

Issues In The Workplace Can Have Us Asking WHY...

...or is that Y?

Have you ever wondered why people cannot simply get on with their jobs and put a stop to their seemingly school yard antics! Personality traits, cultural differences and gender differences can at times create misunderstandings and conflicts which can in turn have a dramatic impact on organisational morale and productivity. In work environments where we need to be ever mindful of any behaviour that may constitute bullying, harassment or racial vilification, managers need to be vigil and proactive in the handling of these matters.

Over the last ten years there has been considerable talk about the Gen X and Gen Y and various impacts within workplaces. Just when I thought I had mastered managing the difference in personality types, along comes news on the generational differences and how this can impact on the workplace.

Research on this subject is not necessarily easy so I thought this may be helpful for those of you that manage teams. Let's first look at the generation categories and age ranges.

Australia's Generation – The Definitive Classification

Description	Born	Age	Pop'n (mill)	% of Pop'n
Builders (Veterans)	Before 1946	63+	3.5m	17%
Boomers	1946 – 1964	45-62	5.3m	26%
Gen X	1965 – 1979	30 – 44	4.4m	21.5%
Gen Y	1980 – 1994	15 – 29	4.2m	20.5%
Gen Z	1995 – 2009	Under 15	3.1m+	15%

ABS Population Pyramid 2006 & McCrindle Research Study 2006 NOTE: Age ranges have been adapted to reflect ages as at 2009 and Pop number % have not been adjusted.

Whilst far from an expert on this matter myself, I observe many of the stated characteristics within my own family members and even within our work teams.

	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y
Values at work:	Work Ethic Industry Focus	Achievement Company-centric	Ownership Individuality
Motivations for work:	Financial security Responsibility	Career progression Opportunity	Job variety Creativity
Influences over career choices:	Parents Authorities	Career Advisors Experts	Internet Peer Groups
Shapers of career perception & views:	Tradition Reputation	Observation Recommendation	Perception Experience
Key Communication Tools:	Technical data Evidence	Visual examples Demonstration	Hands-on learning Participation
Influencers and Values:	Local Long-term needs	Regional Medium-term goals	Global Short-term wants
Management Approach	Telling "Yes boss"	Selling "What's in it for me"	Involving "Here's what I think"

McCrindle researched thousands of Australian Gen Y workers and identified the top five workplace needs as:

1. **Work/Life Balance.** Their job matters however it is not their life!
2. **Workplace Culture.** Social connection with peers identified as one of the top retention factors.
3. **Varied Job Role.** They like change – it’s all they have ever known.
4. **Management Style.** Lead by example and involvement and not just by command and control.
5. **Training.** They know in the 21st century it is essential to keep their skills up to date!

SOME INTERESTING FACTS:

	Baby Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y
Iconic Technology	TV 1956 Audio Cassette 1962 Colour TV 1975	VCR 1976 Walkman 1979	Internet, Email, SMS DVD 1995 Play Station / X Box
Social Markers/ Landmark Events	Melbourne Olympics '56 Decimal currency 1966 Moon Walk 1969 Vietnam War 1965-1973 Cyclone Tracey 1974	Challenger explosion '86 Haley's Comet '86 Stock Market crash '87 Fall of the Berlin Wall '89 Newcastle earthquake '89	Port Arthur Masacre '96 New Millennium 2000 Sydney Olympics 2000 September 11, 2001 Bali Bombing 2002
Music	Elvis, Beatles, Rolling Stones	INXS, Nirvana, Madonna	Eminem, Brittany Spears, Puff Daddy
Popular Culture	Flared Jeans, Mini Skirts, Barbie, Frisbee	Rollerblades, Hyper colour, torn jeans.	Body piercing, baseball caps, men's cosmetics

Whilst Generational changes cannot be denied it is somewhat simplistic and outright dangerous to put people into rigid categories. Change has become constant, technology appears to advance faster than the speed of light, and if we think Gen Y's are wizards with technology just wait till the Gen Z's appear in the workplace. Regardless of generational changes; attracting, recruiting, retaining and training will always play an important role in engaging a productive workforce.

If you would like to receive further information on this topic please contact Pam Dew

t: (03) 9864 6000 e: pdew@bridgeconsulting.com.au



www.bridgeconsulting.com.au