Generations In The Workplace

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service
Commissioner, Joe Trejo
Commissioner, Joe Wilson

Discussion Questions

1. What is one major event that occurred while you were growing up?

2. What is one memorable symbol from your formative years? It could be a TV program, movie, song, toy, slogan, etc.

3. What do you find frustrating about the other generations in the workplace?

4. What do you appreciate about the other generations in the workplace?

5. In what ways can we better handle generational conflict in our workplace?

Introductory Comments

- The characteristics that we will discuss are not intended to create, identify, or confirm stereotypes

- Generational influences are only one part of the tapestry of culture and diversity; every individual is unique

- While various generational studies may use different dates, the categories/characteristics are the same

- Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers; the key is understanding and acceptance

Why Look at Generations in the Workplace?

- To gain a better understanding of ourselves and others and how different values and expectations contribute to how we view the workplace

- Understanding is the first step toward acceptance - of ourselves and others

- Understanding and acceptance open us up to meaningful communication and a willingness to resolve conflict

- The result is to promote better working relationships and increase organizational effectiveness

Generations Defined

For our discussion:

A group of people born at about the same time and raised at about the same place. Generations are not a box everyone fits neatly inside based on a birth year, but rather powerful clues on where to connect better with, influence, and manage people of different ages.

It's a First!

For the first time in history, five generations work side-by-side in the workplace.

Workplace Trends

- Incentives other than salary
- Different concepts of career and success
- Global economy and potential outsourcing
- Virtual workplace and technological revolution, Return of the retired worker
- The once linear nature of power at work, from older to younger, has been dislocated by changes in health, wellness and life expectancy, lifestyle, technology, and knowledge base.
- Decline in unionized workforce
- Greatest diversity of the workforce in any country
- Age discrimination complaints are on the rise (up 14-25%, 7 year high), due to more older employees in the workplace (baby boomers and traditionalists).

Generational Groups

- **Traditionalists** (Pre-1946)
- **Baby Boomers** (1946-1964)
- **Generation X** (1965-1976)
- **Millennial - Gen-Y** (1977-1995)
- **iGen - Gen-Z** (1996-Present)

Note: Individuals may be a "**Cusper**" - born between two generations and either identifying strongly with one generation or sharing characteristics with both

Information From: The Center for Generational Kinetics

Consider, That Each Generation…

Has its own personality formed by:

- Economy
- Heroes
- Music
- Movies and TV
- Current Events
- Politics
- Business and Management style

Differs based on various factors:

- Social, political and economic
- Family structure
- Education
- Values
- Work ethic
- Communication style
- Motivational buttons
- How they interact with others

- Preferred approach to feedback
- View toward the organization
- Work v. personal life
- Desired rewards
- Financial behaviors
- Relationship with technology
- Expectations
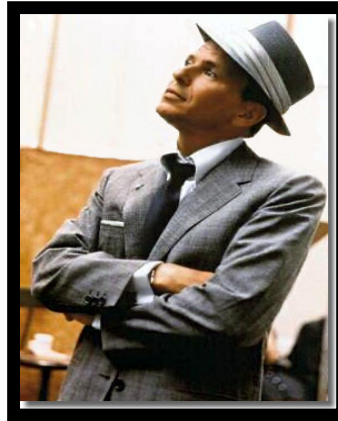
The Greatest Generation …

Traditionalists (Pre – 1946)

Influences:

- Great Depression
- The New Deal
- World War II
- The GI Bill
- The Cold War
- Korean War
- Pearl Harbor

Traits:

- Duty/Sacrifice
- Patriotic
- Respect authority
- Thriftiness
- Loyal
- Strong job loyalty
- Recognition is not expected but appreciated
- Dedicated to both work and family

Defining Moments

- The Great Depression
  - Extended period of time
  - They are savers
  - Clip coupons
  - Don't waste (leftovers)
- Wars
  - WWII
  - Pearl Harbor
 - D-Day
  - Atomic Weapons

Managing Across Generations: Traditionalists

- Traditionalist have more work and life experience than any other generation.

- Traditionalist military connection often make them more comfortable fitting in rather than standing out.

- Traditionalist grew up during the great depression and its not hard to see why they are comfortable with delayed gratification.

