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Managing Multi-Generational Staff

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Managing Multi-Generational Staff

In this presentation, you will learn about the four different generations in today's workplace: Generation Y, Generation X, the Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation. You will hear about the key facts of generational differences and similarities, influential childhood experiences, motivations, values about innovation, expectations about leadership and management, and preferences of members with the four generations. You will have an opportunity to reflect on the ways you might use this information about generational differences so you can mentor a work, community, or family member and build effective teams, sharing your life experiences, values, and perspectives with the goal of helping another person reach the next level of his or her personal or professional success. You will also have the opportunity to consider ways to tap into the talent of the different generations so you will continue to have purposeful life experiences rich with new perspectives and approaches.

Introduction to Sharon A. Wulf, Ph.D. (SharonW@enters.com)

Sharon A. Wulf, Ph.D., is an organizational and business development consultant who has worked in the field of management development for over twenty years. Since establishing Enterprise Systems in Framingham, MA, in 1992, she has delivered over 1,000 customized seminars on professional development and leadership skills. As a consultant, she has worked with management teams in more than twenty countries including North America, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, Australia, Mexico, and Brazil. Sharon is a Professor of Practice at Worcester Polytechnic Institute instructing courses in Leadership, Interpersonal Skills, and Group Dynamics. She has advised MBA Graduate Qualifying Projects and Major Qualifying Projects sponsored by corporations including Kiva Systems, UMASS Memorial Medical Center, Karl Storz Endoscopy, Hanover Insurance Group, Siemens, and Natick Labs. In 2014, WPI recognized Sharon with the Board of Trustees' award for Outstanding Teaching. Since 1999, Sharon has served as a Visiting Associate Professor at Framingham State University. Sharon is the recipient of the 2011 Framingham State University Outstanding MBA Faculty Award, the 2012 Hult International Business School Distinguished Professor Award, and the 1991 Northeastern University Teaching Excellence Award. For the past 25 years, Sharon has been a senior high-technology executive, start-up team member, education organization vice president, board member, angel investor, and international management consultant. Sharon gained over 15 years experience with two Fortune 50 companies holding positions including New Ventures Business Development Director, Worldwide Product Marketing Planning Director, and Strategic Programs Director of Semiconductor Technologies. As a board member, Sharon advised the management team at SpaceTec IMC Corporation throughout the company's start up in 1991 to its public listing on the NASDAQ in an IPO in 1995. Sharon has served on several non-profit boards. From 1988 to 1992, Sharon has served on the MIT Enterprise Forum board, chairing the Start-Up Clinic and presenting as a keynote speaker on business development for the MIT Enterprise Forum Chapters in Cambridge, California, and Colorado. Sharon served as Vice President and Board of Directors member of the English Speaking Union of the USA, Boston Branch.

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Generational Differences: Values and Preferences

There are some significant differences between the mindsets of the four generations currently in the American workforce. By examining the life experiences of each of the generations consisting of Generation X, Generation Y, the Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation, the reasons for the differences regarding motivation and preferences become more apparent.

Generation X: Who They Are

Generation X consists of 50 million Americans born from 1961 to 1981. Characterized by pragmatism, diversity, entrepreneurial spirit, individualism and a desire for a high quality of life, members of Generation X think about their work differently and tend to have different skill sets than other generations. Xers exhibit a more individualistic streak than did their parents at a similar age.

Generation Xers have the ability to do exceptional creative problem solving. This group of individuals is highly individualistic and does not like being stereotyped. Many of them are children of dual-career couples whose marriages ended in record national divorce rates. Many of them were "latchkey kids" who had to feed themselves, make their own decisions, and figure things out for themselves. As a result, many of them have exceptional problem-solving skills and a high need for independence. Their need for autonomy comes from the fact that many of them spent a great deal of time on their own because both parents or a single head of household parent worked outside of the home. Many of the Generation Xers were offered dot-com jobs with huge salaries and responsibilities that quickly left them without job security or comparable employability. Many Generation Xers do not have a college degree. Xers may be the first generation whose lifetime earnings will be less than that of their parents.

Page 11 shows generation Xers' childhood experiences. They grew up with the computer revolution, video games, and the awareness of AIDS. Generation X had MTV. Launched on August 1, 1981, MTV was the first network devoted to youth and its culture. Advertisers reached Generation X through MTV. Generation Xers experienced major political changes such as the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1981, the unification of Germany in 1990, and the fall of the USSR in 1992, bringing the end of the fear of communist takeover in the USA. They saw major institutions such as government, churches, and big businesses falter and be discredited. They witnessed the legalization of abortion via Roe versus Wade. In the early 1980s, the Generation Xers witnessed the explosion of the Challenger, an event that has served as an example in college textbooks of poor decision-making and ineffective communications between leaders and members of their team.

