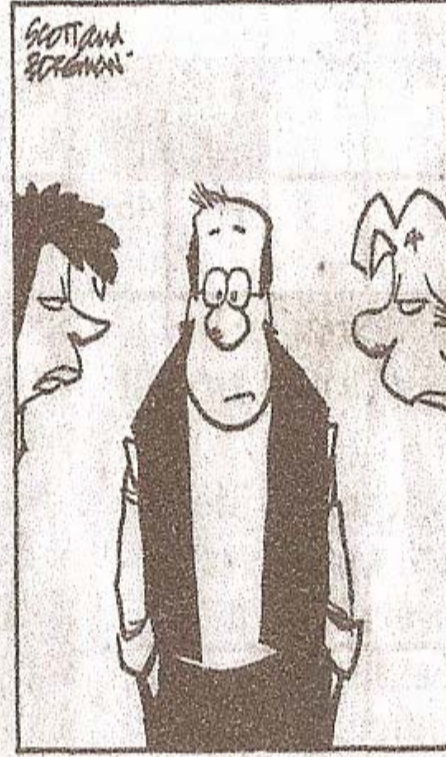
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# Perceived Characteristics of Each of the Generations

**Traditional**

**Boomer**

**Gen X**

**Gen Why**

# SHRM Generational Survey

The survey in the presentation materials should require approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey assesses your perception of the generational differences of the employees in your organization or individuals in society.

# Workplace Generations

<u>Generation</u>	<u>Birth Years</u>	<u>Ages</u>
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Traditional	1925 - 1945	64 - 84
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Boom	1946 - 1964	45 - 63
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GenX	1965 - 1984	25 - 44
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Gen Why	1985 - 2000	09 - 24
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- (G.I. Generation 1901-1924, minimum age 85)
- Note: By 2015 one-third of the workforce will be 55 or older

# Demographic Note

Workforce is primarily aged 18 to 62

(Exceptions occur at both ends: 0 - 17 and 63 – 100+)

## Workforce Composition

Traditional: Age 64 – 104 (8% of Workforce)

Boomer: Age 45 – 63 (52% of workforce)

Gen Xer: Age 25 – 44 (34% of workforce)

Gen Why: Age 9 – 24 (6% of workforce)

Given this composition the diversity issues are primarily between the “stereotypical” Boomer and GenXer with Gen Why just entering the scene and the Traditionals actively departing

# Generational Issues

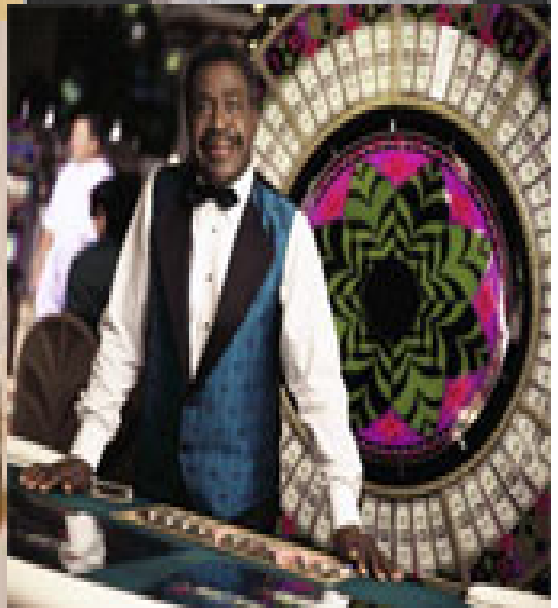
Cultural / societal changes

Educational level / experience

"Acceptable" language

"Age" vs. "youth"

Technology as a "weapon"



# Traditional

## Values

Loyalty

Hard work

Conformity

Adherence to Rules

Patience

Integrity

## Style

Polite – dutiful listener

Reluctant to volunteer

Dislike “games/role playing”

