

"It takes different strokes"

Understanding the realities of generational differences in the EMS workplace



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Ray's Disclaimer

It's important to preface this presentation by stating that people are individuals.

While it is sometimes efficient for experts to place people into generational groups for analysis, in the end, even with certain common traits and behaviors, **individuals must be judged on their own merits.**

Why Are You Here ?

- To understand how the different generations work – or don't work - in the wide world of EMS
- To make your EMS agency a more cohesive place to work
- _____ (Your reason here)

Realities

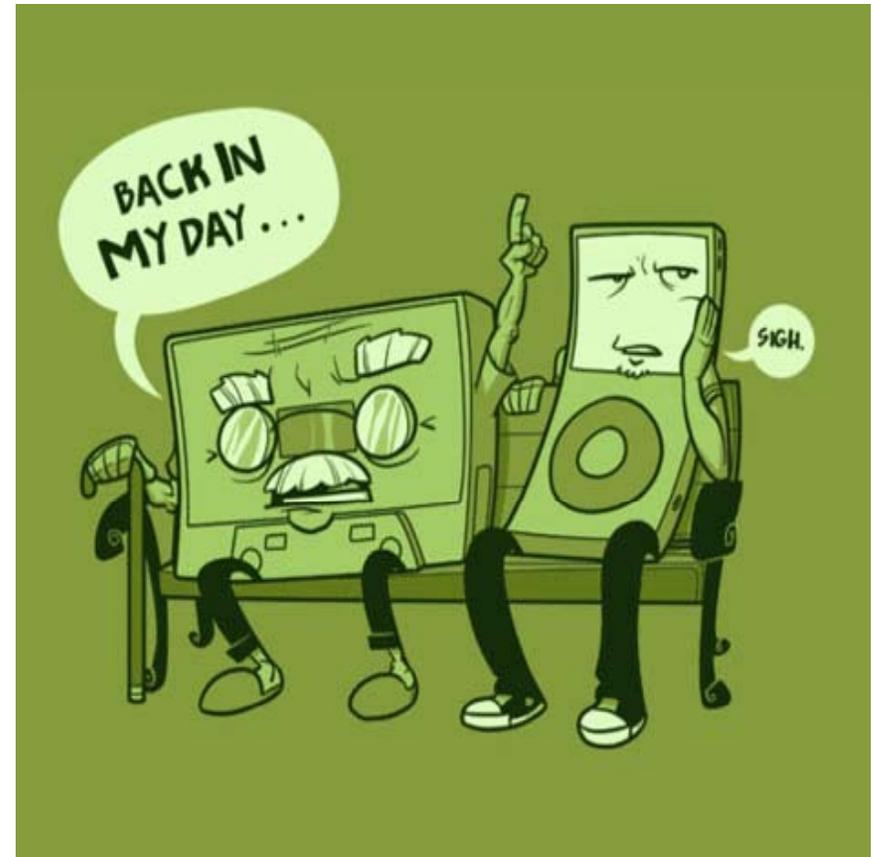
- For the first time in history, we have four generations in the workplace
- Half of the workforce is now 40 years old or older
- One quarter of the workforce is now 50 or older

Realities

- The fastest growing population segment is 75 and older
- 8 out of 10 baby-boomers expect to work past the retirement age

How generations are shaped

- Generations are shaped by:
 - history
 - events
 - technological advances
 - social changes
 - economic conditions
 - popular culture



Reality



Generational basics

- Groups of people born and raised in the same historical and social context
- A new generation is formed when the “world changes” relative to the past
 - Change may be an event (e.g. end of WWII) or paradigm shift (e.g. the Information Age)
- Formative influences shape a generation’s values, beliefs and outlooks on life

Generational basics

- Each generation has a distinct set of:
 - Values
 - Attitudes
 - Behaviors
 - Habits
 - Motivational buttons

Generational basics

- Each generational era profoundly influences:
 - Communication styles
 - Viewpoints on how to approach work
 - Contributions in team settings

Understanding terms



**Traditionals/
Veterans**



**Baby
Boomers**



Generation X



Generation Y

Understanding terms



**Traditionals/
Veterans**



**Baby
Boomers**



Generation X



Generation Y

Understanding Terms: Traditionals

born 1922-1943

- All but the youngest came of age before and during World War II, and just prior to the Baby Boom
- Traditionalists - last of the gray flannel suits, the "Corporcrats"
- "American values" - civic pride, loyalty, respect for authority, and apple pie.
- Attend more symphonies than rock concerts, watch more plays than play in pick-up softball games, and eat a lot more steak than tofu.
- Least likely to be technology savvy. Has difficulty with modern verbiage. Hard-formed opinions, difficult to sway or accept change.

