



KATHLEEN RICH-NEW

# Why Can't They All Just Get Along?

## How to Manage the Older Generations in the Workplace

### Recognize these situations?

#### Robert

A 63-year-old company veteran, watches the new interns as they come into his division. He sneers at their selfish outlook and apparent lack of loyalty.

#### Donna

A 49-year-old single mother of teenagers and caretaker for her aging father, looks at her day planner and wonders how she'll ever find the time to meet the needs of both her family and her job.

Last month I wrote about the unique values and challenges the two younger generations of workers are bringing to the workplace. This month I'll discuss the two older generations. Experts say managing the four generations in the workplace today is more difficult than managing race relations in the 1970's.

To manage them you must understand them. Who are the older generations of workers and what do they want?

#### Veterans

over 63 Population: 52 million

#### Growing Up

- > At a time of economic turmoil in the aftermath of the Great Depression.
- > Nuclear family that consisted of grandparents, dad, stay-at-home mom and siblings.
- > Value of money and a secure job was reinforced
- > Dealt with economic hardships by being disciplined and self sacrificing. They lived and helped reinforce the American Dream. They have enjoyed a lifetime of steadily rising affluence.
- > They are the generation that built the organizations that made American the great economic and military power we are today.

#### Employee Traits

On the farm, battlefield and in factories they developed a sense of loyalty and hard work. They have not been coddled.

Disciplined, detailed and dependable team players who work within the system.

Want respect for contribution, longevity and dedicated work ethic.

Have a huge knowledge legacy to share, and their natural civic-mindedness lends itself to mentoring the youngest generation of employees.

Open to returning to the workplace after initial retirement, if they have the flexibility to put their newfound freedom first. Consider asking some of your retirees to return as part-time consultants and mentors.

#### Tips on Managing

- > Assure them that you value their work and that it's respected.
- > Ask them to share their knowledge legacy.
- > Give them hands-on training and praise their mastery of new areas.
- > They like to hear motivational messages that tell them: "Your experience is respected here" or "Your perseverance is valued here and will be rewarded."





## Boomers

Ages 45- 63 Population: 77 million

### Growing Up

- > "Children of the 60's", the Vietnam War, Robert F. Kennedy and Woodstock.
- > Nuclear family that included dad, stay-at-home mom and siblings.
- > Born into a time of relative prosperity in the U.S., when their fathers might have been coming home from World War II or The Korean War.
- > Taught to work hard, "pay their dues" and aspire towards a nice home in the suburbs, a high-paying job and a good education.
- > Boomers rode a wave of success into the mid 1980's, when downsizing and layoffs awaited many.

### Employee Traits

- > Earned title of workaholics.
- > Because of size had to compete for jobs all their lives and are eager to please and less likely to ask for help.
  - > Want focus on work output and accountability, not time spent on the job.
  - > Want public recognition.
  - > Whine if not happy but feel it is part of the job.
  - > Optimistic, competitive, and focused on personal accomplishment.

- > Two groups: (1) those born between 1946 and 1954 (the "Woodstock" group, known for their idealistic endeavors and social conscience), and (2) those born between 1955 and 1964 (the "Zoomer" group, known for their preoccupation with self).

- > Biggest generational conflict is when Boomer managers are confronted with younger employees who don't "fit the mold" that they themselves follow of putting the job first.

### Tips on Managing

- > Tell them: "You're important to our success," "Your contribution is unique and important to us" or "We need you".
- > Spotlight intangibles such as fulfillment and spirituality; redesign jobs to accommodate family demands of children and aging parents.
- > Let them know how their contributions are unique and important.

### Next month

What local companies are doing to retain workers. Remember there is no such thing as happy customers with unhappy employees.

Kathleen Rich-New, is a coach, speaker and human resources consultant. As a coach she works with women in corporate American and business owners. As a consultant she specializes in helping companies attract and retain top-performing employees. She is the Chair of Brevard's Best Place to Work Survey and an adjunct professor at Webster University's Graduate School of Business. Kathleen is co-author of "Looking for the Good Stuff... a guide to enjoying and appreciating life." Contact her at 321.452.7308 or [KRN@clarityworks.biz](mailto:KRN@clarityworks.biz). Learn more at [www.ClarityWorks.biz](http://www.ClarityWorks.biz).

NOTE: Last month Generation Y was incorrectly listed as age 3-25. Since there is no one expert source on exact ages of each generation there is some confusion. Gen Y is generally considered by leading Human Resource experts as ages 12-25.

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