

Generational Differences



2017 LAOSHC Membership Meeting
Joe Conrad, Manager, Safety & Training
Xcel Energy



Learning Objectives

- **Identify the four generations in the workplace and their defining experiences and events**
- **Discuss the personal, lifestyle, and workplace characteristics of each generation**
- **Compare and contrast the values and the potential outcomes of generational interaction**
- **Discuss how the challenges of a multi-generational workforce challenge safety and create opportunities**


Generational Identification

“To identify the persona of a generation, look for these attributes: perceived membership in a common generation; common beliefs and behaviors; and a common location in history.”

Howe & Strauss, 2000

MULTIPLE GENERATIONS @ WORK

Five Generations Working Side by Side in 2020



TRADITIONALISTS Born 1900-1945	BOOMERS Born 1946-1964	GEN X Born 1965-1976	MILLENNIAL Born 1977-1997	GEN 2020 After 1997
Great Depression World War II Disciplined Workplace Loyalty Move to the 'Burbs Vaccines	Vietnam, Moon Landing Civil/Women's Rights Experimental Innovators Hard Working Personal Computer	Fall of Berlin Wall Gulf War Independent Free Agents Internet, MTV, AIDS Mobile Phone	9/11 Attacks Community Service Immediacy Confident, Diversity Social Everything Google, Facebook	Age 15 and Younger Optimistic High Expectations Apps Social Games Tablet Devices

Each generation brings its own view of the world, which creates both opportunities and threats to businesses. **This demands Generational Intelligence!**

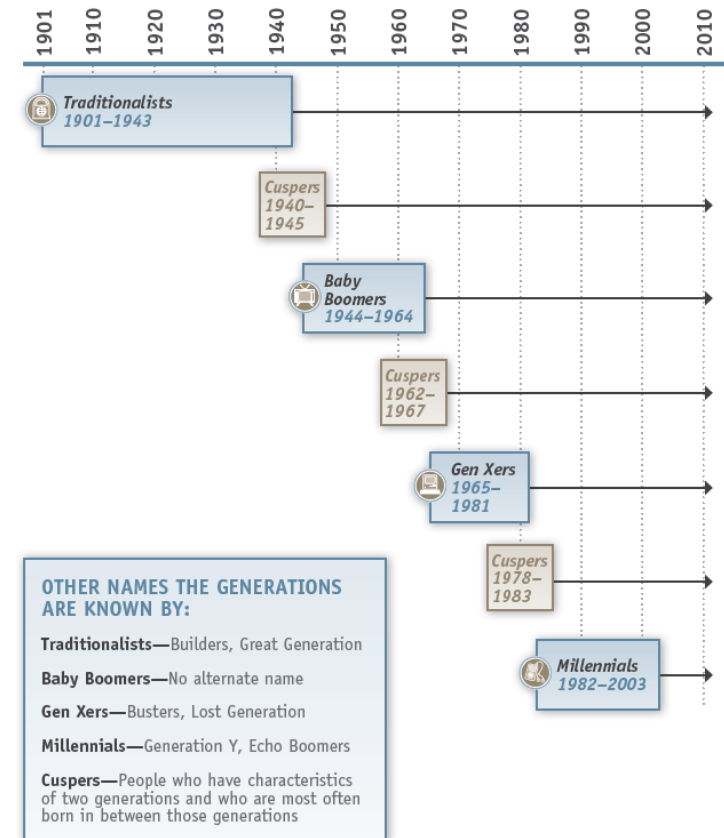
MULTIPLE GENERATIONS @ WORK SURVEY

“Cuspers”

- Persons born within 3-5 years of a generational divide are referred to as “Cuspers” and may favor and display characteristics from both relative generations. They are the folks that cement the generations together. They function as mediators, translators, and mentors.

Lancaster & Stillman, 2003

The Generations: A Historical Timeline



Stereotyping Right Or Wrong We Do It

We've all been exposed to too many media images of

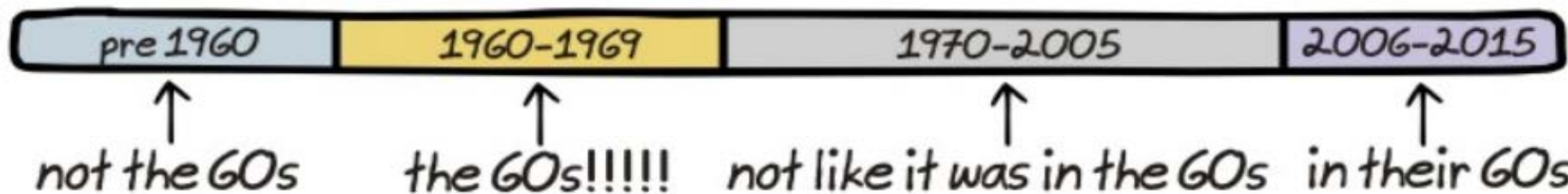
- *The annoyingly precocious Millennial kid, or*
- *The tattooed Generation X slacker, or*
- *The guilt-ridden, workaholic Boomer, or*
- *the lifeless retired Traditionalist....*

The media puts negative images into our minds, and these affect how we view each of the generations.

