EMBRACING GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Lesson Plan

Objectives:

• Define generational characteristics
• Review impacting factors of 4 generations
• Relate importance of generational attributes and awareness
• Relay generational impacts on families, organizations and business

Advance Preparation:

• Assemble equipment
• Review presentation
• Assemble handouts and program supplies

Materials Needed:

• Computer
• LCD projector
• Media presentation
• Markers
• News print or poster board
• Recorded music and CD player
• Generational Quiz

Time Needed: one hour

Background: There is an old adage that says, “Everyone is part of something greater than ones self”. (Unknown) There is great truth in that comment. Each of us is or has been a part of a family, neighborhood, city or country. We may also be a part of groups, organizations, religions, fraternities and work forces. But larger than any other affiliation each of us belongs to a generation.

A generation can be defined as a group of people born roughly within a twenty year time period during the same era in history. (Codrington & Marshall, 2004) Members of each generation share similar social conditions, historical events, economic trends and technological advancements. They are influenced by noted personalities and cultural changes within that time period. The birth population of each generation also plays a dynamic impact on the groups competitive bids for education and workforce positions. Together all of these influences help to mold and shape the groups’ values, thinking and personalities. To identify the persona of a generation look for three attributes: perceived membership in a common generation; common beliefs and behaviors; and a common location in history. (Howe & Strauss, 2000) When you can identify these things, you will find the Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and the Millennials.

One should keep in mind that generational beliefs are not absolute. Significant differences may vary from rural to urban settings and low to high economic backgrounds. It is also important to note that being born early or late in a generational era may also alter ones viewpoints and opinions. Persons born within two to three years of a generational divide are referred to as “Cuspers” and may favor and display characteristics from the past, next or even both relative generations. They are the folks that cement generations together. They function as mediators, translators and mentors. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003)

While specific generational age groups vary from research to research it is important to understand that there is no specific birth or cutoff dates that truly define each group. Generations are more readily defined by their personalities. (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003) Each group is equally important; making lasting contributions and setting the stage for the successes and problems of the following generations.

Understanding the personalities of each group is valuable tool as to what makes each so discerning with reference to education, work, parenting, politics, religion, home, economics, leisure and retirement. Generational knowledge gives us a timeless approach and foundation as we interact with family members, strengthen relationships with different groups manage the workforce and set the stage for the future.

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**Interest Approach:** Divide participants into evenly divided groups. Using markers, poster board or newsprint; direct each group to draw pictures identifying their assigned generational group. Encourage them to highlight songs, modes or travel, technology, fashion and noted activities.

**Lesson:**
- Slide 1, Introduction of topic
- Slide 2, Share quote from Homer’s Iliad
- Slide 3, Definition of a generation
- Slide 4, Generation Identification
- Slide 5, Definition of “Cusper”
- Slide 6, How We Learn About Others
- Slide 7, Generational Timeline
- Slide 8, Generational Identity quote
- Distribute “Embracing Generational Differences” Handout
- Slides 9-15, The Traditionals
- Slides 16-22, Baby Boomers
- Slides 23-30, Generation X
- Slides 31-37, Millennials
- Generational Quiz (Fun Test)
- Slide 38, So What?
- Slide 39, quote from When Generations Collide
- Slide 40, quote from Franklin D. Roosevelt
- Slides 41-44, References

**Application:** All of us have been guilty of thinking or saying, “What were they thinking?” or “People just don’t work the way they use to.” The way we think, act and react to situations with respect to our families, work and leisure can be attached to our generational places in history. We respond to situations accordingly with what we have learned, witnessed and anticipated. How will you help to bridge the generation gaps? Will you make an effort to coach, mentor or even change your opinion about someone, how they dress or go about doing business? Maybe in doing so someone will change their opinion about you.

**References:**


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