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Leveraging Lopsidedness: Building Stronger
Teams Across Generations



Build26

“We don't see things as **they are,
we see things as **we are.**”**

Anais Nin

Millennials are Killing Mayonnaise

Business Insider Retail

Why is Gen Z so Self Absorbed

Quora 2023

Gen X: The Ignored Generation?

Time Magazine 2008

Florida man trapped in unlocked closet for two days

1965



Why I
Find You
Irritating

Navigating
Generational Friction
at Work

Chris De Santis

with contributions from Andrew Mortazavi and Tim McClure

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves”

Carl Jung

Perceptions, Biases and **Generalizations**

- The **Dunbar Number**: We are tribal and designed to detect threats
- Representativeness Heuristics, **Confirmation Bias**, and the Salience effect
- The Process: Deletions, Distortions, and Generalizations
- Conversational Coordination, Pattern Seekers, and **Illusory Correlations**

Additional Generational **Caveats**

- **Chronological birth not as important as our narrative and the perception of where we belong**
- **Relating to and experiencing a “labeled generational group” requires commonality of life cycle, period, and cohort effects**
- **Generational differences not the same as stages of life**

The New Stages of the Life Cycle

1. Child
2. Young Adult
- 3. Emerging Adult**
4. Adult
5. Elder
6. Bonus Elderhood

Life's Hurdles and the **Emerging Adult**

- **Completing school**
- **Becoming financially independent**

- **Leaving home**

- **Marrying**

- **Having a child**

1960

77% of women

65% of men

2010

13% of women

10% of men

Scott Hess

Tru insights consulting

Your Gifts, Their Journey

- Inspiration
- Aspiration
- Exploration

Generational Waves and **Cusp Babies**

Traditionalists
1923-1943

Boomers
1944 - 1964

Gen X
1965 - 1981

Millennials
1982 - 1996

Gen Z
1997 - 2012

Gen Alpha
2012-?

“Each generation foretells the downfall of civilization as seen in the rise of the next generation. They are a constant source of disappointment, until they are not.”

Anonymous

The Cycle of Defiance

Boomers

1944-1964

Hippies

Gen X

1965-1981

Slackers

Millennials

1982-1996

Entitled

Gen Z

1997- 2012

(?)

The Cycle of Defiance

Boomers

1944-1964

Hippies

Gen X

1965-1981

Slackers

Millennials

1982-1996

Entitled

Gen Z

1997- 2012

(Fragile)

On Becoming Catalysts

Boomers

1944-1964

Civil Rights,
Gender Equality,
and the Sexual
Revolution.

Gen X

1965-1981

Work/Life balance,
the entrepreneurial
mind set, and the
“middle child”
technological
bridge

Millennials

1982-1996

Shifting social norms
to be more accepting
and inclusive. The gig
economy, the
internet, and
flexibility.

Gen Z

1997- 2012

Mental health advocacy:
opening the door
addressing aging,
anxiety, menopause,
equality, and identity.

Parenting Models at Work

Boomers

1944-1964

**Permissive
Authoritarianism**

Gen X

1965-1981

Millennials

1982-1996

Gen Z

1997- 2012

Parenting Models at Work

Boomers

1944-1964

Permissive

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Gen X

1965-1981

**Natural
Growth**

Millennials

1982-1996

Gen Z

1997- 2012

Parenting Models at Work

Boomers

1944-1964

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Natural

Growth

Millennials

1982-1996

**Concerted
Cultivation**

Gen Z

1997- 2012

Parenting Models at Work

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Permissive

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Gen X

1965-1981

Natural

Growth

Millennials

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Concerted

Cultivation

Gen Z

1997- 2012

Autonomy-

Supportive

Boomers: 1944 - 1964

Events

- Post war boom
- GI Bill
- **Wealth Effect**
- Relatively Permissive Parenting
- The Cold War
- Women's Rights
- Civil Rights
- Crowded Classrooms
- Camelot
- Disco

What's Important

- **Joining**
- Optimism
- Competition
- Loyalty: sacrifice and deference
- The long good day work ethic
- Being present
- **Climbing the ladder**
- Faith in the covenant
- The mythic hero
- A "Gut" feeling

Generation X: 1965 - 1981

Events

- Stagflation
- Downsizing
- Working parents
- Latch key kids
- Natural growth parenting
- Vietnam
- Nixon
- **Milk cartons**
- The first technologists
- The computer in isolation
- The erosion of trust

What's Important

- **Free ranging**
- Self reliance
- The habit of privacy
- The unvarnished truth
- Personal security
- Independence
- Work/Life accommodation
- The really long, busy, and private work day
- Transactional relationships and schmooze free
- **Realist: inspiration-free zone (at work)**

Millennials: 1982 - 1996

Events

- The Berlin Wall
- The Dot Com
- Globalization
- The Internet: the connected computer
- Digital diffusion
- Tethering
- **Trophies**
- The culture of immediacy
- The family vacation
- Homework: an act of love
- Play dates and vetting
- Concerted Cultivation Parenting
- 9/11

What's Important

- The bubble of love
- Dialog
- The habit of engagement/distraction
- Optimism
- Diversity and social responsibility
- Collaboration and competition
- Constant contact and sharing
- Interdependent
- Being scheduled
- The Discerning Consumer
- Time and place agnostic
- **Poise and the dinner table**

Gen Z: 1997-2012

Events

- iPhone
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Climate Change
- School shootings and code red drills
- The Great Recession 2008
- Reality TV
- Play dates

What's Important

- The Outboard brain
- FOMO
- Security/Safety
- A Livelihood
- Time to work alone
- Constant availability
- Face to Face
- The Rules
- **The Side Hustle**
- Flexibility and Customization
- Health
- Fairness and equity
- Diversity and Inclusion
- The Curated self
- Being “straight up” with the truth

The **Path** Forward

- The **only absolute truth** is what is true for you personally, anything else is fodder for conversation.
- **Start a dialogue** recognizing you are speaking to a person, not a tribe or a category, there may be different perspectives in terms of priorities and interpretations of values.
- Ultimately, know we have **more in common** than we have differences between us.

Thanks for Listening

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Chris De Santis

cpdesantis.com

chris@cpdesantis.com