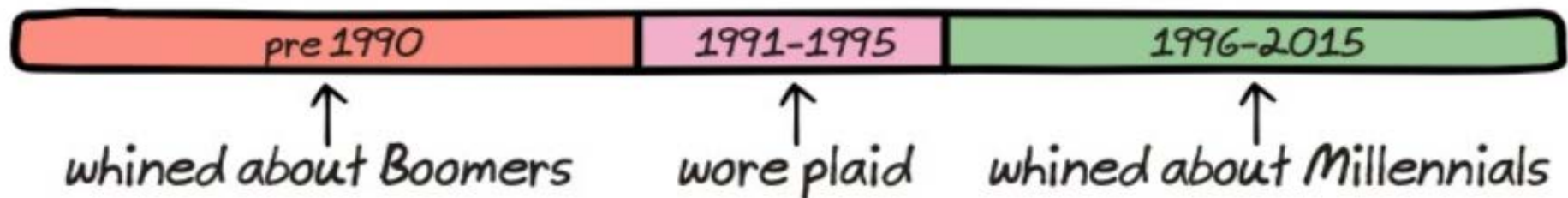
anatomy of generations

© John Atkinson, Wrong Hands

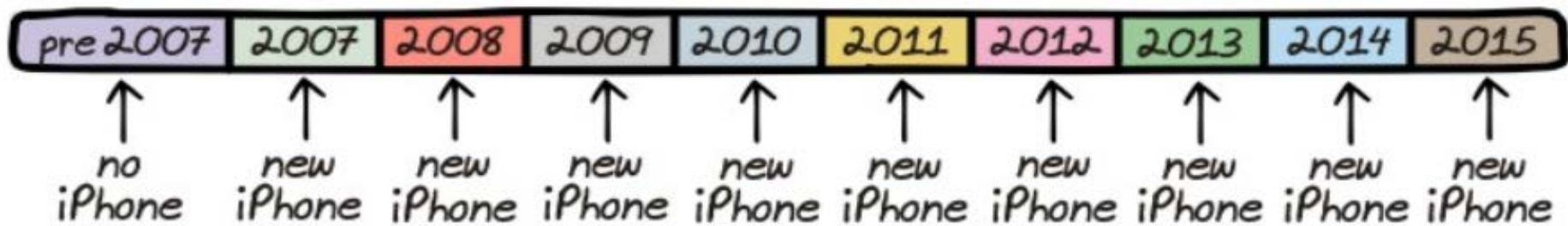
Boomers



Gen Xers



Millennials



Workplace Characteristics

	Traditionalists	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
Work Ethic and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hard work ■ Respect authority ■ Sacrifice ■ Duty before fun ■ <u>Adhere to rules</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workaholics ■ <u>Work efficiently</u> ■ Crusading causes ■ Personal fulfillment ■ Desire quality ■ <u>Question authority</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Eliminate the task ■ Self-reliance ■ Want structure and direction ■ <u>Skeptical</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What's next ■ <u>Multitasking</u> ■ Tenacity ■ Entrepreneurial ■ <u>Tolerant</u> ■ Goal oriented
Work is.....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An obligation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An exciting adventure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A difficult challenge ■ A contract 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A means to an end ■ Fulfillment
Leadership style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Directive ■ Command-and-control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Consensual ■ Collegial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Everyone is the same Challenges others Asks why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ *TBD
Interactive style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Individual</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Team player</u> ■ Loves meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Entrepreneur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participative
Messages that Motivate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Your experience is respected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You are valued ■ You are needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do it your way ■ Forget the rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ You will work with other bright, creative people
Feedback and Rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No news is good news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Don't appreciate it ■ Money ■ Title recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Whenever I want it, at the push of a button ■ Meaningful work

Generational Differences

How they can affect the Workplace

- Recruiting
- Building Teams
- Dealing with Change
- Motivating
- May impact perceptions of fairness and equality
- Safety

Traditionalists

- **Have worked longer than any other generation**
- **Many are approaching retirement or are retired and now working part time jobs**
- **Life experiences have taught them to live within their means**
- **Typically hardworking and financially conservative**
- **Dutiful motto: “Always faithful”**

Baby Boomers

- **Generation that came of age during the 1960's**
- **Put a priority on higher education**
- **Most are at or near retirement age**
- **Tend to believe that age is not a barrier when it comes to work**
- **Workaholics- work long hours to get ahead**
- **Individualistic motto: "Do your own thing"**