Values: What Motivates Generation X

The highly individualistic members of Generation X place strong boundaries between their personal lives and work responsibilities. Many of them desire a traditional family life in their adult life, with a balance of work and personal commitments. In college, many of them majored in business or economics. During their early adulthood, they witnessed corporate downsizing of loyal employees that radically altered the careers of hard-working parents and older siblings.

Generation Xers value:

- Managing their own time
- Being independent and creative in problem solving
- Self-loyalty over corporate loyalty
- Intellectual stimulation
- Enjoying balance of work and personal commitments.

They think more like entrepreneurs, willing to invest emotionally in themselves in their own development, rather than in their organization's development. These attitudes are actually better adapted to today's workplace than the sometimes blindly loyal attitude of earlier generations.

Preferences: How Generation Xers Prefer to be Managed

Generation Xers prefer to be managed in a way that is unique to traditional, hierarchical managers. To be effective, managers of Generation Xers must:

- Let the Xers be creative, removing organizational blockages that impede creativity
- Avoid micromanaging
- Use effective persuasion rather than commanding to do a task
- Encourage questions and be generous in sharing information about the organization and the project
- Train the Xers on anything that is interesting to them for this is one of their biggest satisfactions.

Generation Xers seek work that makes a contribution to others. They are drawn toward teams that create a genuine sense of community and purpose. Manipulation tactics, insincere "attaboys," false promises especially about paying one's dues, do not motivate the Generation Xer. Unlike earlier generations, Generation Xers are not concerned with long term job security with one firm. They are comfortable moving to another company for the next job, expecting more money, better challenges and better opportunities with each move. Seeing each job as a building block that integrates competencies and skills sets, they expect to change careers three to five times during the course of their professional employment. Generation Xers believe loyalty rests with oneself so they act accordingly.

To effectively manage a Generation Xer, be clear about the end results you are holding them responsible for, the deadlines, and the parameters within which they are to work. Then allow the Gen Xers to make day-to-day decisions and mistakes. When actively engaged, Generation Xers offer creative problem solving approaches.

Generation Y: Who They Are

Today's managers have observed that Generation Yers are different from Generation Xers. Born during 1981 to 1994, members of Generation Y are busy, hard workers who care about the community. At 60 million strong, marketers know Generation Yers will influence products and

services like the 72 million Baby Boomers did. One in three Generation Y members are not Caucasian. Large racial and ethnic diversity is accepted and highly valued. Generation Y has the highest percentage in day care from an early age. A large majority of them have learned good group skills and know how to follow and how to lead as circumstances demand. They have little urge to push back at adults, but they do expect adults to treat them with respect.

Page 12 provides an overview of Generation Y and their childhood experiences. They were deeply involved with family decisions and grew up in a media saturated, brand-conscious world. They learned about sex from news reports about the President of the United States and a White House intern. They learned about justice, or, in some people's eyes, injustice, from OJ. They learned not to trust traditionally safe places from the Columbine shootings.

Values: What Motivates Generation Y

According to a survey conducted by Northwestern Life Insurance Company, a large number of Generation Y members expect to have careers and a way to balance their work and personal life.

Some have acknowledged three concerns about Generation Y. They need to:

- Think analytically and question more
- Realize that actions have consequences
- Build a sense of context to sort through the mass of information that they sometimes see as knowledge.

Preferences: How Generation Yers Prefer to be Managed

Unlike members of Generation X, Generation Yers are not always able to see the big picture, set the priorities that truly matter, exhibit sound judgment, and employ critical thinking skills to solve problems. Some of these characteristics are a bit of a surprise since Generation Yers were given considerable responsibility at an early age. Some believe the weaknesses of the Generation Yers is due to the fact that these individuals experienced adults who caved in early rather than setting boundaries and exerting discipline on their children. For example, college administrators have seen that the parents for Generation Yers do most of the negotiations for them during the college admission process. Generation Y students have been observed to cheat more often than earlier generations, drop activities, and, if they can, cut corners without feeling any guilt.

Generation Yers are not impressed with authority for the sake of authority. For that matter, they are not impressed with celebrity endorsements. It was the Generation Yers who did not buy Nike products because of allegations of the company's inhumane overseas labor practices. Marketers who study Generation Yers have recognized that this generation responds irony. An example of what works is Sprite's tagline: "Image is nothing. Obey your thirst."