Individual contributor

Pride in accomplishment

## Seminal Events

1929 – Stock Market Crash

1930 – Great Depression

1935 – Social Security Enacted

1941 – Attack on Pearl Harbor

# Traditional Motivators

Recognition of experience

Reinforcing value of contribution

Inclusion in decision making

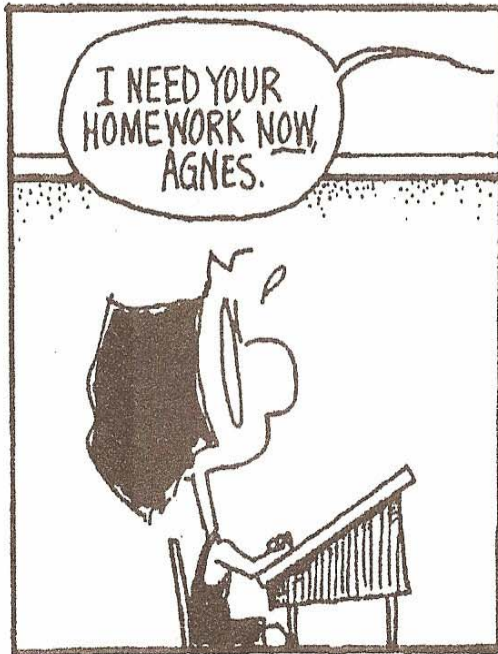
Recognition as barer of "tribal  
knowledge"

Job security

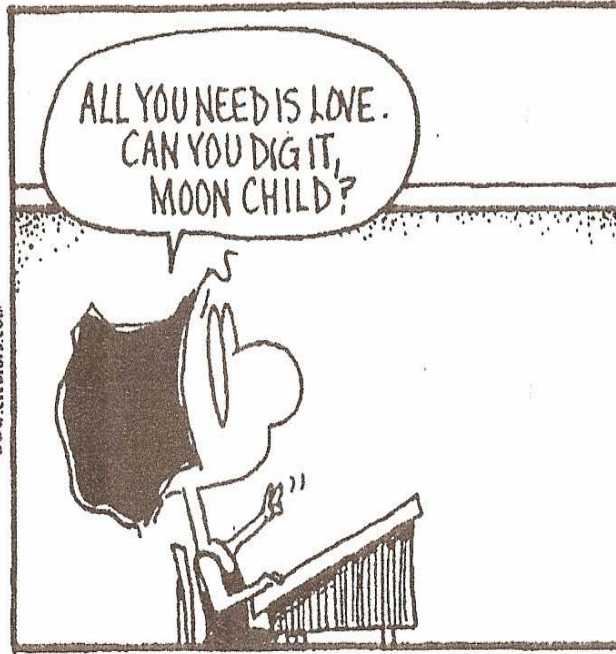
Medical benefits and pension programs



# AGNES



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# Boomer

## Values

Optimism  
Career view  
Team Orientation  
Personal  
Gratification  
Growth  
Youthfulness

## Style

Politically aware  
"Go-along-to-get-along"  
Provide "safe" answers  
Appearance counts  
Accept consensus rather  
than disagree

## Seminal Events

1960 – "The Pill"  
1963 – JFK Assassination  
1965 – Combat Troops to Vietnam  
1966 – NOW  
1969 - Woodstock