Generation X

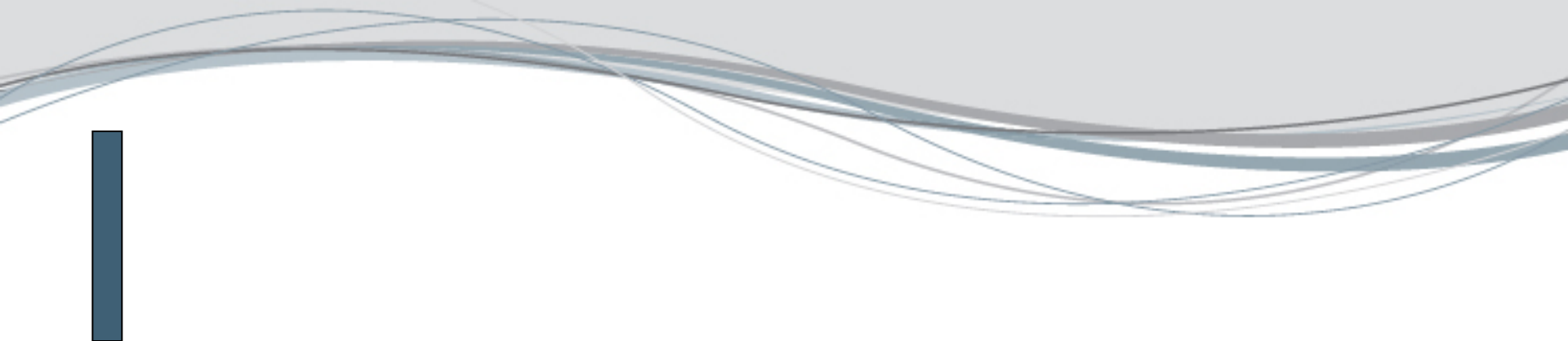
- **Term is borrowed from Douglas Copeland's novel**
 - Generation X: Tales from an Accelerated Culture
- **Often depicted as slackers**
- **Self reliant and like to work alone**
- **More than any other generation before them, they value flexibility and freedom, especially when it comes to work**
- **Likely to have 10-12 jobs during their lives**
- **First generation in America to believe they will be less well off than their parents**
- **No-nonsense motto: "Get real"**

Millennials

- Also known as the “Echo Generation” or “Gen Y”
- Most diverse population
- Values tend to mirror those of their Boomer parents
- Grew up in the age of technology
- Demand flexibility at work, but value structure
- Multitasking is second nature
- Work well in team environments
- Will have 4 or 5 careers, three of which currently don't exist
- Self-Assuring motto: “Believe in yourself”

How Can Values Impact Generational Interactions?

- **Traditionalists and Boomers may have a tendency not to question or challenge authority or the status quo. This may cause confusion and resentment among Gen X and Gen Y who have been taught to speak up**
- **Gen X and Gen Y who have had different life experiences and communicate with people differently may fail to actively listen to Traditionalists and Baby Boomers thereby missing valuable information and guidance**



What **you do** speaks so loudly...
...that I **no longer**
can hear your voice

- Emerson

Generations

Failing To Communicate

- **May impact turnover rates**
- **May impact tangible costs** (e.g., recruiting, hiring, training, retention)
- **May impact intangible costs** (e.g., morale)
- **May impact grievances and complaints**
- **May impact perceptions of fairness and equality**
- **May impact safety and safety programs**

Communication

Cross Generational

■ **Workplace & communication strategies to use with Traditionalists**

- Honor the chain of command
- Offer them job security
- Value their experience
- Appreciate their dedication

Communication

Cross Generational

■ Workplace & communication strategies for communicating with Baby Boomers

- Younger generations should show respect
- Choose face-to-face conversations
- Give them your full attention
- Play the game
- Learn the corporate history

Communication

Cross Generational

■ Workplace and communication strategies for communicating with Generation X

- Get to the point
- Use e-mail
- Give them space
- Get over the notion of dues paying
- Lighten up

Communication

Cross Generational

- **Workplace and communication strategies for communicating with Millennials**
 - Challenge them
 - Ask them their opinion
 - Find them a mentor
 - Provide timely feedback

Feedback Styles

■ Generational meaning of feedback:

- Traditionalists seek no applause but appreciate a subtle acknowledgement that they have made a difference
- Baby Boomers are often giving feedback to others but seldom receiving, especially positive feedback
- Generation X needs positive feedback to let them know they're on the right track
- Millennials are used to praise and may mistake silence for disapproval. They need to know what they're doing right and what they're doing wrong

(Consider the impact on Safety)



Bridging The Generation Gap

- **Be aware of the differences**
- **Appreciate the strengths**
- **Manage the differences effectively**



Conflict In The Workplace

- **Some conflict is inevitable**
- **70% of older employees are dismissive of their younger workers' abilities**
- **Nearly 50% of employers say that younger employees are dismissive of the abilities of their older coworkers**

Safety Impacts and Opportunities

- **Communication, communication, communication**
- **Different perceptions and reaction to feedback**
- **Different perceptions (acceptance of) risk**
- **Multitasking**
- **Xers/ Millennials want to participate – Have you asked?**
- **Younger workers DEMAND a safe workplace – earlier generations did not**

Questions/Comments?