Managers report that the members of Generation Y enjoy working side-by-side with adults who teach them competence and effectiveness. They like to be managed in a logical, open manner with defined goals, roles, and expectations while allowing for individual choices. They do not

like to be micromanaged. They enjoy strong interaction with teammates who are honest, informal, helpful, and their own age. They expect collaboration and honesty, encouraging and respecting diversity to be diverse. They seek relevant work and thrive on making contributions at the local level.

Given the purchasing power, marketers have invested a substantial sum in studying Generation Y's buying behavior. Studies have shown that members of generation Y learn about products from other kids. Mountain Dew's popularity had nothing to do with the company's television ads.

Generation Yers are perceptive and practical about their future. Extensive use of social media is one of the dramatic differences. Members of Generation Y communicate with one another. They constantly seek feedback, but one might need to remember that most Generation Yers were brought up where every player received a trophy.

Baby Boomers: Who They Are

Born from 1943 to 1960, Baby Boomers are highly individualistic, highly intelligent, and change agents. At 76 million strong, they are a powerful and demanding force in the marketplace. Baby Boomers are the single largest consumer group in USA and are the best educated and most sophisticated purchasers.

Baby Boomers participated in the greatest and most dramatic wave of education in history. During their high school education, most Baby Boomers were graded on their ability to challenge others and demonstrate their critical thinking skills. They started their college years with sit-down protests and stereos blasting rock music. Raised in an era of phenomenal national wealth in the United States, they felt secure in questioning and challenging everything.

Page 13 provides some key facts about Baby Boomers. Characterized by idealism, high expectations, individualism, and intense self-centeredness, members of the Baby Boomer generation serve as change agents, willing to test the limits of tradition, redefine stereotypes, and demand new approaches. They witnessed the autonomy for women and their life choices. From 1960 to 1992, women in the labor force increased from 32% to 60%. Along with the changing role of women in the workforce, Baby Boomers witnessed a failed war in Vietnam, the assassination of the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King, Jr., the disgrace of President Nixon after Watergate, the OPEC oil crisis, and environmental disasters such as Three Mile Island. Unafraid to challenge authority, the Baby Boomers have consistently questioned if authority figures knew how to make effective decisions.

Values: What Motivates Baby Boomers

While it very important to Baby Boomers that they are respected as individuals, this group will share responsibility more easily, communicate more frequently, and challenge the hierarchies of their organizations more readily than previous US generations. Comfortable with team-based decision-making, they enjoy using their critical thinking skills to question things.

Preferences: How Baby Boomers Prefer to be Managed

Many highly intelligent Baby Boomers have found themselves under-employed or unemployed before their planned retirement date. Not known to accept mentoring from older managers, Baby Boomers typically do not mentor younger individuals. Capable of being self-absorbed, self-centered, and highly competitive, Baby Boomers are not willing to readily accept leadership from Generation X members. To effectively manage Baby Boomers, a manager must work with the Baby Boomer to:

- Decide on goals, roles, and expectations
- Identify priorities
- Establish timelines
- Determine and agree upon a method of evaluation
- Make decisions
- Decide on rewards and recognition.

Baby Boomers have a need to be involved with decision-making. They enjoy questioning things and do not accept traditional explanations easily. As their manager, answer their questions, listen to their comments and their problems, and make information about the organization accessible to them. One Vice President announced that she did not suffer fools lightly, stating that was her Baby Boomer generation's mantra.

The Silent Generation: Who They Are

Born from 1925 to 1942, the members of this generation were the children of war and the Great Depression. Also referred to the Greatest Generation, this group brought civil rights to the US society and unparalleled economic and artistic wealth. Lacking a sense of individualism, they identified themselves as patriotic, loyal Americans.

Members of the Silent Generation were the youngest marrying generation in US history. The average ages at their first marriage were 20 years old and 23 years old for females and males, respectively. Despite their young marrying age, this group started the divorce epidemic in the United States.

This group witnessed many technological inventions. Television became available in the home during the 1940s and 1950s. NBC, ABC, and CBS, the three major broadcast stations, were highly regulated and served as the entire nation's broadcast system.

The Silent Generation is a generation that failed to produce a United States President. President John F. Kennedy was born in 1917. Presidents Nixon and Ford were born in 1913. President Regan was born in 1911, and the forty-first US President George Bush was born in 1924. President Clinton and President George W. Bush, both Baby Boomers, were born in 1946.

Values: What Motivates Members of the Silent Generation

In the work force, they were the ultimate “organizational man,” operating with a strong respect for formal authority, company loyalty, and hierarchical structure. For the most part, men held positions of authority and responsibility when this generation was in its prime, supporting the strong male-dominated work environment.