# Boomer Motivators

New experiences and adventures

Self indulgent items and activities

- Merchandise discounts
- Laptop, PDA

Paid Time Off

Flexible work schedules

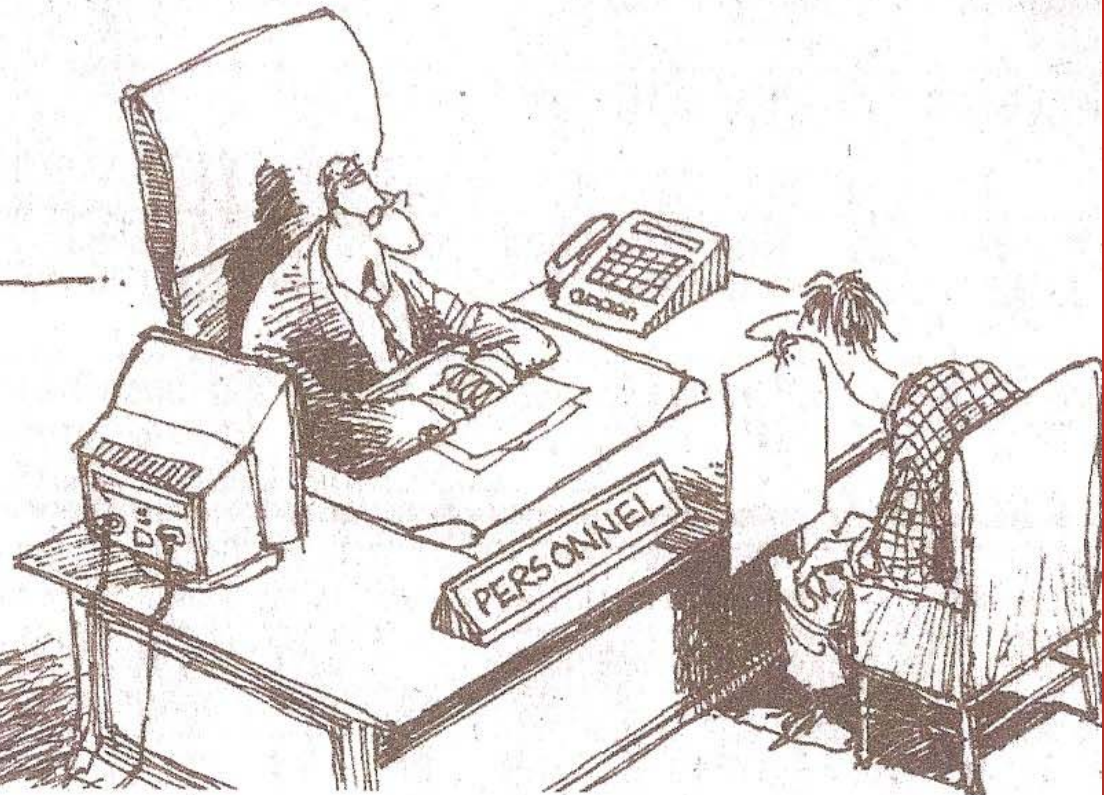
Work – life balance

Public recognition for outside activities



THERE'S NO  
NEED TO DETACH  
THE JOB  
APPLICATION  
FROM YOUR  
NOSE RING.

I CAN REJECT  
IT FROM HERE



# GenX

## Values

Self-reliance  
"Job" orientation  
Informality  
Pragmatism  
Techno-literacy  
Diversity  
Global Perspective

## Style

Abhor lecturing  
Impatient learning/promotion  
"WIIFM"  
Exercises, activities, games  
Prefer experiential learning  
"My solution is correct and best"

## Seminal Events

1973 – Watergate  
1976 – Tandy and Apple PCs  
1979 – Three Mile Island  
1986 – Challenger Disaster  
1989 – Exxon Valdez

# GenX Motivators

Meaningful assignments

PTO for volunteer service

Explaining context/contribution of job

Discretion completing assignments

Direct cash rewards for individual initiative

Listen, do not lecture

Make work "fun"

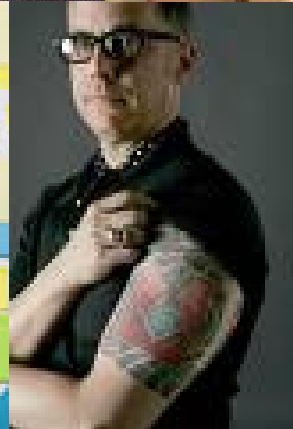
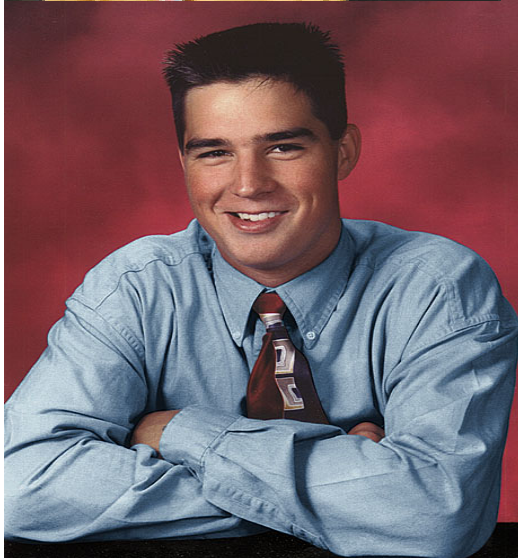
Latest and greatest PC or software

