



Facilitator's Guide

Understanding Generational Differences

Each generation goes further than the generation preceding it because it stands on the shoulders of that generation. You will have opportunities beyond anything we've ever known.—Ronald Reagan

Rationale:

Each generation is significantly different from those who preceded and followed it because each generation was shaped and molded by markedly different societal influences during its developmental years. These differences in perspective are usually attributable to generational differences. In many cases, this difference in generational perspective can lead to misunderstanding and create conflict at home, work, or community activities.

Program Goal:

To understand each generation's characteristics and values in order to develop strong generational relationships

Program Objectives:

- Compare six different generations' characteristics and values
- Analyze how changes and events in society influence generational perspectives
- Examine how generational values are reflected in family, work, and social behaviors

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Read and make copies of *Understanding Generational Differences* (CLD1-8) factsheet.
- Take card stock, fold in half, and make four table tents with the following labels: Silent Generation; Baby Boomers; Generation X; Millennials. (Note: with a large group, you may have to make multiple sets of table tents.)
- Select which pictures you will show from the PowerPoint (see Learning Activity 1) and have those ready to show. If you do not have access to a computer and projector, you may want to print hard copies of the pictures.

- Secure a computer, projector and Internet connection.
- Make copies of the *Valley View Farm: Generational Divide* handout (see Learning Activity 3) found below.
- Secure flip chart and markers.

Introduction:

Each generation is significantly different from those who preceded and followed it because each generation was shaped and molded by markedly different societal influences during its developmental years. By gaining a better understanding of the values that have shaped each generation, we increase our opportunity for building strong family, work, and community relationships.

Introductory Activity:

NOTES: Allow five to ten minutes for the introductory activity; prior to participants walking into the room, make table tents with the following labels: Silent Generation; Baby Boomers; Generation X; and Millennials. Place one table tent on each table.

As participants walk into the room, have them sit at the table labeled with their respective generation. If they are unsure of which their generation is, you can help them by referring to the years listed on the fact sheet. Once all participants are seated at the appropriate tables, ask them to chat around the table about the

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following questions:

- What are some major events (i.e. political, environmental, news, etc.) that happened during your youth?
- How many children were raised in your family?
- What was your family life like (i.e. What did you do for fun?)?
- What are some of your workplace values?

Encourage groups to talk with each other about each of these questions for three to five minutes. After this, have a larger group discussion where each group shares some of their responses (Note: There may not be time for all groups to share for each question; however, allow one to two groups to share for each question, and encourage each group to share at some point.)

Stress that while there are differences within each generation, these differences are not necessarily positive or negative. It is important that each generation recognizes and learns to appreciate the differences.

Objective 1: Compare different generations' characteristics and values

As society continues to change, the experience of each generation continues to be different from the generation before. The norms, values, and experiences we have during our youth and early adulthood affect who we become as people (and ultimately leaders) later in life. In addition, as people are living and working longer, our workplaces are becoming more generationally diverse. As such, it is important for today's workers and volunteers to recognize that there are generational differences and ideally learn to appreciate these differences. Beginning in the early 20th century, we can examine four American generations and the factors that make them different from one another.

Learning Activity 1:

NOTE: Prior to this activity, you will need to select two or three pictures you prefer from those available in the PowerPoint (you will find the PowerPoint link directly below the CLD1-8 KELD facilitator's guides on the KCCL site). Select pictures of the different generations that are most highly represented in your audience group—they are more likely to identify with the pictures. Once you have chosen your preferred pictures, have them ready to be shown on the computer.

Show each of the two to three different farming/agriculture pictures you have chosen (one at a time) to your audience. Describe each picture and talk about what life/society was like at the time of the picture (you

can ask the audience for help). As you discuss the pictures, share descriptions and values from the specific generation. It may be helpful to use specific generation information from the fact sheet (CLD1-8). See the first two paragraphs under each section.

Bring the discussion to a close by sharing that while it is obvious that each generation has different values and characteristics, each of us also has positive knowledge and characteristics to contribute to the workplace and life in general. Realizing these differences is the first step toward appreciation.

Objective 2: Analyze how changes and events in society influence generational perspectives

As mentioned previously, each generation has been affected by changes or events in society, especially during their formative years (youth into young adulthood). These experiences affect that generations' outlook on life.

Learning Activity 2:

Within their generational groups (participants should still be sitting around their generational tables) ask participants to discuss the following questions:

1. During your formative years (through early college) what were some of the significant local, state, national or world events that you remember in the news?
2. What are the three to five most important values that characterize your generation (these were probably brought up in Learning Activity 1)?
3. How did the events mentioned in Question 1 influence the development of your generation's values?

Give the groups five to eight minutes to discuss these three questions. Then ask each generational group to share with the larger group. Take time to discuss with the group how their experiences are reflected in their own generational values.

