

MOTIVATING YOUR GENERATION X AND Y TEAM MEMBERS!

By Lissa Eilers Johnsen, CMC, CITP.CPA

To become a more successful manager, a stronger team leader, and a motivator who gets the best results from your group, you have to come to grips with the fact that your team is, or someday will be made up of a variety of generations. Economic status, demographics, political views and adaptability to technology advancements are all potential points of difference between older and younger generations. An additional challenge is that often people in leadership positions are of a different generation than the individuals they supervise. These leaders need to take the time to better understand the generational differences in their business or practice, to effectively manage their diverse group of employees.

Each generation has different characteristics, behavioral traits, and value systems. The table below and other content in the article, was adapted with permission from ConvergenceCoaching, LLC, who has done extensive research on generational differences. Although this table serves the general purpose of differentiating the generations, people can't necessarily be categorized solely based on the year they were born; instead, their behaviors and values will identify them with a particular generation.

Silent Generation Born 1925-1942	Baby Boomer Born 1943-1964	Generation X Born 1965-1981	Generation Y Born 1982-2000
"Mature" or "Peacemaker Generation"	The label "Baby Boomer" is pervasive	"MTV Generation" – although they aren't fond of labels!	"Echo Boomer" or "Millennium Generation"
Least studied, least understood generation	Shaped the youth culture of the 1960's and 1970's	Most educated generation	Very techno-literate, Internet is innate, most ethnically diverse
Are firm leaders, empty nesters with decent incomes and growing amounts of leisure time	Primary leaders, looking toward retirement	Senior staff and middle management	The workforce of tomorrow
First generation of women to move into the workforce at significant rates	Are willing to work long hours and leave children home alone more frequently	Raised by "wolves" – absentee parents. Committed not to be that for their families, so balancing the demands of their jobs and personal lives is non-negotiable	Expect to change jobs frequently
Have strong human relations skills, are still very involved in cultural and societal issues, despite their age	Value creativity, love adventure, are risk takers, independent, tend to be more permissive	Eschew politics, may be cynical, sensitive to hype and insincerity, connect through music, independent, self-reliant, value teamwork, close network of friends, flexibility is important, not intimidated by authority, enjoy problem-solving	Easily bored, respect must be earned vs. title-based, goal oriented, team players, strong sense of fairness and ethics, respond to humor and the straight truth

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Remember these age groupings are just a general guideline, but some people will have characteristics from multiple generational groups. There are other outside influences that affect a person other than their age, but the table below is a general age guideline. For example, I was born in 1964 (yes....I turned 40 this year) which makes me a Baby Boomer if I used the table below. However, I have many characteristics of both Baby Boomer and Generation X – I am a true blend.

Silent Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Age Range 62 to 79	Age Range 40 to 61	Age Range 23 to 39	Age Range 4 to 22
Approx. 30 million in group	Approx. 76 million in group	Approx. 41 million in group	Approx. 60-70 million

So what do these generational characteristics mean to you as a leader in your firm or company? Creating an appeal to the different generations and then making the appropriate organizational changes to address the needs of your generation X & Y team members is a necessity if your goal is to maximize employee productivity, retention, and the success of your organization.

When considering how to motivate generation X & Y staff, keep in mind that, according to the **Journal of Career Planning and Employment**, what matters most to your Generation X and Y team members is:

- Being respected
- Receiving straight talk;
- Fair pay;
- Doing interesting work;
- Feeling their job is important, including documented roles and responsibilities;
- Opportunity for self-development and improvement; and
- A large amount of freedom and flexibility on the job.

In addition, they will respond best when you:

- Set their expectations up front and give them the big picture on your firm's mission, vision, values, and their role in meeting your firm's goals;
- Clearly define their roles and responsibilities in writing;
- Directly interact with them regardless of your reporting structure;
- Model the behaviors you expect from them – they will only respect you if you do what you ask them to do;
- Performance manage them with "straight talk" – sharing the good and bad with them;
- Speak their language where possible, meaning that you take the time to understand the phrases and words that they use when speaking to one another; and

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- Have a sense of humor in your communications one-on-one and in group meetings. Take the time to have fun!

Now, you might say that these are things that will appeal to all generations and we would agree. The distinction is that “older” generations will not tie their overall organizational commitment (hear this as willingness to stay and perform) to these things – your generation X and Y staff will. They simply will not stay employed long term in your firm without many of these expectations being met.

Another important concept to consider is the shift from managing and measuring your people and their performance based on number of hours worked alone. Your baby boomers can relate but your generation X and Y’ers won’t! Instead, consider setting goals based upon revenue and profitability targets. If they can find a way to get the goals achieved without working long hours, then we may be able to learn from them! Also, to support your Generation X and Y staff in their very real need to be at home with their families, consider upgrading your companies’ infrastructure to maximize your Generation X and Y employees’ access to technology and information, providing them with the ability to work any time, anywhere. They will surprise you by their willingness to work evenings and weekends if they can do so from home.

Some policies to consider that could be motivating to the Generation X and Y, but can also motivate all employees include:

- Offer employee referral incentive programs;
- Produce and maintain written job specifications;
- Pay market rates for comparable positions;
- Offer education, certification, skills enhancement programs;
- Develop recognition programs;
- Offer flexible work programs including telecommuting/remote access, flex hours, flex benefits;
- Hold social and team building events – create fun; and
- Challenge your people – they will step up!

So are you trying to think of new ways to motivate your Generation X and Y employees? According to a study on the *100 Best Companies to Work For* published by **Fortune Magazine** on January 12, 2004, there are some perks that well known companies currently offer that could be motivating for Gen X and Y employees. At The Container Store, employees get free weekly Yoga classes, monthly chair massages, and an average of 162 hours per year of employee training. At the SAS Institute, there are three onsite cafeteria choices for employees, two Montessori child care centers with reduced fees averaging \$300 per month, and an onsite fitness center with a ten-lane pool. Employees of Starbucks have health insurance if they work at least 20 hours per week, and receive stock options after one year. And finally, at Cisco, employees have a say in company direction stating that the CEO spends time with staff and



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tough questions are encouraged. A staff at Cisco felt they have a say in where the company's going, stating "where else can you have an impact at 25 years old?"

Most importantly, each employee, regardless of their generation, will be motivated in unique ways. As a leader in your company, you should strive to understand what the key priorities and motivators of your Generation X and Y people are – by asking them directly and individually. Then, work in collaboration with them to create performance goals and base them on the needs of the company and their individual values.

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