# Generalized View of GenXers

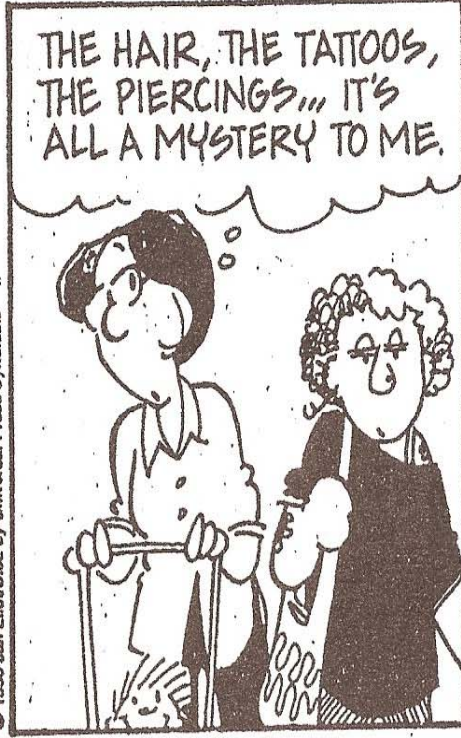
"The press has dubbed the young adults as the "Doofus Generation", the New Lost, the Grungers, New Petulants, Boomerang, Generation P (poor and pissed-off), the Scarce, the Busters, 13ers and the title which stuck Generation X or GenXers."

# Quotes Referring to GenXers

*Atlantic Monthly* called GenXers the "reckless bicycle messengers, hustlers and McJobbers in the low wage/low benefit service economy."



# STONE SOUP



# Gen Why

## Values

Optimism  
Diversity  
Confidence  
Sociability  
Morality  
Civic Duty

## Style

Multi-tasking  
Work should be "fun"  
Learn by "playing"  
Lectures are "tuned-out"  
Short attention span  
"Virtual" as "Reality"

## Seminal Events

Oklahoma City Bombing  
School Shootings  
Suicide Boomers  
World Trade Center  
WWW, IM, E-mail, Twitter, Face  
Book, My Space

# Gen Why Motivators

Personal attention, immediate feedback

Listen, do not lecture

Cash awards for individual/team

PTO for volunteer activities

Allow variance from routine

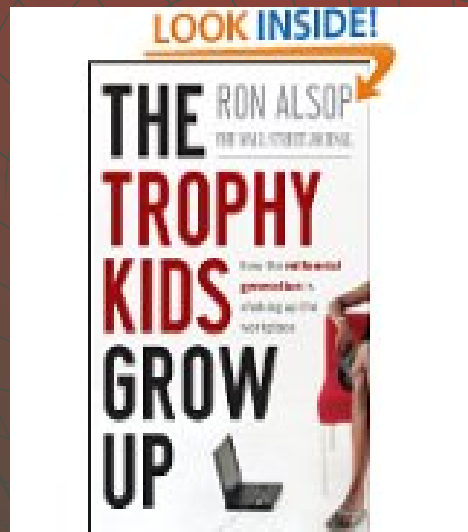
Flexible work schedules

New assignments / responsibilities

Latest and greatest PC and software

Most Gen Why material deals with university graduates and does not address the issue of high school graduates or drop-outs.

Unfortunately these groups possess most of the annoying and very few of the positive attributes of the university educated group.



# GenWhy: Got a Nanosecond

“The attention span of a sparrow (ferret, gnat, whatever). GenWhys’ mental focus shifts on average once every three minutes and costs businesses an estimated \$650 billion annually in lost productivity.”

# Managers of Generation Why

"They have such high expectations."

"They walk in with seventeen things they want to change about the company."

"If you don't supervise them closely, they go off in their own direction."