Page 14 provides an overview of the Silent Generation.

Preferences: How the Silent Generation Prefers to be Managed

Extremely different in their management preference from Generations X and Y, the Silent Generation accepts and follows domineering, control-oriented managers. Members of the Silent Generation are willing to “pay their dues,” not challenge menial job responsibilities, and not question authority. Being part of an organization is satisfying for the members of the Silent Generation. By the year 2010, fewer members of the Silent Generation were in power positions within corporate society.

The Silent Generation is called “The Greatest Generation.” They lived through the Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II, and the Korean War.

Conclusion: Some Next Steps

By understanding the preferences and values of Generation X, Generation Y, the Baby Boomers, and the Silent Generation, you have had the opportunity to learn about generational differences,

Each and every one of us has gifts that we have acquired through experiences. After this session, you might want to:

- Reflect on ways you will strengthen your communication with members of other generations
- Be a mentor to a family, work, or community member, sharing your life experiences, values, and perspectives with the goal of supporting that person to reach the next level of his or her personal and professional success
- Tap into the talents of the other generations so that you will continue to have purposeful life experiences rich with new perspectives and approaches.

If you believe your organization would benefit from exploring ways to manage multi-generational staffs, contact Sharon Wulf at Enterprise Systems (phone: 508.626.2233 or email: SharonW@enters.com) to discuss building:

- Team environments for increased employee engagement
- Onboarding coaching plans for college recruits initiatives
- Innovation strategy performance values in diverse teams
- Mentoring and reverse mentoring programs.

**Key Facts About Generation X
(Born from 1961 to 1981)**

Key Facts	What They Experienced During Childhood	What is Important to Them	The Way They Prefer to be Managed
<p>Individualistic, idealist, unmotivated and disloyal</p> <p>Children of dual-career couples and parents whose marriages ended in record national divorce rates</p> <p>Were “latch-key kids” who had to feed themselves, make their own decisions, and figure things out for themselves</p> <p>Spent a lot of time on their own because both parents or single parent worked outside the home</p> <p>Majored in business or economics</p> <p>Witnessed corporate downsizing of loyal employees</p> <p>Think about their work differently and tend to have different skills sets than earlier workers</p> <p>Characterized by pragmatism, diversity, entrepreneurial spirit, and desire for a high quality of life</p>	<p>Grew up with MTV, computer revolution, video games, the highest divorce rates, awareness of AIDS and legalized abortion</p> <p>Saw downsizing radically change the careers of hard-working parents and older siblings</p> <p>MTV (launched on 8/1/81) was the first network devoted to youth and its culture</p> <p>Dot-com jobs offered huge salaries and responsibilities and then left many without job security</p> <p>Major political changes such as the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), reunification of Germany (1990), and the fall of the USSR (1992), bringing an end to the fear of communist takeover in the USA</p> <p>Saw major institutions (schools, government, churches and big businesses) falter and be discredited</p>	<p>Think more like entrepreneurs, willing to invest emotionally in themselves and their own development, rather than in their organization’s development.</p> <p>Independent, creative in solving problems and resourceful</p> <p>Place strong boundaries between their personal lives and work duties</p> <p>Desire for a traditional family life in their adult life, with a balance of work and personal commitments</p> <p>Not concerned with security; focused on skill development</p> <p>Self-loyalty over corporate loyalty</p> <p>Value intellectual stimulation</p>	<p>Want to make their own decisions and see that a contribution is made</p> <p>May rebel against or depart from authority</p> <p>Seek superiors who are coaches or mentors</p> <p>Demonstrate little tolerance of domineering superiors</p> <p>Monitor their own results carefully and aggressively so they can be more successful</p> <p>Seek and expect useful feedback on how to achieve results</p> <p>Desire clarity about the end results, holding themselves responsible for achieving them</p> <p>Expect the sharing of information about the organization and the project</p> <p>Drawn toward teams that create a sense of community</p>

