



Generational Know How

Understanding the core values of each generation of volunteers.

The Generations Defined:



Silent Generation - born 1925-45 (65-85 yrs*)

- Respects authority and wants to be respected in return
- Dedicated
- “Do the right thing” generation
- Insightful, knowledgeable and wise



Boomers - born 1945 – 1965 (45- 65 yrs*)

Generation Jones - born 1954 – 1965 (45-56 yrs*)

- Social changers-they experienced the women’s movement, sexual revolution, the environmental movement, and the civil rights movement
- Dominate most political, business and community leadership roles
- View retirement not as an end to a career, but as an opportunity to begin a new one.



Generation X - born 1966 – 1979 (31-44 yrs*)

- Get to the point - be clear
- Likes technology
- Trained to make fast decision; thinks fast/acts/then evaluates
- Independent, entrepreneurial, crave autonomy
- Value a healthy balance between work and personal
- Rejects authority and rules
- Choice



Millenials (Gen Y) - born 1980 – 1994 (16-30 yrs*)

- Want to do things that matter - work, community engagement
- Collaborative and team players
- Quick feedback
- Socially conscious
- Most racially diverse generation ever
- High performance, high maintenance, questions everything....asks for everything
- Expect teams and collaboration



Generation Z - born 1995-2001 (9-15 yrs*)

- “Digital Natives” - highly connected, many having had lifelong use of communications and media technologies such as the internet, instant messaging, text messaging, MP3 players, cell phones & YouTube
- Relatively little is firmly established about its composition, character, and even name.

**in the year 2010*

City of Bloomington Volunteer Network

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10 Ideas to get Gen X and Millennials Volunteers Involved and Excited

1. Involve them in the development of your programs and opportunities

- Make sure they can be involved at all levels of the organization - they are your future committee leaders and board members. Treat it as a training ground.
- Create a working group that can offer ideas and a new perspective on current organization programs as it relates to them.

2. Create Task Driven Initiatives

- Research shows that Gen X and Gen Y want dedicated tasks with a clear beginning and a clear end.
 - Start initiatives within your organization that don't require becoming a committee member for life (e.g. golf outing task force, or mentorship program creation task force, etc.).

3. Communication is Essential

- Managing "generational diversity" is only partly about knowledge, and it is mostly about communication.
- Focus the message on what the group or program can do for them:
 - Help you advance your career.
 - See yourself as an agent of change.

4. Rethink Leadership Roles

- Younger generations want to know they can lead without 10 years of following. Create training opportunities for young professionals to prepare them for these roles quickly. The opportunity to lead is appealing to them. But don't throw them to the wolves!

5. Social Responsibility is Key

- Young professionals want to contribute to the greater good. Create opportunities for them to do so...and they will follow you.

6. Focus on Their Skills: Problem Solving

- Allow Gen X and Gen Y members to help you solve the problems you're facing - they want to help! Create a task force around an issue and let them go.
- Issue them a challenge - they will rise to it.
- Make sure the leadership of the association is ready to take their ideas seriously or you risk losing them.

7. Offer Options

- Choice - Offer a variety of exciting and challenging experiences.

8. Develop Recognition programs that fulfill their needs

- Many members of these generations have come to volunteering through a motivation for personal or professional development
- Offering recognition in the form of more responsibility and recommendations to employers may appeal more than a trinket or gift.

9. Embrace Generation Change from the Top Down

- Encourage your Staff and Board to begin the discussion of embracing change brought about by intergenerational involvement.
- If the leadership doesn't embrace change, you will fight it every step of the way.

10. Make it Fun!

- Younger members want to interact as they learn.
- Consider updating your meeting structure to be more of a forum rather than a point by point agenda to keep these generations engaged.
- Use interactive tools at your meetings
- Create fun activities such as speed networking, outing to a baseball game, a happy hour, not just meetings...

