



## ***SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS***

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A.,  
Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative  
Extension Service

SCFCL WEBSITE: <http://clemson.edu/fyd/fcl.htm>

### **Leader Training Guide**

#### **Mean What You Say - Say What You Mean: Guide to Intergenerational Communication**

**Objective:** To communicate more effectively with multi-generations

#### **Lesson Overview/Introduction:**

For the first time in modern history, family demographics now span four generations, meaning that 20-year-olds can find themselves side-by-side with friends/family who are older than they are by 50 years (or even more). The median age of the U.S. worker in 2006 was 40 years, which is the highest in history. One-third of the white-collar federal workforce is between 50-59 years old. Understanding Communication differences and preferences is critical to fostering healthy relationships with family and friends.

#### **Lesson:**

Each generation has unique communication preferences. Family members and friends that understand and adapt to those preferences will have a much easier time effectively communicating. To understand how to communicate effectively with multi-generations, we must determine what life experiences have affected their development. The following overview will help you to understand the 4 Generation Models

#### **Lesson Summary:**

#### **Generational Models**

World War II – Born before 1946  
Baby Boomers – Born 1946 – 1964  
Generation X – Born 1965 – 1980  
Millennial Generation – Born after 1980

#### ***WHERE DO YOU BELONG?***

#### **World War II Generation**

in 2006 8% 12.5 million – NOW in 2011 5% 7 million

Also known as... Traditionalists, Builders, Matures, Industrialists, Depression Babies, Radio Babies, GI Joe Generation, and Greatest Generation

1937 Hindenburg tragedy

1937 Disney's first animated feature (Snow White)

1941 Hitler invades Russia

1941 Pearl Harbor; U.S. enters World War II

1945 World War II ends in Europe and Japan

1947 Jackie Robinson joins major league baseball

1950 Korean War begins

Words to Live By:

Make do or do without. Stay in line. Sacrifice. Be heroic. Consider the common good.

Popular technology in the era that shaped them: Radio

Rewards - Tangible symbols of loyalty, commitment, and service including plaques and certificates

Preferred methods of communication - Memos, letters, and personal notes

### **Baby Boom Generation**

**in 2006    44%    66 million – NOW in 2011    38%    60 million**

Boomers, Vietnam Generation, and Me Generation

1954 First transistor radio

1960 Birth control pills introduced

1962 John Glenn circles the earth

1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. leads march on Washington & President Kennedy assassinated

1965 U.S. sends troops to Vietnam

1967 World's first heart transplant

1969 U.S. moon landing & Woodstock

1970 Women's liberation demonstrations

Words to Live By:

Be anything you want to be. Change the world. Work well with others. Live up to expectation.

Duck and cover.

Popular technology in the era that shaped them: Television

Rewards

Personal appreciation, promotion, and recognition

Preferred methods of communication

Phone calls, personal interaction

### **Generation X**

**In 2006    33%    50 million - NOW in 2011    32%    51 million**

GenX, Baby Busters, Twenty-somethings, Thirteenth Generation (since the American Revolution), and Post-Boomers

1973 Global energy crisis

1976 Tandy and Apple market PCs

1978 Mass suicide in Jonestown

1979 Three Mile Island accident & Margaret Thatcher becomes first female British Prime Minister

1981 AIDS identified

1986 Chernobyl disaster & Challenger Disaster

1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill & Berlin Wall falls & Tiananmen Square uprisings

Words to Live By:

Don't count on it. Heroes don't exist. Get real. Take care of yourself. Always ask "why?"

Popular technology in the era that shaped them: The personal computer

Rewards

Free time, upgraded resources, opportunities for development, bottom-line results, certifications to add to their resumes

Preferred methods of communication

Voice mail, email

## **Millennial Generation**

**in 2006 15% 22 million – NOW in 2011 25% 40 million**

Generation Y, Internet Generation, Echo Boomers, Boomlet, Nexters, Nintendo Generation, Sunshine Generation, and Digital Generation

1990 Nelson Mandela released

1993 Apartheid ends

1995 Bombing of Federal building in Oklahoma City

1997 Princess Diana dies

1999 Columbine High School shootings

2001 World Trade Center attacks

2002 Enron, WorldCom and corporate scandal

2003 War begins in Iraq

2004 Tsunami in the Asian Ocean

2005 Hurricane Katrina

You are special. Leave no one behind. Connect 24/7. Achieve now! Serve your community.

Popular technology in the era that shaped them: The Internet

### **Rewards**

Awards, certificates, tangible evidence of credibility

### **Preferred methods of communication**

IM, blogs, text messages, emails, Twitter, Facebook



## **Suggested Activities:**

Myth or Reality – Ask members to determine if the statements are Myths (False) or Realities (True) - ALL are FALSE – allow for group discussion.

- Myth: Millennials are only in it for themselves.
- Reality: The Higher Education Research Institute has surveyed college freshmen and found the highest levels of social concern and responsibility since 1966. In 2006 “the importance of helping others” was the third highest common value held by incoming students
- Myth: Millennials have a sense of entitlement and want opportunities handed to them.
- Reality: A major survey of U.S. employees revealed that Millennials have an entrepreneurial spirit that makes them self-reliant.
- Myth: Millennials have a lot in common with Generation Xers.
- Reality: Millennials as a generation have more in common with Baby Boomers and the World War II Generation than with Generation Xers.
- Myth: Generation Xers aren’t willing to work hard.
- Reality: Generation Xers are willing to work hard, but believe it’s unfair to expect a 70-hour week for 40 hours of pay. Generation Xers want a life beyond work.
- Myth: Baby Boomers are a selfish “me generation.”
- Reality: Baby Boomers want to make contributions to their clients, employers and community. A 2005 study found that 58% of those 50 to 59 are interested in finding work that contributes to the greater good, naming education and social services among their top choices

- Myth: Baby Boomers have quit learning.
- Reality: Baby Boomers are enrolling in adult education and college programs at record rates.
- Myth: Baby Boomers are workaholics.
- Reality: Baby Boomers today are committed to a slower pace and eager to find creative ways to simplify their lives. One study found that nearly half of Baby Boomers would prefer to work an average of eight fewer hours a week.
- Myth: Older workers get sick more often than younger workers.
- Reality: Mature persons are less likely to have dependent children and they use less sick time for short-term illnesses. One 2006 survey showed that World War II generation workers took the fewest sick days.
- Myth: Older workers can't learn technology.
- Reality: Older adults are willing students when training is done respectfully and in an environment with low stress. A 2005 study found that mature workers were more willing than their younger counterparts to learn new technology.

Summary:

**Communication TIPS – Say What You Mean – Mean What You Say**

- When communicating with a member of the World War II Generation: Words and tone of voice should be respectful, with good grammar, clear diction, no slang or profanity.
- When communicating with a Baby Boomer: This conversation should be more relational, perhaps over coffee or lunch. Boomers tend to see relationship and business results as intertwined. Ask about mutual interests (e.g. “How is your son doing in college?”). Make the conversation participative
- When communicating with a Generation Xer: Don't waste the person's time. Be direct and straightforward. Send an email or leave a voicemail that states clearly what you want and when you want it
- When communicating with a Millennial: Be positive. Send a text message or meet face-to-face. Tie the message to the Millennial's personal goals. Don't be condescending. Avoid cynicism and sarcasm.

Regardless of age, thoughtful and sincere communication can make a difference in fostering healthy relationships. Remember, Say What You Mean and Mean What You Say!

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Sources/References: AARP – Leading a Multigenerational Workforce