**Key Facts About Generation Y
(Born from 1981 to 1994)**

Key Facts	What They Experienced During Childhood	What is Important to Them	The Way They Prefer to be Managed
<p>At 60 million strong, marketers know they'll influence products and services like the 72 million Baby Boomers did</p> <p>1 in 3 is not Caucasian; Large racial and ethnic diversity is accepted and valued</p> <p>Known for being busy, technological adeptness and volunteerism</p> <p>Highest percentage in day care from an early age; learned group skills, how to lead and how to follow as circumstances demand, have little urge to push back at adults</p> <p>Not impressed with authority for the sake of authority. Respond to humor, irony, and truth. An example of what works is Sprite's tagline: "Image is nothing, Obey your thirst."</p>	<p>Given considerable responsibility at an early age; Deeply involved with family decisions</p> <p>Grew up in media saturated, brand conscious world; Learned about sex from news reports about President Clinton and a White House intern; Learned about justice from OJ; Learned about the lack of safety in traditional safe places from Columbine shootings</p> <p>1 in 4 grew up in a single parent household; 3 in 4 had working mothers; 1 in 9 at high school age had a credit card co-signed by parent</p> <p>Experienced adults that caved in early rather than using discipline on their children. Their parents do most of the negotiations for them with college admissions offices Students cheat more, drop activities and cut corners</p>	<p>Being savvy, perceptive, and practical with their future</p> <p>Being a hard worker who cares about community</p> <p>Communication via the Internet, their medium of choice</p> <p>Learn about products from others their age</p>	<p>Enjoy working side by side with adults who teach them competence and effectiveness</p> <p>Expect a logical, open manner that defines goals, roles, and boundaries and allows individual choice</p> <p>Seek strong interaction with teammates who are honest, and feedback at the push of a button</p> <p>Seek to make a contribution at the local level</p> <p>Need to be helped to think analytically and question more</p> <p>Need to realize that actions have consequences</p> <p>Need to build a sense of context to sort through information</p>

**Key Facts About Baby Boomers
(Born from 1943 to 1960)**

Key Facts	What They Experienced During Childhood	What is Important to Them	The Way They Prefer to be Managed
<p>At 72 million strong, they are powerful and demanding in establishing trends</p> <p>Participated in the greatest and most dramatic wave of education in history; Were graded on their ability to challenge others and use critical thinking skills</p> <p>Highly individualistic</p> <p>Challenge authority</p> <p>Self-absorbed and highly intelligent</p> <p>Majored in political science or psychology</p> <p>Characterized by idealism, high expectations, individualism, and political incorrectness</p>	<p>Raised in an era of phenomenal national wealth, which later translated into indulgence</p> <p>Started college years with sit-down protests and stereos blasting rock music</p> <p>Witnesses autonomy for women (Labor force consisted of 32% and 60% in 1960 and 1992, respectively)</p> <p>Experienced the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and space travel</p> <p>Witnessed a failed war in Vietnam, the assassination of two Kennedys and Martin Luther King, Jr., the disgrace of a president after Watergate, the OPEC oil crisis, and environmental disasters like Three Mile Island</p>	<p>Personal gratification</p> <p>Ability to challenge everything</p> <p>Being involved with the decision-making process</p> <p>Being able to provide for their children and take care of their parents</p> <p>Having a purpose</p> <p>Owning symbol of success by having a house, a car, and other material possessions</p> <p>Expect to be doing better than their parents did at a similar age</p>	<p>Will share responsibility more easily, communicate more frequently, and challenge the hierarchies of their organization more easily than previous US generations</p> <p>Comfortable with team-based decision making</p> <p>Need to work with a manager to set goals, roles, and expectations</p> <p>Must have a say in setting priorities and establishing timelines</p> <p>Expect to be recognized for work with promotions and raises</p>

**Key Facts About the Silent Generation
(Born from 1925 to 1942)**

Key Facts	What They Experienced During Childhood	What is Important to Them	The Way They Prefer to be Managed
<p>Children of war and of the Great Depression</p> <p>Brought the US civil rights and unparalleled economic and artistic wealth</p> <p>Started the divorce epidemic</p> <p>Lacking a sense of individualism, they identified themselves as patriotic, loyal Americans</p>	<p>Youngest marrying generation in US history (average ages were 20 and 23 for females and males, respectively)</p> <p>Lived through the Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II, and the Korean War</p> <p>Television became available in the home during the 1940s and 1950s</p> <p>NBC, ABC, and CBS, the three major television broadcast stations, were highly regulated and served as the entire nation's broadcast system</p>	<p>Company loyalty</p> <p>Willing to make personal sacrifices for co-workers and the company</p> <p>Dedicated work ethic</p> <p>Strong respect for formal authority, structure, and the chain of command</p> <p>Being an "organizational man" and playing a role in the hierarchy to build a legacy</p>	<p>Accept and follow domineering, control oriented managers</p> <p>Respect the hierarchy and the role within the hierarchy</p> <p>Willing to "pay their dues" and not challenge menial job responsibilities</p> <p>Believe that no news is good news</p>