Objective 3: Examine how generational values are reflected in family, work, and social behaviors

Often there is great potential in the workplace or community for inaccurate perceptions of generational difference, potentially leading to conflict. In many cases, our underlying values may be similar, but how we demonstrate those values can be reflected in different behaviors.

Common Generational Perceptions:

Xers say boomers:

- Are too political
- Don't practice what they preach
- Are workaholics
- Need validation
- Are self-righteous

Boomers say Xers:

- Aren't loyal
- Have no work ethic
- Are not committed
- Are self-focused
- Have no respect

Millennials:

- Have influenced today's workplace environment
- Like being connected through technology
- Like supervisors that guide, coax, and coach, and not rule as in the past
- Have doses of loyalty, optimism, skepticism
- Appreciate diversity
- Are realistic
- Gravitate toward group activity
- Learn best through experiences

Learning Activity 3:

Distribute the *Valley View Farm: Generational Divide* handout. Allow five to eight minutes for individuals to read and answer the questions.

Once individuals have finished, take time to review the worksheet. On a flip chart (or whiteboard) list the generational misconceptions George, Sam and Bennet have about the others (Questions 1 through 3; the handout answer key is below). After all the misconceptions have been listed, talk about why they are misconceptions and where the misconceptions come from. Many of the misconceptions are because of differing characteristics between generations (see CLD1-8 factsheet). Talk about some of the differences in characteristics between generations. Once you have finished, ask the audience for the suggestions they have to deal with these generational differences/misconceptions (Question 4). Talk about the appropriateness of their suggestions, and then ask them for their own personal examples and discuss appropriate suggestions for improvement.

Key:

1. George (Baby Boomer) feels that Sam (Generation Xer) isn't really committed to the farm, has no work ethic, is too self-focused and ultimately, doesn't show George the respect he deserves.
2. Sam thinks George is a self-righteous workaholic who needs validation and doesn't practice what he preaches.
3. Both George and Sam think Bennet spends too much time with technology and don't like the new technologies that Bennet is interested in integrating into farm operations. They both think Bennet needs to be directed/told what to do.
4. Answers may vary. You determine what appropriate answers could be. Some suggestions:
 - Have George, Sam and Bennet sit down and talk about their misconceptions (perhaps with a third party).
 - Allow Bennet to talk about his ideas for the farm and perhaps give him some small project to do on his own (to prove himself). Once he proves that he can do it, give him more responsibility.
 - Sit down and talk about everyone's strengths/preferences in what they like to do on the farm. Then delegate those responsibilities to those individuals.

Summary:

Each generation is significantly different from those who preceded or came after it, due to societal influences and major events during their developmental years. Each generation has its own strengths as well as challenges. It is important that we recognize and even learn to value our generational differences.

Reference:

- Culp, K., III. (2010). CLD1-8: Understanding Generational Differences, Kentucky Extension Leadership Development (KELD). Lexington, KY: KY Cooperative Extension, 8 pgs.

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Valley View Farm

A Generational Divide

Valley View Farm is a family farm on a beautiful piece of land in rural Kentucky. For more than four generations people have been working the land and raising corn, cattle and a little hay. Over the years much of the technology has changed, but not the products. Because the farm is relatively large, currently there are three generations working together on the farm:

- George—grandfather, 68 (Baby Boomer)
- Sam—father, 45 (Generation X)
- Bennet—grandson, 22 (Millennial)

Recently, Bennet has been asking George for more responsibility on the farm; George is hesitant to give Bennet more leeway because of the family conflict already occurring. George and Sam have been having a lot of arguments recently—for a variety of reasons. George (Baby Boomer) feels that Sam (Generation Xer) isn't really committed to the farm, has no work ethic, is too self-focused and, ultimately, doesn't show George the respect he deserves. On the other hand, Sam thinks George is a self-righteous, workaholic who needs validation and doesn't practice what he preaches. All of these issues have been contributing to the larger issue of generational conflict—and have left Bennet very frustrated.

The one thing they can agree on is Bennet (Millennial). Both George and Sam think Bennet spends too much time with technology—texting, tweeting, typing, etc. In addition, they aren't crazy about all of these newfangled technologies that Bennet is interested in integrating into farm operations. They both have tried to be more direct and tell Bennet what he needs to be doing—to no avail. Bennet still does things his own way. All of this leaves George and Sam very frustrated. But there's one thing they can agree on—Bennet is *not* ready to take over more responsibility on the farm.

1. What are some of the misconceptions that George has about Sam? _____

2. What are some of the misconceptions that Sam has about George? _____

3. What are some of the misconceptions that both Sam and George have about Bennet? _____

4. Suggestions for improvement (How can the misconceptions listed above be dealt with on the family farm?):