- Traditionalist prefer formal communication, especially in the workplace. The more formal you make your communication with them, the more they see they can trust you, believe you and respect you. They prefer one-on-one communication and not a group setting. They find this to be safer and more respectful.
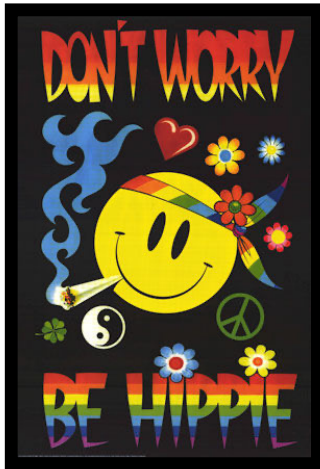
The last innocent or "Me" generation…

Boomers (1946 – 1964)

Influences:

- Assassinations (John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King)
- Vietnam War
- Watergate
- Civil Rights Movement
- Woodstock
- Neil Armstrong
- Roe vs Wade

Traits:

- Competitive
- Question authority
- Long hours-gets rewards
- Not as much loyalty
- Hard time balancing work & life issues
- Individuality
- Experience brings reward

Managing Across Generations: Baby Boomers

- Baby Boomers are the workaholics of the modern age.

- They arrive at work early, stay late, work weekends and expect everyone else (except their Gen Y Kids) to do the same.

- Boomers measure work ethic in hours per week. Those hours don't count unless they can see you.

- Let them lead a team. Give them leadership roles on teams and they will rise to the challenge.

Managing Across Generations: Baby Boomers

- When you give Boomers rules and boundaries, you create expectations and accountabilities that allow Boomers to lead and thrive because they know what everyone else is bringing to the table.

- Boomers are competitive and achievement driven. Create ways for them to win and be recognized as winners for their contributions they have made to your organization. Giving them a plaque or some other recognition for top performance for hard work that month.

- Boomers are not going to rush out of the workforce this year or next year. Keeping them excited about their work benefits you and your company because they have tremendous experience that helps every generation.

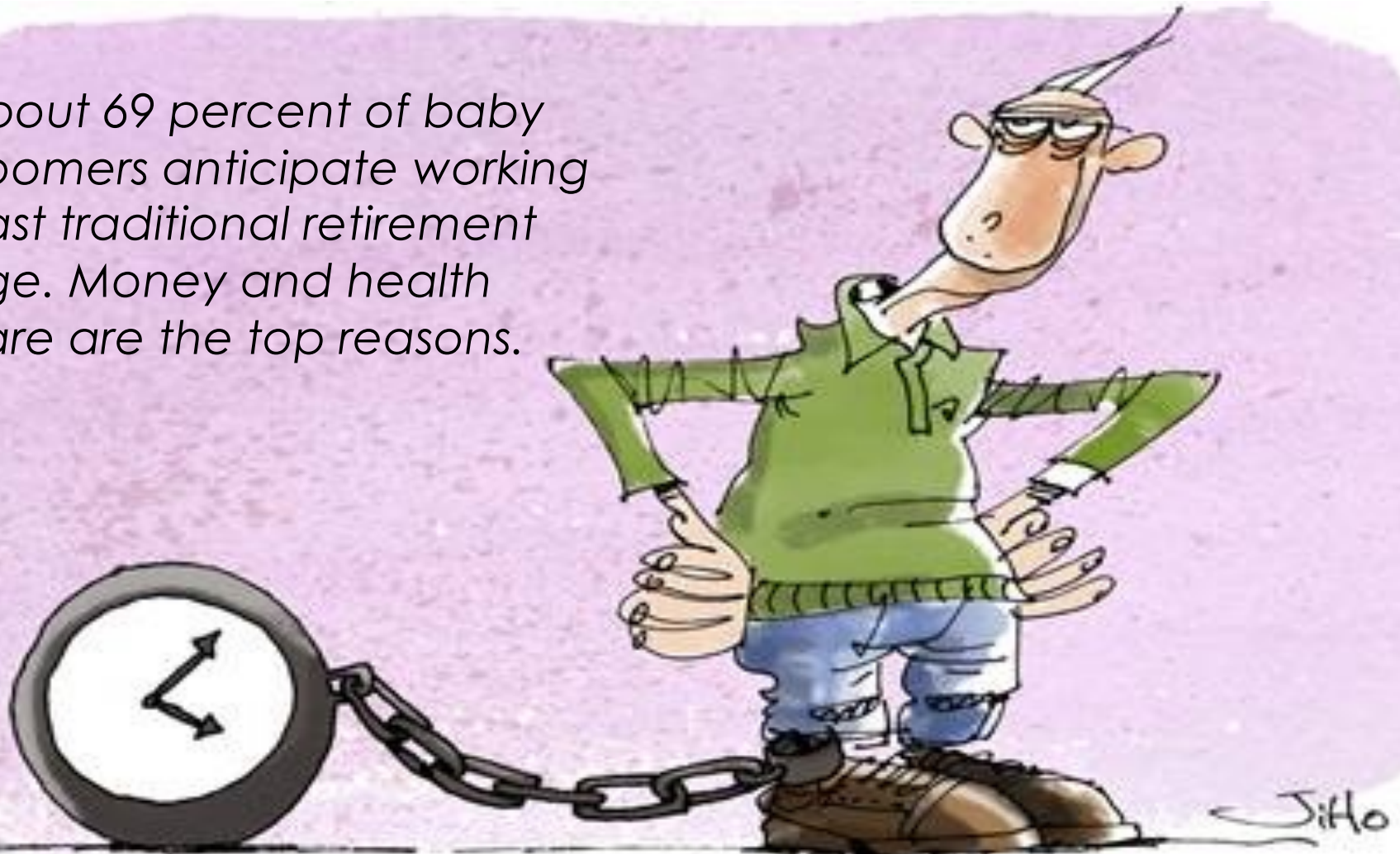- They prefer one on one communication or phone conversations.

