



## Generations in the Workplace

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## Objectives

- Learn how workplace attitudes, beliefs and behaviors are impacted by when we grew up.
- Use a generational lens to gain insight into interactions:
  - Among staff
  - Between staff and students
- Discover new choices for working with people from different generations.
- Make generational differences a source of strength for the Williams.

## Agenda

- 1 • Introduction
- 2 • Intergenerational Communication & Empathy
- 3 • Generational Snapshots and Case Studies

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## Disclaimer

- There are vast differences between people we'll categorize as being part of the same generation.
- Good social science research on this topic is hard to come by ... blog entries by self-appointed "experts" abound.

## Generational Differences: Why Do They Matter?

- Things that happen around us when we're growing up make a big difference
  - Example: People brought up during the depression don't like to spend money
- For centuries, our lives were pretty much the same.
- Now, dramatic changes are happening to our lives in just a few decades.
  - Examples?
- Four generations are working side by side with each other, with very different stories
- Those differences matter in how we work with each other

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- 1 • Introduction
- 2 • **Intergenerational Communication & Empathy**
- 3 • Generational Snapshots and Case Studies

## Generational Empathy

- What value is the person aiming for?
  - Stability or Innovation?
  - Discipline or Flexibility?
  - Live to work or work to live?
  - A wired world or face to face interactions?
- How can you communicate respect for that value?
- What are your common interests?
  - Getting the job done
  - Service
  - Creating a positive workplace

## Facilitating Conversations Across Generations

- Listen and reflect back the value the other person is aiming for
- Everyone contributes to a pool of shared meaning
- Emphasize common ground

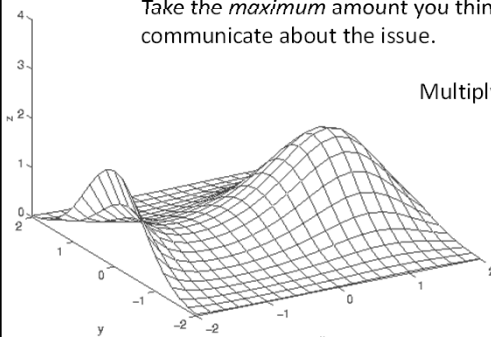
How much communication is enough?

**MAX X 10 = MIN**

Take the *maximum* amount you think you need to communicate about the issue.

Multiply by 10.

That's the *minimum*.



## Agenda

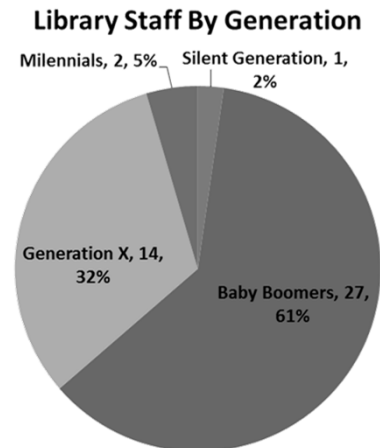
- 1 • Introduction
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- 3 • **Generational Snapshots and Case Studies**

- Four Generations
  - Silent Generation (born 1925 – 1942)
  - Baby Boomers (born 1943-1965)
  - Generation X (1966-1985)
  - Millennials (1986- 1996)

## Generations in the Williams Workforce

Includes faculty, admin,  
and support staff.

Does not include almost 2200  
students, 1400 of whom are  
student employees.



### Millennials (1986-1996)

- Work and life merged with smartphones
- Self-esteem generation
- Impatient for recognition and increased responsibilities

## Famous Millennials (1986-1996)

- Mark Zuckerberg (well, ok, 1984)
- Malala Yousafszai
- Kim Kardashian
- Jessica Simpson
- Beyonce Knowles
- Britney Spears
- Justin Timberlake

## Millennials – Memorable Events (1986-1996)

- 2008 Recession and Occupy Wall Street
- Dawn of Social Media, Telecommuting, Paperless Office



## Millennial Case Study

- Read the case study
- Discuss:
  - What are your immediate reactions to this person?
    - Likes/dislikes
    - Judgments
  - What values might be important to this person?
  - How might they define “a job”?
  - Discuss strategies for interacting with this coworker:
    - If you were their manager
    - If you were their peer
    - If you were their customer