"It's very hard to give them negative feedback without crushing their morale."

"They walk in thinking they know more than they know."

# Managers of Generation Why

"They think everybody is going to get a trophy in the real world, just like they did growing up."

"Their parents are outrageous, calling me to complain about their child's workload, recognition, lack of promotion, etc."

This content is from NOT EVERYONE GETS A TROPHY: HOW TO MANAGE GENERATION Y by Bruce Tulgan.

# GenYers say:

"My boss keeps telling me, 'This is where you are going to be in five years.' I'm dying to tell him, 'I hate to tell you pal, but you don't know where you're going to be in five years.'"

"I know they think they are masters of the universe, but, gee, the Soviet Union disappeared overnight. So could they."

# GenYers say:

"My boss thinks I have a bad attitude. I don't know why he thinks I have a bad attitude! I told him I'll work alongside him on any project until he drops from exhaustion

"They keep telling me, 'This is what you get in five years, ten years, twenty years.' I feel like—what's that expression—they are trying to sell me a bridge."

# Performance Reviews

Silent – “No news is good news.”

Boomer – “Annual feedback, with lots of documentation.”

GenX – “Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?”

Gen Why – “Feedback whenever I want it with the push of a button.”

# Generational Recognition

## Silent

Orchid File: thank you notes, annual increase

## Boom

"They" Love Me Wall – certificates, plaques

## GenX

Nothing personal – Dilbert Cartoons – ridicule management

## Gen Why

Personal recognition, everyone gets a trophy

# Generational Differences – Work Perspective

**Boomers** – respect the aging of boomers, assign tasks which allow transfer of “tribal knowledge” to GenXers, accept the “live to work v. work to live” dichotomy between Boomers and GenXers.

**GenX and Gen Why** – assign short term projects, allow scheduling flexibility, respect the “life-work” approach of GenXers.

# Generational Differences– Communications

**Boomers** – deliver performance reviews with respect and tact, provide clear, accurate and concise back-up for past performance and clear future goals.

**GenX and Gen Why** – appreciate timely feedback, accept negative comments better than Boomers, straightforward and factual review is most effective.

# Generational Differences – Authority

**Boomers** – performance is significantly influenced by both formal and informal recognition from superiors, lunch with the CEO has more impact on performance than a salary increase.

**GenX and Gen Why** – performance is influenced by internal motivation and peer approval, do not readily respond to CEO “strokes”, resent “false praise”.

# Generational Differences – Approval

**Boomers** – productivity increases when Boomers are included in meetings and discussions or publicly recognized for contributions or performance.

**GenX and Gen Why** – are generally indifferent to others comments, increases in salary, a bonus, flexible hours, or new computer hardware or software is valued more than oral or written "praise".

# Generational Differences – Policies and Procedures

**Boomers** – productivity can be improved by providing clear, concise and accurate policies and procedures. SOPs, ISO documentation, etc will result in Boomer productivity improvements.

**GenX and Gen Why** – productivity can be improved by limiting the number and types of SOPs, directives, etc. GenXer are more productive when allowed to “manage-the-problem” with initiative.

# Generational Differences – Reliance

**Boomers** – productivity is likely to improve for Boomers operating in a team environment, possibly due to “risk avoidance” or “shared blame”.

**GenX and Gen Why** – most productive when allowed to address issues individually, but close control is needed to prevent pursuit of tangential or unwanted outcomes.

# Generational Differences – Work Ethic

**Boomers** – measure productivity in terms of time invested rather than outputs and outcomes. Productivity can be increased by carefully defining outcomes and monitoring the process.

**GenX and Gen Why** – are productive within the limits of their personal goals, work hard during “work-day” but do not willingly work overtime, weekends, or take work home.

# Generational Differences – Entitlement

**Boomers** – productivity is likely to decrease if the compensation / bonus system is based strictly on outputs and outcomes. View past achievement as validation for present or future entitlements.

**GenX and Gen Why** – productivity increases when rewards are based strictly on outputs and outcomes. Productivity is viewed as a measure of worth.



**Comments**

**Discussion**

**Questions**

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