



RYP QUARTERLY

Leveraging Generations

Maximising the Synergy between Baby Boomers and Gen Y

By David Stewart Principal RYP International

The World is now in the midst of the “Knowledge Revolution.” Technology and the internet have changed forever how people communicate, learn, socialise, and trade. This has many implications for those people leading and managing people if they are to benefit from the best of the talent, skills, and insights of both Generations. The two generations are quite different. Together, with the right leadership, they are a potent force in planning and executing for organisational success.

What Defines Each Generation?

Much has been written about the differences between Baby Boomers and Generation Y's. **The literature summarises** some of the following generalised characteristics:

Baby Boomers:

- Born Post war through to 1964.
- They were taught to have a strong work ethic to progress a career, it takes time and promotions need to be earned.
- Were smacked as a child.
- Marched, rebelled and protested the prevailing governments of their day.
- Value face to face discussions and relationships as a first option and more likely to call someone via telephone.
- Housing was more affordable at a young age.
- Have seen and witnessed hard times and were taught to value simple things by their parents. But left home at an early age to be independent.
- Revolutionised sexual freedom, rock n roll music and went to the movies.
- Live their life around work.
- More likely to have been self – peer taught life lessons / sex education at an early age.



- If things did not go their way were taught to “suck it up” and “get over it” by their parents and teachers
- Education was focused on standards and conformity but had access to cheap university education.

Generation Y:

- Born after 1987
- Have grown up with a technology World, so technologically savvy.
- Fastest growing consumer demographic in the world
- More likely to socialise through technology and social media.
- There is a more “immediacy” attitude to their thinking, rather than saving or working their way towards something.
- Access to information and knowledge is immediate. More likely to download a movie, video clip or music when they want access to it, rather than go to a movie or watch it on TV.
- Socialisation is important to them, both through face to face and social media
- Living at home longer with their parents providing for longer
- University education is expensive and creates financial debt early in a career.
- More likely to travel widely at a younger age.
- Aware of social issues and have a strong social conscience.
- More educated and open minded to what is possible. Have been taught to be creative and innovative from a young age.
- Accepting, aware and understanding of different cultures, languages, and the differences of others.

Digital Immigrants V Digital Indigenous:

There is one stand out feature between Baby Boomers and Generation Y’s. Baby Boomers have had to learn to adapt to technology as a new skill. Like learning a language this requires a new way of thinking, with new skills and applications. Hence, the propensity to use, utilise and apply to work and life has required a more cognitive learning approach. However, Generation Y’s have grown up with technology and its applications to work, life and access to information.

It was not that long ago that the teacher was the central conduit of learning for students. Today, every student has access to a computer in their pocket, called a smart phone where they can verify facts, access information, download webinars and click onto



YouTube for the latest news or information, whilst uploading a photo of the class to share with their friends and parents.

No Matter What, You Still Need the Right Team Attributes:

I recently saw on an International Morning News Channel a professor from a major University being interviewed on what employers should look for when aiming to retain good talent. He answered with the following, and I quote:

“You need to aim to keep people with the right attitude, who have an ability to adapt and work in a team environment, and they have the appropriate skills to do their job effectively.”

Hallelujah!!! Thanks for the advice, Professor!!

No matter what age, demographic, sex, or culture there are some overarching attributes that help to ensure that all members, **regardless of their generation**, have the right set of basic attributes.

A Simple Test Is to Apply The “BEST” Filter:

B:

Balance within their personal / professional lives bring balance and understanding to the team by keeping issues in perspective and high performance as a shared goal.

Body Language that is positive, welcoming, confident, and consistent with how they act and behave.

Belief in their skills, abilities, team, and Organisation. A positive self-belief will help with commitment and resilience.

E:

Enthusiasm / Energy for life, the job, the organisation, in their demeanour and general outlook. An enthusiastic outlook will always translate into more positive team morale and service standards.

Eye Contact helps facilitate trust and sincerity amongst the team. It also shows a level of self-confidence and engagement with people. This greatly helps foster a positive environment for communication to take place.

Engagement requires a two-way effort. A commitment to engage requires a person to be genuinely interested and to convey their interest in others in an authentic and genuine manner.

S:



Smiles foster friendships, relationships, and team engagement. People who smile have a positive impact on the atmosphere of any circumstance and help diffuse unnecessary conflict. An ability to smile creates the right atmosphere and ambience for positive team dynamics.

Selfless thinking ensures there is a sensitive approach to team members, clients, customers, and suppliers. Thinking beyond “me” is a crucial ongoing requirement to build united and resilient teams. Disharmony within a team always has an element of selfish sentiments.

Sensitivity to the needs of others helps foster an awareness of all team members within a team, and the needs of clients, customers, suppliers, or indeed other members of the value chain. This is especially important when it comes to planning, innovation, problem solving and contingency planning.

T:

Talking is *fundamental to communication* whether it be via telephone, text, Skype, Facebook, Viber, or Email (and who knows what the future will involve). The key to effective communication (shared & common understanding of sender and receiver) is relevance, timeliness, and clarity.

Tone is a key ingredient for creating the right chemistry and dynamic within a team. Tone sets the mood of the group. An unnecessarily harsh tone in a communication piece will always create unintended consequences. The tone of communication is as important as the content.

Team thinking is picked up in how a person talks. Do they use “I” words or “We” words? Do their actions match the rhetoric of what they say? Team thinking manifests itself through the words, actions, and behaviours of a person. Can a non-team thinking person be relied upon when the going gets tough?

So, whether a Generation Y or a Baby Boomer, the BEST Filter applies to both.

So How to Leverage Boomers and Gen Y's?

Generalising about one generation or another is perhaps counterproductive. The key is to leverage and encourage the best from both generations. What follows are 6 suggestions to help leverage the maximum potential to deliver maximum performance:

Tip 1: Share Wisdom

Both sides have wisdom. Baby Boomers tend to have a stronger ability to plan, and risk mitigate potential problems in any planning process. Having witnessed history and observed the successes and pitfalls of the past, Baby Boomers bring a sense of pragmatic reality and Generation Ys bring a fresh perspective and thinking process into the planning process.



Tip 2: Leverage Communication Styles

What we say and how we say it are critical to clear understanding and appropriate responses. The obligation we have is to listen respectfully to what is being said, question sensitively when clarity is needed, and never leave an important conversation with any misunderstanding about what is said, what is heard and what the next step, if any, will be.

Tip 3: Embrace Diversity for Problem Solving

Acknowledging the different backgrounds, skills, attitudes, understandings, and capacities individuals contribute to address a problem will ensure that the collective effort will potentially bring a more successful outcome in resolving an issue or a problem.

Tip 4: Foster Relationships (front yard – back yard)

Relationships are the foundation of all great organisations. They are founded on the need for individuals to want to understand more about each other personally and professionally. Communication is the essence of good relationships.

Tip 5: Balance Energy and Action with Thinking and Engagement

Recognising and harnessing the capacity of the “Thinkers” and the “Doers” for different situations is a skill all teams should value highly and work towards. It requires, space, time, and practice (the more practice, the better the outcome)

Tip 6: Enjoy and Respect Differences

Valuing the fact that we all bring different perspectives to address common problems means that between us, we have a greater capacity to solve them. We need to celebrate these differences and be grateful for them.

Facta Non Verba – Deeds Not Words

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