THE CATALYST

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Much has been published about the differences and similarities between the generations in today's workforce. As the next generation, Gen Z, starts to enter the workforce I think it's important to revisit some of this information and I challenge you to examine how you are evolving your leadership style and your team/organizational culture to make the most of each generation. In addition, how are you addressing the unique challenges and opportunities each generation, and each individual, poses to developing your pipeline of new leaders.

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Cross-generational Teams

Cross-generational team members have different perspectives and worldviews that help foster creativity and innovation. Working with a diverse team is not a new reality, but we all need to continually renew our awareness of the individuals we work with. Today those teams primarily include Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen X) and Millennials (Gen Y). This month, the Pew Research Center updated their generation definitions to clarify when Generation Y ends and Z starts. Millennials were born between 1980 and 1996 and anyone born in 1997 or afterwards is a Post-Millennial (Generation Z.) Given that generations historically are grouped in a 15-20-year span, we can expect to hear about the next generation soon. As the next generation emerges, Generation Z enters the workforce and Millennials become the majority, the need to understand diverse generations will continue.

Generation is a predictor of differences in behavior, preference and attitude. Age tells you on average where that person is on their life cycle. It also gives you an understanding of historic events that have helped shape their life view. Understanding what drives the generational differences can help you learn from each other within the context of a team. Here are some of the key differences across generations.

World Events and Economy: Baby Boomers (age 54-72) grew up during the Vietnam War and the Cold War with a growing economy. Gen X (age 38-53) witnessed Persian Gulf Wars and 1987 stock market crash. Millennials (age 22-37) experienced 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq Wars and lived with the effects of 2008 housing and stock market crashes. Generation Z (21 and younger) is growing up with world terrorism, domestic mass shootings and a poor economy.

Technology and Communication Content: Baby Boomer's emerging technology was the television with household ownership increasing from 12% in 1950 to 95% by 1970. Information was given to them face-to-face in semiformal style that included all the information they needed but was delivered in chunks. Gen X grew up as the computer revolution was starting. Their communication style changed as email became the norm and is informal with the content that gets to the point and provides just what is needed. Millennials came to age with the explosion of the internet. Their style of communication is eye-catching and driven by the idea that when they need information, it can be found online. They are more likely to carry on multiple conversations at the same time via text messaging or instant messaging. Generation Z is growing up with continual access to mobile technology and social media. Generation Z communicates best in the virtual world and expects information transparency.

Life perspective and Context: Gen X desires a work-life balance and to hop off the Boomer's merry-go-round of status, money and social climbing. Millennials are challenging the work place norm on how business gets done and want to tackle work that has meaning to them and brings enjoyment. The focus of work has shifted from Boomers focus on "bottom line" to Xers focus on "what matters to me" to Millennials focus on "now, today and my role."

Authority and management: Boomers refined the Silent Generation chain-of-command management style to a more consensus-based model where information was communicated as needed. Gen Xers are more independent and less likely to follow "because-I-said-so" and have developed a more relaxed, open door, collaborative leadership style that happens as needed. Millennials who were raised with helicopter parents have developed a style based on support and constant feedback and want a workplace that shifts the place and time of work to suit them.

Demographics: The percentage of women in the workforce has continued to grow since the Boomers were growing up. Men made up two-thirds of the workforce in 1950, but the gap is expected to be less than 6% by 2024 with men accounting for 55.8% of the workforce. Millennials are the most diverse generation to date and Generation Z is expected to be even more diverse. Minorities account for 43% of the Millennial population compared to 28% of Boomers. Millennials definition of diversity and inclusion at work is a product of their ethnic, racial and gender diversity.

Differences within generations can be great given the large number of people in each group, their regional and cultural diversity and the age span involved. Generational characteristics can be a starting point to understand what motivates someone, but alone will not tell you what unique characteristics they bring to the team. You can also look at the other things that influence their life view, such as which sectors they have worked in, where have they lived and what are their educational experiences.

At the end of the day, getting to know each other on a personal level is the key to a successful team. Motivation, resistance to change, loyalty and work ethic are situational not generational. Motivating the team as a group and as individuals will lead to greater success. Leaders need to ask lots of questions to connect with the team and let them know that their input is respected and heard.

Planning for the Future

The Deloitte Millennial Survey estimates that Millennials will comprise 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025. Those millennials are not just changing the face of the workforce, they are also changing the face of management. The oldest Millennials turn 38 this year. Companies need to start shifting their focus from how to hire or manage Millennials to how to develop their leadership skills.

A Harvard Business Review from 2012 titled "We wait too long to train our Leaders," by Jack Zenger, looked at over 17,000 business leaders worldwide who had participated in his company's training and found the average age was 42. However, the average age of supervisors in their firms was 33. The typical individual in these companies became a supervisor around age 30 which means these individuals operated untrained.

Millennials add another dimension to the problem. This generation is more connected and will look for new opportunities from their network if they do not feel supported in their role. They are looking for more than mere training, they are looking to be developed. High performers who are promoted to leadership roles need to be given tools to transition from solving the problem to leading others to solve the problem. They need tools to shift their mindset from individual achievement to communicating and leading a team to alignment and one that is motivated to perform and excel. As Dwight Eisenhower said, "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it."

Gen Z is entering the workforce. The group is still young, and history has not been written for them yet, but we know that they will enter the workforce with high technical skills. As this generation starts their careers in entry-level jobs, companies need to develop their interpersonal and communications skills and include them in the training pipeline.

Companies need to invest in a culture of developing the future leaders and not just promoting them. Has your company used current demographics to forecast who your workforce will be in 2025? Do you have a communication plan that will engage Millennials and Generation Z? Do you have a training program for your emerging leaders?

A successful manager taps into talents and resources with the purpose of supporting and bringing out the best in the individual and team. A comprehensive development program to include training, coaching and feedback can help you maximize the human talent present in your company regardless of where they work. If you're interested in exploring a development program for your organization contact Bill Burtch at Harmony for a consultation at 901-272-7390 or bburtch@harmonycc.net

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Schedule of Public Courses

The following courses are being offered to the public by Harmony Coaching & Consulting. Click on the associated link for more information on the program or to register.

Course Title	Date(s)	Time	For More Information/Registration

TBD Summer 2018