



UNDERSTANDING THE GENERATIONS

Different generations are not simply older or younger, they differ in their beliefs and values. One of the keys to understanding these differences is to look at what major cultural experiences each generation faced when they were coming of age. Wars, recessions, cultural events, and technological advances can sometimes lead to generations having drastically different perspectives and attitudes in life.

Understanding generations is important for communicating effectively to one's audience. The information in this card deck is for understanding overall trends not for critiquing individuals. People vary widely depending upon personal beliefs and experiences. But larger cultural shifts are apparent as we look at history unfolding.

This graph shows the recent percentages of each generation in the U.S. work force.

2010 WORKFORCE %¹

- Traditionalists 05%
- Baby Boomers ... 37%
- Gen Xers 23%
- Millennials 35%



1. Jeanne C Meister and Karie Willyerd, "Are You Ready to Manage Five Generations of Workers?", Harvard Business Review, 2:48 PM October 16, 2009, <http://blogs.hbr.org/>



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KOREA



TRADITIONALISTS

(a.k.a. "the Lucky Few", "Veterans",
or "the Silent Generation")



TRADITIONALISTS

born 1929 to 1945
population: 46 million¹

Grew up in shadow of the Great Depression and WWII. Raised with strict regimen. Taught the value of hard work, respect, and authority. Learned to be self-sacrificial in working toward a common goal.

CHARACTERISTICS:

- patriotic
- respect for authority
- keep rules
- seek conformity
- loyalty to company
- hard working
- dedication, and perseverance
- rationing, thrift, and spending wisely
- believe in division of labor with clear distinction between boss and worker

VALUES:

- duty before fun
- discipline
- working toward a greater good
- traditional values
- respect, appreciation

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2007
American Community Survey

DO THE
RIGHT
THING



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VIETNAM



BABY BOOMERS

(a.k.a. "the Me Generation")



BABY BOOMERS

born 1946 to 1964
population: 78 million¹

Grew up in the most affluent time ever recorded in the USA. Embraced sacrifice to get ahead which made them very loyal to their employers. Also grew up with the paranoia of the Cold War.

CHARACTERISTICS:

- distrust government
- individualistic
- competitive
- workaholics
- most disposable income of any generation
- dedication, and perseverance
- rationing, thrift, and spending wisely
- process and output not implications and outcomes

VALUES:

- personal gratification
- career
- health & wellness
- job status and perks
- face to face communication

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2007
American Community Survey

**WORK
TILL YOU
DROP**



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GULF WAR



GENERATION X

(a.k.a. "Post Boomers")



GENERATION X

born 1965 to 1982
population: 50 million¹

Grew up after the peak of affluence. Many were latchkey children as both parents increasingly had careers. Also the first generation to grow up with computer technology.

CHARACTERISTICS:

- distrust of institutions
- cynical
- pragmatic, independent, self-reliant
- works to earn living, no company loyalty
- knowledge seeking and sharing
- less work-focused
- world-weary
- pessimistic, skeptical
- tech savvy

VALUES:

- balance between work and family
- flexibility and fun
- informal work environment

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2007
American Community Survey

**HAVE
A LIFE**



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WAR ON
TERROR



MILLENNIALS

(a.k.a. "Generation Y" or
"Echo-Boomers")





MILLENNIALS

born 1983 to 2001
population: 88 million¹

Grew up with the internet. Constantly connected, they are multi-taskers and bore easily. They understand how to use new technology better than any generation before them

CHARACTERISTICS:

- political
- respect norms & institutions
- technology-based peer community
- global, multicultural
- exist to consume, materialistic
- confident, self reliant
- opinionated
- optimistic and positive
- entrepreneurs
- tech empowered

VALUES:

- freedom to choose alternative lifestyles
- multiple work opportunities
- image-oriented communication

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2007
American Community Survey

**LIVE
& LET
LIVE**



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