Boomers

About 69 percent of baby boomers anticipate working past traditional retirement age. Money and health care are the top reasons.

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Gen Xers (1965 – 1976)

Influences:
- MTV
- High Divorce Rate
- Single Parent Home
- Personal Computer
- AIDS
- Hostages
- Latch Key Kids
- Wall Street Frenzy

Traits:
- Resourceful
- Highly Adaptive
- Distrustful of Institutions
- Self-Reliant
- Personal Focus
- Skeptical/Cynical
- Focus is to be on top
- Want autonomy
- More praise and rewards
- Follow leadership by competence

Managing Across Generations: Gen X

- Did you know the most stress between generations in the workforce is not youngest to oldest, but Generation X to Gen Y?

- Gen X has been waiting and waiting for Baby Boomers to retire so they move up in the organization.

- Gen Y comes in with a sense of entitlement and a desire to get promoted immediately.

- Leaders & Managers need to understand Gen X's experience and perspective.

- They prefer phone conversations or email.

Millennial –Y- (1977 – 1995)

Influences:
- Fall of Communism
- Internet Boom
- Desert Storm/Fox
- Video Games
- Domestic Terrorism
- Columbine
- Credit Card Debt
- September 11th

Traits:
- Globally Concerned
- Technologically supreme
- Environmentally Conscious
- Believes less is more
- Realistic
- Politically aware-register to vote in large numbers
- Quality time with family
- Racially inclusive

Managing Across Generations: Gen Y

- Gen Y is the fastest growing generation in the workforce today and will be for years to come.

- Gen Y likely had their first job three to five years later than you.

- The result is they might be 24 with a fancy degree but have little real- world experience. They can make an awesome PowerPoint but might not be able to actually sit through a meeting. They might need some help from you developing their skills in some areas at an age you think they should already know.

- Gen Y's sense of entitlement really just equates to them having big expectations.

Managing Across Generations: Gen Y

- Motivate Gen Y and boost their performance at work by highlighting the outcomes they are creating for your business. As an outcome driven generation, they long to feel a sense of accomplishment and completion of their work.

- Gen Y may be used to getting a trophy for simply making an effort, instead of handing out trinkets and trophies, give them what they really want: quick-hit feedback. This feedback should be less than a minute total, provide insight, education or advice.

- This feedback may not happen because previous generations were taught that if your boss is talking to you then you did something wrong. It is the opposite for Gen Y. If your boss is not talking to you then you are doing something wrong.

- They prefer email or text messaging.

Gen Z - iGeneration "I" / "Alpha"
Born 1996 +

Gen – Z – iGeneration
(1996 – Present)

Influences:

- Global economic crisis
- Global Technology
  - Wearable devices
  - Cloud usage for storage and computing
- African American President

Traits:

- Motivated by incentive
- Stressful economics times
- College unaffordable by many
- Team dynamics
- Dependent on technology

Think About This……..

