

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 the ones that preceded and followed it because members of each generation have been shaped and molded by markedly different societal influences during their developmental years. These differences in perspective usually can be attributed to generational differences. In many cases, this difference in generational perspective can lead to misunderstanding and create conflict at home, at work or in community activities.

Program Goal:

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

Program Objectives:

1. To compare different generations' characteristics and values
2. To analyze how changes and events in society influence generational perspectives
3. To examine how generational values are reflected in family, work and social behaviors

Pre-Program Preparation:

- Read *Understanding Generational Differences* fact sheet.
- Prepare PowerPoint Slides—Norman Rockwell's "Freedom from Want" and C. F. Payne's "Thanksgiving"—projector, laptop computer.
- Collect pictures of different generations at work, play, and at home for Objective 3 activity.
- Make copies of *Handout 1*.

Introduction:

Each generation is significantly different from those that preceded and followed it because members of

each generation have been shaped and molded by markedly different societal influences during their 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:

Step 1: Have participants line up in birth order from oldest to youngest.

Step 2: Have participants introduce themselves giving their year of birth.

Step 3: Ask groups of participants to divide into groups by generational name in the following categories:

- » 1901-1929: Civic Generation
- » 1929-1946: Mediating, or Silent, Generation
- » 1946-1964: Baby Boomers
- » 1965-1981: Generation Xers
- » 1981-2001: Millennials

Ask each generational group to discuss the following questions:

- How many children were raised in your family?
- How did your family spend Sunday afternoons?
- Did you work for salary or wages during your school-age years?
- What did you do on Saturday night for fun?
- What were the most popular TV shows when you were in grade school and high school?

Have people go back to their seats and sit in generational groups.

This leadership curriculum was developed by Family & Consumer Science (FCS) agents with University of Kentucky specialists. Examples in the guide are geared toward an FCS audience such as Kentucky Extension Homemakers. This guide may be reproduced or modified for educational or training purposes and used with other audiences.

Objective 1: To compare six different generations' characteristics and values

Show Norman Rockwell's "Freedom from Want" and/or C.F. Payne's "Thanksgiving" from the Power-Point. Ask: What similarities and differences in the generational values and characteristics do you see in the two scenes?

Share descriptions and values from each generation. (Use information from fact sheet: first two paragraphs under each paragraph.)

Learning Activity 1:

Ask a representative of each generational group to come forward and answer each of the questions discussed in the introductory activity.

Discuss with the group how their experiences are reflective of their generational values.

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

Each generation has been affected by changes or events in society. These experiences help determine how each generation perceives life.

Learning Activity 2:

Ask participants to discuss, within their generational groups, the following questions:

- During your formative years (through high school) what were some of the significant local, state, national or world events that you remember in the news?
- How did those events influence the development of your life values?

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

There is great potential in the workplace and in the community for conflict-based inaccurate perceptions of generational differences. In most cases, our underlying values may be the same, but how we exhibit those values can be reflected in different behaviors.

Show a picture representative of each generation and discuss the content from the handout (values, characteristics in the workplace, and characteristics as a volunteer).

Learning Activity 3:

First of all, consider how each generation prefers to communicate and fill out *Handout 1*. (For help and additional information, please refer to CLD1-8). See *key below*. Once everyone has had a chance to fill out the handout, discuss the differences in communication preferences according to generation.

Then, using the communication information discussed above, develop a membership campaign for the Kentucky Extension Homemakers Association designed to recruit multiple generations.

- For a special recruitment activity, what communication method would work best for each generation?
- What message would you emphasize for each generation to create interest in your organization?

KEY: **1.** X,M; **2.** S,C; **3.** X,B; **4.** S,M; **5.** S,C; **6.** S,C; **7.** S,B,C; **8.** S,B,C; **9.** S,C; **10.** S,C; **11.** C; **12.** X; **13.** M,X; **14.** S,B; **15.** C,S; **16.** S,B; **17.** M; **18.** S,B; **19.** S,B; **20.** B,X; **21.** X,B; **22.** M,B,X; **23.** S,M; **24.** M; **25.** S,C; **26.** B,C,S.

Summary

Working with people of different generations can be rewarding and productive. An "A-B-C" approach can be used to develop respect among the generations:

- A: Accommodate differences. Remember that a diversity of perspectives enriches an organization. Understand and appreciate generational differences.
- B: Be flexible. Be willing to step out of your box. Focus on the end result rather than the process or other people.
- C: Create an atmosphere of trust. Do not try to micro-manage other people. Involve others in planning and decision making. Provide clear and specific goals and, the resources needed, then step out of the way.

Understanding the difference in generations and developing respect between the generations is key to potentially decreasing conflict at home, at work and in the community.

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Handout 1

Understanding Generational Differences Communication Styles Across the Generations

Mark each of the following communication methods or styles with a letter denoting the generation(s) that use them

Civics, born 1901-1929, with *C*

Silents, born 1929-1946, with *S*

Boomers, born 1946-1964, with *B*

Generation Xers, born 1965-1981, with *X*

Millennials, born 1981-2001, with *M*

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|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| 1. _____ | Facebook | 14. _____ | Meeting |
| 2. _____ | Newspaper | 15. _____ | Lecture/speech |
| 3. _____ | E-mail | 16. _____ | Coaching |
| 4. _____ | Text messaging | 17. _____ | Mentoring |
| 5. _____ | Land-line phone | 18. _____ | Handouts |
| 6. _____ | Cell phone | 19. _____ | Flyers |
| 7. _____ | Face-to-face conversation | 20. _____ | PowerPoint presentation |
| 8. _____ | Radio | 21. _____ | Television |
| 9. _____ | Newsletter | 22. _____ | Video |
| 10. _____ | Handwritten note | 23. _____ | DVD |
| 11. _____ | Black and white | 24. _____ | YouTube |
| 12. _____ | Full color | 25. _____ | Direct mail |
| 13. _____ | Website | 26. _____ | Billboard |

Which communication methods or styles would be most successful to recruit new Homemaker members or Extension volunteers?