## **Generations in the Workplace**

### **Case Study: Millennial Role**

You're a heavy smartphone user, in fact sometimes you need to charge it twice in the same day. You take personal calls at work, sure, but the work still gets done, which is the most important thing. Also during the blizzard you were the first to get the news and were right on top of all of the changes that needed to be made to run the library on a skeleton crew. You're an hourly employee but you have no problem taking these extra steps from home from time to time. Also you spend a lot of time with library patrons teaching them how to use technology, and you consider yourself really good at explaining things to people no matter how old they are ... what you can't stand is when people aren't ready to learn something new. You saw that comment on Facebook someone made about the "dinosaurs" at the library, and you didn't think it was cool, but what people say on their own time is their business, right?

## Generation X (1966-1985)

- Latchkey Kids
- Skeptical, ironic
- Values freedom and flexibility
- Comfortable hopping from job to job
- Values work/life balance
- Mission driven
- Breakfast Club, Ferris Bueller's Day Off

## A Few Famous Members of Generation X (1966-1985)

- Rand Paul
- Charlie Sheen
- Ben Stiller
- Sarah Jessica Parker
- Rand Paul
- Gordon Ramsay
- Ted Cruz
- Marco Rubio
- Winona Ryder and Ethan Hawke

## Generation X – Memorable Events (1966-1985)

- Threat of Nuclear Holocaust
- 9/11
- Dawn of the Internet
- .com Boom and Bust

## Generation X Case Study

- Read the case study
- Discuss:
  - What are your immediate reactions to this person?
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  - What values might be important to this person?
  - How might they define “a job”?
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## **Generations in the Workplace**

### **Case Study: Generation X Role**

You have a smartphone but do your best not to use it for work, or at work. As a parent of two kids at the child care center, you have had to take phone calls at work when one or the other was sick, and to communicate with your husband to talk about transportation to soccer practice. It's just easier to use your mobile since you're often in the stacks.

Also you have what you think is a great idea, to create a twitter feed to let library patrons know which titles are popular. But you haven't been able to make any headway on it because no one seems to know how to get the address or posts to it approved before they go out.

## Baby Boomers (born 1943-1965)

- Largest generational group in the workplace
- Driven for upward mobility, willing to work long hours
- Less comfortable with advances in tech.
- Providing care to both parents and children
- 2008 Financial Crisis postponed retirement for many

## A Few Famous Baby Boomers (born 1943-1965)

- Steve Jobs
- Bill & Melinda Gates
- Sylvester Stallone
- Bill Clinton
- Hillary Clinton
- Condoleeza Rice
- Ellen DeGeneris
- Sonia Gandhi
- Arianna Huffington
- George W Bush
- Sonia Sotomayor
- Elton John
- Oprah Winfrey

## Baby Boomers: Memorable Events (born 1943-1965)

- **Baby Boomer cohort #1** (born from 1946 to 1954)
  - Memorable events: assassinations of JFK, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, political unrest, walk on the moon, Vietnam War, anti-war protests, social experimentation, sexual freedom, civil rights movement, environmental movement, women's movement, protests and riots, experimentation with various intoxicating recreational substances
  - Key characteristics: experimental, individualism, free spirited, social cause oriented
- **Baby Boomer cohort #2** (born from 1955 to 1964)
  - Memorable events: Watergate, Nixon resigns, the cold war, the oil embargo, raging inflation, gasoline shortages
  - Key characteristics: less optimistic, distrust of government, general cynicism

## Baby Boomer Case Study

- Read the case study
- Discuss:
  - What are your immediate reactions to this person?
    - Likes/dislikes
    - Judgments
  - What values might be important to this person?
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## **Generations in the Workplace**

### **Case Study: Boomer Role**

You're a middle manager in the library. You oversee 8 permanent employees and a large volume of student employees as well. Your boss has asked you to develop a proposal for some guidelines for the use of social media and smartphones in the library. This is a tricky issue, since you know of several instances recently where this kind of technology has caused some problems.

You don't exactly relish the task before you. There was a time when you were eager to prove yourself and would take on any new challenge for the boss wholeheartedly. Now you're a first time grandparent and you're trying to find a good assisted living placement for your mother. When is work ever going to slow down?