"Parents often talk about the younger generation as if they didn't have anything to do with it"

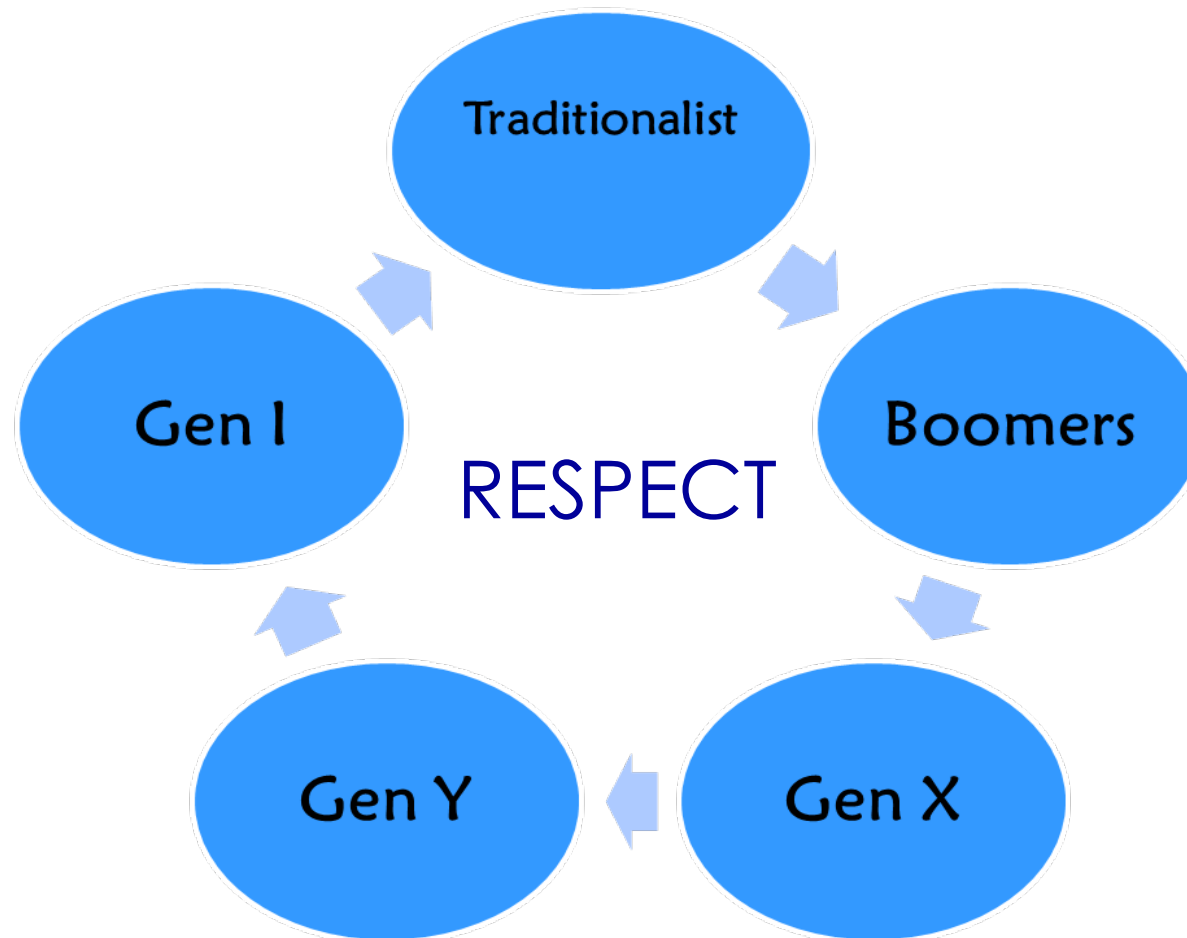–Haim Ginott, child psychologist (1922-1973)

When it's All Said and Done,
All the Generations Share a Common Interest:

Traditionalist

Boomers

Gen X

Gen Y

Gen I

RESPECT

Questions?

Commissioner Joe Trejo
614205-3758
jtrejo@fmcs.gov

Commissioner Joe Wilson
513-684-2952
jwilson@fmcs.gov

Thank You!