



CATALYST4GROWTH

Generational Gap

Executive Read

Lack of effective messaging and communication between the hierarchy of an organization, and sometimes the omission of a specific communication strategy, is one of the most pressing, yet poorly addressed challenges facing businesses today. Exacerbating these challenges are the widening chasms between generational vocabulary and norms of communication. In fact, [86% of employees and executives](#) cite the lack of effective collaboration and communication as the main causes for workplace failures.

It's one thing to say that lack of effective communication is the one of the predominant causes of workplace failure, but how much are communication failures really costing businesses? Inc.com states communication barriers could be costing businesses around [\\$37 billion a year](#).

The good news however, is this same report found that companies with leaders who possess effective communication skills, which implies they have implemented a cross generational communication strategy, produce a 47 percent higher return to shareholders over a five-year period.

In order to understand how to overcome this challenge, we have to understand who is being communicated to and the generations that are involved.

Firstly, we have the Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964. They tend to prefer face-to-face communication and may lean towards formal language and written correspondence. They often value personal relationships and loyalty, and they appreciate direct communication that shows respect for their experience and expertise. Baby Boomers, having the longest experience and history of their norms of communication, may have the most room to give to adapt. They need to understand that being short or passive aggressive across communication platforms, damages relationships. Stop using "THX", or abbreviation just to try to fit into other generations.

Next up, we have Generation X, born roughly between 1965 and 1980. The Generation X group often embraces a more balanced approach to communication. They are comfortable with both traditional methods like email and phone calls and are open to adopting new technologies like social media and texting.

Moving on to the Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996, who have grown up in the digital age. They are tech-savvy and gravitate towards instant messaging and social media platforms. Millennials often prefer efficiency and flexibility in communication, valuing the ability to multitask and respond promptly. This is a group I have experienced first hand with Regal Holdings. Millennial employees are more willing to communicate through email than to pick up the phone to resolve an issue. This generation is the first interconnected generation, so they don't value personal relationships to the degree the other generations do. Millennials are a transactional generation and not so transformational.

Lastly, we have Generation Z, born after 1997, who are true digital natives. They have an innate understanding of technology and are heavily reliant on smartphones and social media for communication. Their attention span may be shorter, often never having read a physical book, they prefer quick, bite-sized information. Generation Z is interesting as they see the world with a more global view since they have always been connected to the world through technology. Being a part of this generation is different, we hear that we aren't able to balance a checkbook or complete tasks that all of the boomers know. Yet all of us in this generation feel that we know more or have access to more information since we are the most proficient with technology. Attacking this generation can cause retaliation and resentment from them, often at the speed of technology.

In order to overcome this generational communication challenge, we need to move forward with six key tenants that we all can actively work on with ourselves and others.

Respect Each Other: Understand differences and respect those differences, show respect for their experiences and knowledge. Other generations have insights that can prove invaluable.

Active Listening: Regardless of the generation, active listening is crucial. Give your full attention to the speaker, ask questions, and show genuine interest in their perspective.

Be Open to Change: Consider your audience and be willing to adapt your communication style to meet the preferences of the other generations. This could mean being more tech-savvy or using more formal language, depending on the situation.

Provide Context: When communicating with older generations, adding context to your messages can help them understand the relevance and importance of the information.

Embrace Technology with Caution: For older generations, slowly introduce them to new technologies and be patient in guiding them through the learning process.

Use Multi-Channel Communication: Recognize that different generations might prefer different communication channels. A mix of face-to-face, phone calls, emails, and messaging can ensure inclusivity.




















Moving forward if you begin to utilize multi-channel communication with your teams and others around you, we can begin to cross the chasm of breaking down these generational

communication challenges. Teams can come together and accomplish more while relationships across companies and teams are being built, creating the more positive culture we all desire

Be a part of the 47% of leaders who possess effective communication skills and create a better working environment while bringing greater profitability to your team and company.

"To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."-Tony Robbins

Chart 1: An overview of the working generations

Characteristics	Maturists (pre-1945)	Baby Boomers (1945-1960)	Generation X (1961-1980)	Generation Y (1981-1995)	Generation Z (Born after 1995)
Formative experiences	Second World War Rationing Fixed-gender roles Rock 'n' Roll Nuclear families Defined gender roles — particularly for women	Cold War Post-War boom "Swinging Sixties" Apollo Moon landings Youth culture Woodstock Family-orientated Rise of the teenager	End of Cold War Fall of Berlin Wall Reagan / Gorbachev Thatcherism Live Aid Introduction of first PC Early mobile technology Latch-key kids; rising levels of divorce	9/11 terrorist attacks PlayStation Social media Invasion of Iraq Reality TV Google Earth Glastonbury	Economic downturn Global warming Global focus Mobile devices Energy crisis Arab Spring Produce own media Cloud computing Wiki-leaks
Percentage in U.K. workforce*	3%	33%	35%	29%	Currently employed in either part-time jobs or new apprenticeships
Aspiration	Home ownership	Job security	Work-life balance	Freedom and flexibility	Security and stability
Attitude toward technology	Largely disengaged	Early information technology (IT) adaptors	Digital Immigrants	Digital Natives	"Technoholics" — entirely dependent on IT; limited grasp of alternatives
Attitude toward career	Jobs are for life	Organisational — careers are defined by employers	Early "portfolio" careers — loyal to profession, not necessarily to employer	Digital entrepreneurs — work "with" organisations not "for"	Career multitaskers — will move seamlessly between organisations and "pop-up" businesses
Signature product	 Automobile	 Television	 Personal Computer	 Tablet/Smart Phone	Google glass, graphene, nano-computing, 3-D printing, driverless cars
Communication media	 Formal letter	 Telephone	 E-mail and text message	 Text or social media	 Hand-held (or integrated into clothing) communication devices
Communication preference	 Face-to-face	 Face-to-face ideally, but telephone or e-mail if required	 Text messaging or e-mail	 Online and mobile (text messaging)	 FaceTime
Preference when making financial decisions	 Face-to-face meetings	 Face-to-face ideally, but increasingly will go online	 Online — would prefer face-to-face if time permitting	 Face-to-face	 Solutions will be digitally crowd-sourced

*Percentages are approximate at the time of publication.

(Redmond 2013)

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