Understanding Terms: Traditionals

- 1900 – 1945
- Ages 64 – 109, 75 million
- Two generations lumped together based on similar experiences
- “Greatest generation”, “Silent Generation”, Veterans



Characteristics: Traditionals

- Work together for the common good
- Duty, honor, economy, courage, service, love of family and country and above all, responsibility for oneself.
- Hard work, loyalty, respect for rules
- No safety nets; no “bail outs”
- Dedication, sacrifice

Characteristics: Traditionals

- EMS reality :
 - Influential in the early development of EMS and its adaptation of traditional hierarchal organizational structures.
 - Traditionalists are heavily service-oriented and function from a perspective that you work hard, follow the leader and sacrifice for the company.
 - This notion still influences the way many of today's managers view EMS organizations.

Understanding Terms: **Baby Boomers**

born 1945-1965

Passionately concerned about

- participation and spirit in the workplace
- bringing heart and humanity to the office
- creating a fair and level playing field for all

They are the civil rights, empowerment, and diversity generation.

Understanding Terms: Baby Boomers

- 1945 – 1965
- Ages 45 – 63
- Population: 69 million
- Baby boomers – “Me” generation



Worker Characteristics: Baby Boomers

- Individualists
- Make a difference
- Perfectionists
- Micromanagers
- High Achievers

Characteristics: Baby Boomers

- Optimism – “The American Dream”
- Idealism
- Devotion / Involvement
- Competitive
- Opportunities
- Personal gratification
- Want to leave their stamp on things

Characteristics: Baby Boomers

- EMS reality :
 - Boomers helped EMS grow up and ultimately became today's leaders, carried forward some of these traditionalists' ideals, but added some new aspects.
 - approach work more competitively and a desire to get credit for what they did.
 - value hard work, come from a strong focus on achievement and a need to be recognized.

Understanding Terms: Generation X

born 1965 – 1981

- Ages 28 – 44
- Population: 46 million
- Twenty something
- First wave of Boomer children



Worker characteristics: **Generation X**

- Respect skills, not credentials
- Willing to job shop
- First generation to grow up during the technology explosion - stuck in between worlds as a result, can recall a time without instant communication and current advances.
- Priorities in life shift
 - Family
 - Work

Characteristics: Generation X

- Skeptical
- Disillusioned
- Individually motivated
- Transient workforce
- Demand balance
- Question authority
- Fun / informal

Understanding Terms: **Generation X**

- **The Gen-Xers (1961-1980)**
 - At the same time, Xers as individuals are more positive about their personal futures than their pessimism and reluctance to be as overtly "gung ho" at work as the Boomers they dislike would indicate. They believe opportunity exists for them, just not on Veteran or Boomer terms.

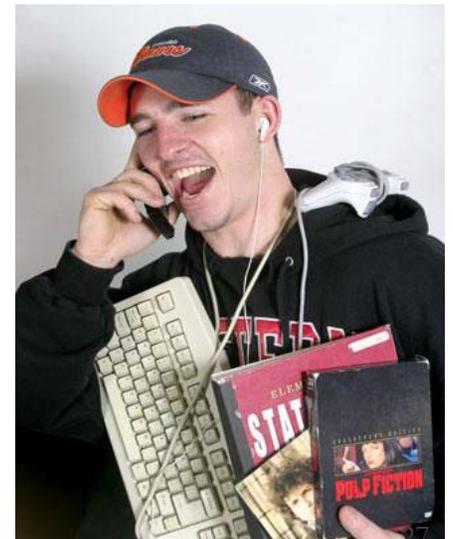
Characteristics: Generation X

- EMS reality –
 - Many now functioning as EMT's, medics, supervisors and managers
 - receive cues from the baby boomers but they are “stuck in between”
 - they use terms like “old school”
 - they recall a time before ATM's and cell phones
 - could be fearful of new technologies

