

Generations Exposed

**Unexpected Insights Into
the People You Work With**



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Library and Archives Canada Cataloging in Publication

Generations Exposed. Unexpected Insights Into the People You Work With/Merge Gupta-Sunderji.—First Edition

ISBN 978-0-9783914-1-6 (pbk)

1. Work environment. 2. Conflict of generations in the workplace.
3. Teams in the workplace. I. Title.

HF5549.5.C75G86 2014 331.3 C2013-908756-7

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Publisher:

mergespeaks Inc.

1110 – 5 Avenue NW, Suite 307

Calgary, Alberta T2N 0R6 Canada

TurningManagerIntoLeaders.com

Design and Production: Tanya Jasper, Calgary, Alberta

Project Management: Debbie Elicksen, Publishing Media Creative Incorporated, Edmonton, Alberta

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Printed and Bound in United States

Several years ago, I started to hear my clients (many of whom are Boomer and Generation Xer managers and supervisors) complain about “young people today.” At my keynotes and seminars, on my blog, through social media, I started to hear familiar refrains.

They expect everything to come easily to them.

*He thinks he's going to become CEO
in his first two months on the job!*

They don't respect their elders!

It's the entitlement generation.

They feel like they're owed whatever they want!

They think the office is a playground.

These repeated comments are what put me on a journey to better understand the young people who are increasingly entering the workforce. And along the way, my first-hand research and in-depth conversations helped me uncover much more than I originally expected, not just about the Millennial generation, but also about the other three demographics that exist in today's workplace. As I shared this knowledge with my clients and colleagues, both in my writing, as well as on the platform, I was frequently asked if I could share my notes. Unfortunately, I didn't have any notes to share! But it was these continual requests that led, finally, to the creation of this book.

The undeniable certainty is that the multi-generational workplace is here to stay. True, while I pen this, the Traditionalist generation is shrinking as the veterans of the workplace retire and expire, but they're not all leaving at once. In fact, my many informal discussions with managers and supervisors indicates that almost every workplace has at least one Traditionalist in their midst. The Boomers, by their sheer volume, continue to have an impact. The Generation Xers are still firmly entrenched in the workplace. And of course, minute by minute, more Millennials continue to enter the workforce.

Here are some statistics that may interest you.

As of 2011 census data, there were 23.5 million Canadians in the workplace. Of those, Traditionalists made up about 3%, Boomers approximately 42%, Generation Xers roughly 25%, and Millennials nearly 30%. As the years roll by, the Traditionalists will decrease (but don't count them out) and the Millennials will increase. In fact, to give you a sense of how quickly the Millennials are advancing, consider that in 2007, they made up only 10% of the Canadian workforce.

The U.S. numbers are similar in terms of percentages, but it's the sheer volume of the American population that amplifies the impact. It is estimated that there were over 227 million Americans in the workforce in 2012 – roughly 6 million Traditionalists, 94 million Boomers, 57 million Generation Xers, and 70 million Millennials. Even as time passes and Traditionalists move out as the Millennials move in, the significance of each demographic is still sizable.

Each of these generations brings its own filter – and how they view the world – to the workplace, and this directly impacts their values, expectations, habits, and work styles. Bottom line: if leaders don't recognize and acknowledge these differences, then conflict, inefficiency, and eventually negativity can result. But, fortunately, if you seek to understand the differences between each generation, and then consciously and deliberately adapt how you interact with the people you work with, you can tap into their strengths and harness each of their extraordinary potential.

This book is about stereotypes but not in a negative way. The stereotypes I have outlined in the following pages simply reflect the common traits that characterize specific demographic groups. Will there be people who don't fit the stereotype for their age demographic? Undoubtedly. These exceptions do not negate the value of what I'm sharing with you. The key to making this knowledge work for you (instead of against you) is to focus on using this information to gain greater insights into the people you work with, but not to pigeon-hole them. Use this book as a tool to build better working relationships and accomplish more as a team.

Flip through the book at leisure. You'll notice that each of the generational demographics is identified by a specific picture. These are designed to not only aid you in finding information quickly, but also to help you quickly compare and contrast the differences between the generations.

Remember, this book isn't intended to label people; rather, my sincere hope is that you'll use this knowledge to help you harness and leverage the unique strengths that each generation brings to the workplace. As a leader, your job is to capitalize on the potential that every person – whether a colleague, your boss, or your employee – brings to the work relationship, and this book arms you with the data and the wisdom to do just that.

Their perspectives on jobs and job change



Jobs are for a lifetime

Job change carries a negative stigma



You may have to change jobs

Job change sets you back and puts you behind your peers



Jobs are only temporary

Job change is a reality



I am offering “me” to the world for the season, and as long as I am getting something out of the relationship I will stay

I want to be a “paid volunteer”; I’ll join your organization not because I have to, but because I really want to, or because something significant or fun is happening in your company

Job change is a part of daily life

Their perspectives on performance feedback



No news is good news



Once a year, with lots of documentation



“Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing?”



When I want it; now; frequently