



Enterprising Rural Families™

This newsletter is an instrument of the *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work* program of the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. For further information concerning the Enterprising Rural Families program or on-line course contact information@eRuralFamilies.org or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

TIP OF THE MONTH:

Team process checklist:

- Is everyone participating?
- Are the right people involved on the team and present at the meetings?
- Are members communicating well?
- Are members free to disagree with one another?
- Are members working through differences of opinion?
- Are there interpersonal conflicts on the team?
- Does the team have healthy team guidelines for behavior that all have bought into?
- Do team members follow these guidelines?
- Are the goals clear to everyone?
- Is the mission of the team written down and every member have a copy?
- Do members take part in deciding how to improve the team?
- Is the team leader comfortable with facilitating the team?
- Do members attend meetings and complete action items?
- Is progress being made on tasks and goals?
- Is progress being made on how well members work together?
- Do members have a sense they belong to the team?
- Is it clear who is on, and who is not on, the team?

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When Generation X Runs the Show

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You've seen the articles for years now, full of tips and suggestions on how to manage Generation X employees. But, in today's workplace, those articles miss an important point: many Gen Xers now are managers themselves and are responsible for guiding and over-seeing other employees. As a result, a workplace that once asked itself how to manage this newest crop of potential employees must now ask itself, "What type of management will this generation of workers provide?"

Generation X, (those born between 1960 and 1980), were the first generation raised to come home from school to an empty household. They got off the bus, unlocked the door, prepared their own snacks, and started on their chores or homework. Close to 40 percent of all Generation Xers were touched by divorce and almost as many were uprooted or disrupted due to a family member being laid off through buyout or merger.

Their world was different. Their parents or relatives, seen through the eyes of a child as heroes, were regularly victims of corporate downsizing. Even their sports idols left town annually for something referred to as "free agency." And when they watched the nightly news they saw politicians and evangelists challenged by reporters who questioned motives and actions as a way of life. They are skeptical and pragmatic. Bonnie Stedt, a baby boomer and senior relationship leader and executive vice president for American Express in New York City, sees plenty of strengths in Gen X managers. "I look at them as a very promising generation," she says. "They bring so much to the workforce -- especially as managers." In general, she says, Xers tend to be flexible, good at collaboration and consensus building, and mature beyond their years. "They are also capable of multitasking," says Stedt. "They can keep a lot of balls in the air at one time. And Generation X is truly the first generation raised on computers."

She adds that Gen Xers "tend not to be narrow in their thinking because they have been exposed to a lot through television and school and all the problems they have seen around the world."



Robert Wendover, managing director of The Center for Generational Studies, states that as Generation X moves into senior leadership and management they will have a profound impact on the workplace. How will Xers differ as managers?

Emphasis on results:

There will be less intrinsic recognition and reward for long hours and sacrifice. The overall emphasis will transition to an outcome-based measurement of performance.

Less willing to travel and relocate:

With Xers desire for balance, there will be more judicious travel practices. While one should not discount the importance of traveling to important customers, technology is already eliminating some of these practices. As Generation X assumes responsibility, they will make use of this option that will have a significant impact on customer service and organizational communication.

Shorter average leadership tenure:

Those in Generation X have already demonstrated they view work as a contract and not a career. Their desire for flexibility and opportunity will undoubtedly reduce overall leadership tenure for many Gen X. managers. This will impact business assumptions about manager development, recruitment, and costs of turnover.

Technology as a decision-making tool:

Having grown up trusting the computer, it is only natural that Gen X. managers will search for ways to use technology as a decision-making tool. With technology already in use in areas such as agriculture, economics, and geography, it is only a matter of time when Xers will use technology and computers in personnel issues. Where older generations will want to discuss all angles and options of a personnel issue, Gen X managers will turn to the keyboard for a solution.

Reduced emphasis on protocol:

Generation X came of age with Sesame Street. They learned that learning is fun and extrapolated that to include work. This is the attitude they have brought to the workplace; much to the chagrin of older workers who believe that work should be just that—work. As Xers assume senior level positions, they will continue to introduce an atmosphere of informality to the work tasks.

A more perfunctory style of communication:

Generation X has come of age with e-mail and text messaging. They spend less time on the phone or in meetings. This form of communication tends to be brief, to the point, and not to have the emotions attached to them as are common in telephone calls or face-to-face meetings. This emerging generation of leaders will foster a more detached style of communication than we've seen before. The ramifications of this in the workplace remain to be seen.

In summary, the Generation X manager is typically mature beyond their years, adaptable and flexible, and team oriented. They have high expectations of employees and don't buy into power structures; rather they prefer the project-based approach to work. Generation X managers need positive validation for their work or they will not hesitate to quit their jobs. They hate being micro-managed and want independence in their work, which may explain why so many of this generation have turned to entrepreneurship. Ray Williams, executive vice-president of Canada's Premier Career Management Group, argues that Gen X managers will only thrive in organizations that give them independence, reward for merit not years, minimal rules and bureaucracy and an atmosphere that encourages informality and common sense. All of which leaves an awful lot of businesses and organizations with a lot of work to do if they're going to get Gen X on their side.

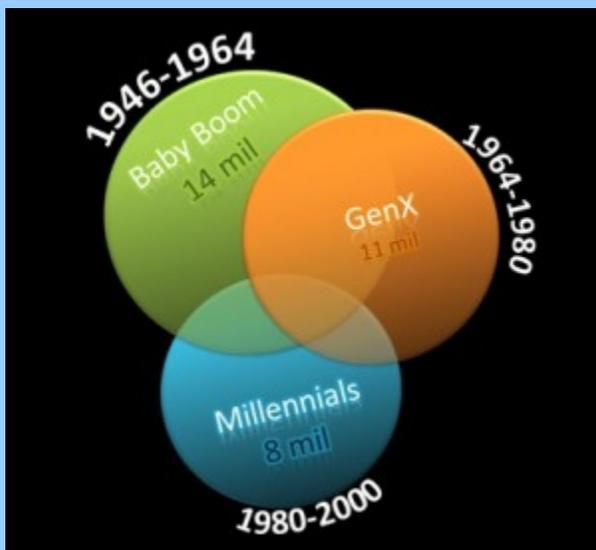


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Generation X, (those born between 1960 and 1980), will have a profound impact on the workplace.

- ▶ They bring different values and attitudes to a traditional workforce
- ▶ Fundamentally different ideas about work, loyalty and commitment
- ▶ New expectations for work satisfaction



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