Understanding Terms: **Generation Y**

born 1980 – 2001

- Ages 8 – 27
- Population: currently 33 million
- Generation “Lap” – close to parents
- NetGen, Digital Generation, Next Gen Millennials/Nexters/ Generation Y



Worker Characteristics: Generation Y

- Usually technologically savvy
- Multi-taskers
- Interactive style
- Tolerant of diversity, multiculturalism, internationalism

Characteristics: Generation Y

- Optimistic
- Confident
- Experiential learners, collaborative
- Move between Real and Virtual
- Multi-taskers
- Achievement oriented
- Respect for diversity, tolerant
- Respectful but not awed by authority

Characteristics: Generation Y

- EMS reality
 - Mostly field EMS providers
 - Blank slate – waiting to be seen what they will bring to the proverbial EMS table

Defining moments

Particularly telling are a generation's defining moments:

These are events that capture the attention and emotions of thousands -if not millions- of individuals at a formative stage in their lives.

Defining Moments: Traditionals

Events that shaped them:

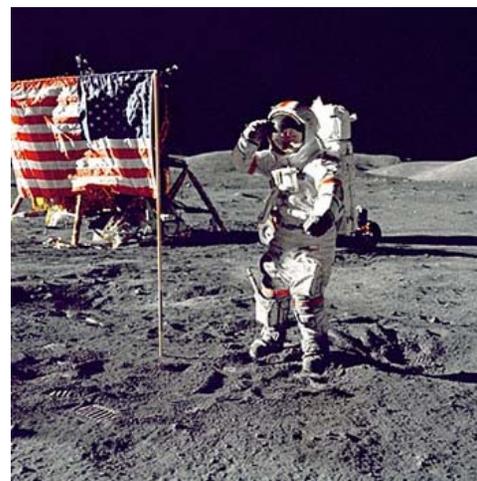
- World War II
- The rise of television
- Penicillin goes into common use



Defining Moments: Boomers

Events that shaped them:

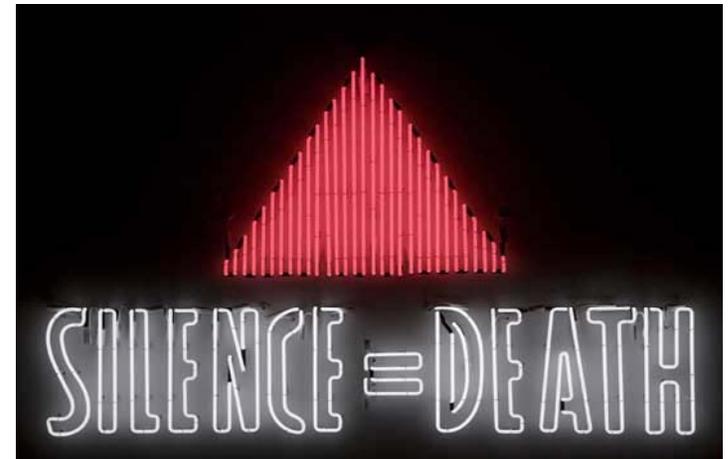
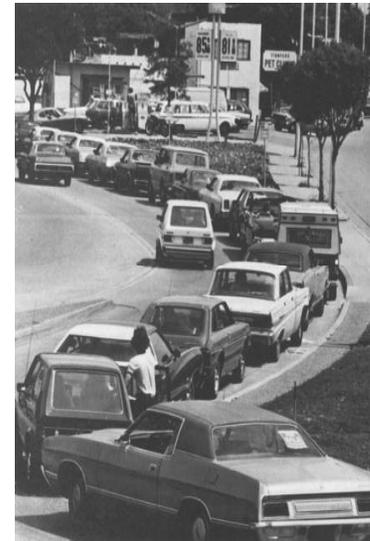
- Civil Rights Movement
- Women's Liberation Movement
- Vietnam War
- Moon Landing
- