

Generational Differences

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Generational differences provide more information than you might suspect

By Tom Fitzgerald, CEO, Nevadaworks

Early last year, I attended a seminar that focused on the four generations currently represented in our workforce. As a businessman, I had never thought about generational differences but I was aware that not all employees shared the same work motivations I held. In fact, as my interaction with individuals younger than me increased, I began to have concerns that they did not understand my points of view. I went to the seminar hoping I would learn some techniques that would help me overcome my concerns.

What I learned has changed me forever. Each generation is truly different and that difference is alive and well in our work places. I was so taken by this information that I had Nevadaworks organize two seminars attended by over 100 people, our Board heard noted generationalist Neil Howe (www.lifesource.com) at its June retreat and I started presenting this valuable information to businesses and organizations throughout northern Nevada.

What creates a generation and what do generational differences mean to executives and managers trying to produce a product or service that will add to the company's bottom line profitability? Here are some insights:

Generations share fads, historical events, time passage, bonding, technology, music, culture, birth, attitudes, heroes, passions, and life experiences. Think about your generation. You can recall historical events, music concerts, major storms, and new food fads as clearly today as when they first occurred. Yet others on either side of your generation may look at you when you describe these items as though you are from another planet!

Broadly speaking, the four generations are:

Traditionalists (1925 - 1942, 5% of current workforce) typified by hard work, dedication/sacrifice, respect for rules, and honor;

Baby Boomers (1943 - 1964, 45% of current workforce) typified by optimism, personal gratification, involvement, and personal growth;

Generation X (1965 - 1981, 40% of current workforce) typified by a lack of heroes, independence, techno- literacy, fun, informality, and pragmatism;

Millennials (1982 - 2002, 10% of current workforce) typified by civic responsibility, self-confidence, achievement orientation, and respect for diversity.

Each of these generations sees the world differently. For example:

	Traditionalists	Boomers	Xers	Millennials
Outlook	Practical	Optimistic	Skeptical	Hopeful
Work Ethic	Dedicated	Driven	Balanced	Determined
View of Authority	Respectful	Love/Hate	Unimpressed	Polite
Leadership by	Hierarchy	Consensus	Competence	Pulling together

Do you see the challenge managers face in dealing with this much diversity? Many business leaders have expressed a desire to just get the job done without having to understand individual differences and preferences. To them I say, sorry, you have to change! If you want a cohesive workforce, change in managerial attitudes is imperative.

Let Nevadaworks help you understand the generational differences. As the local workforce investment Board for northern Nevada, Nevadaworks oversees workforce development services in the thirteen northern counties. At the heart of the delivery of those services is the Nevada JobConnect. Organized as a unique collaboration of state and local non-profit agencies, Nevada JobConnect's purpose is to deliver employment-related assistance with a focus on economic development. The wide range of offerings to small and large businesses is targeted to attract and retain employers in the local community and provide them with a quality workforce. This is done through access to labor market information about Reno and Nevada that is especially helpful in learning labor availability and prevailing wages, and access to JobConnect Business Service Consultants, who have worked with hundreds of companies and understand workforce issues. All of these services are available to businesses without charge.

Let Nevadaworks help your organization. Ask me to address your business managers, business organization or civic group and share more details of the generations. We are in this together and together, we can adapt and change to meet the workforce needs of tomorrow.

Information on Tom Fitzgerald:

Tom Fitzgerald was named Chief Executive Officer of Nevadaworks in 2000. His 35-year career includes owning and operating nationwide businesses and working in various executive positions during that tenure. Tom has served as an elected official and is active in business and community organizations.

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