## Silent Generation (born 1925 – 1942)

- Sometimes called “The Lucky Few”
- Respect for employers
- Job security
- Loyal to employers

## A Few Famous Members of the Silent Generation (born 1925 – 1942)

- Lenny Bruce
- Malcolm X
- Andy Warhol
- Shirley Temple
- Warren Buffett
- Woody Allen
- Garrison Keillor
- MLK
- Churchill
- Roosevelt

## Silent Generation: Memorable Events (born 1925 – 1942)

- Grew up in the shadow of the “Greatest Generation”
- Korean War
- Cold War
- Birth control

## Silent Generation Case Study

- Read the case study
- Discuss:
  - What are your immediate reactions to this person?
    - Likes/dislikes
    - Judgments
  - What values might be important to this person?
  - How might they define “a job”?
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## **Generations in the Workplace**

### **Case Study: Silent Generation Role**

You don't own a smartphone and you're not on twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn – in fact you only have a vague idea what these services are or how they differ from each other. You've worked for the library for over 30 years, and now you're working for someone 30 years younger than you with less than 10 years working in a library. There have been a lot of changes in the library. Recently someone came in asking for help with finding the book, and she was trying to show you the call number on the cell phone. You got flustered and ended up looking it up on the computer. It was embarrassing.

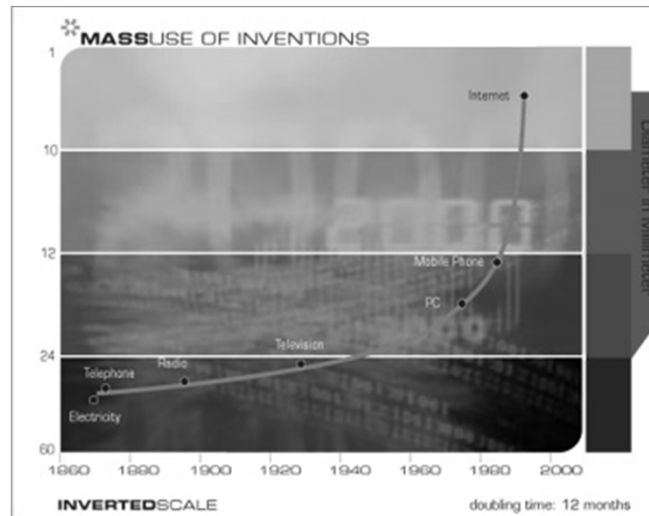
One thing for sure, people shouldn't be talking socially on their cell phones while they work, period. You're regularly seeing behavior in the students and younger employees that would have gotten you fired when you started your career. Maybe it's time for someone to lay down the law.

## What the Future May Hold



- In the next 5-10 years, Boomers will retire in droves. Gen-X will move into leadership positions. Younger workers will take their place.
- Technological change will keep accelerating, and will mold us as much as we mold it.

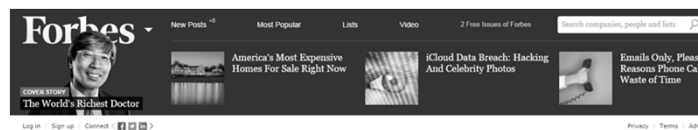
## Technological Acceleration



## Within the Last Year, these technologies have made headlines ...

- 3-D Printing
- Wearable technology
  - Google Glass
  - Smartwatches
- Bitcoin
- Driverless cars
- Commercial drones

## The Nature of Work is Changing



**Josh Bersin**  
Consultant

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*I analyze corporate HR, talent management and leadership. Not too ...*



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## The End of a Job as We Know It

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The concept of a job, as we know it, is starting to go away.

Let me explain. Over the last year I've been speaking with corporate business and human resource leaders and hearing a common theme: *we need our organizations to be more agile. We need to redesign our organization to build dynamic cross-functional teams, communicate faster, and rapidly find experts.*

Companies which do this well, according to our research, outperform those that do not.

Well this quest for the *agile organization* has changed the nature of what we call a job. *Jobs* are turning into *roles*, roles are becoming more highly specialized, and the new currency of value is *expertise*, not simply *experience*.



*Are 'jobs' going away?*



Thank you

- Program evaluation link will be sent by email.
- You'll get a link to a course page with all the materials.

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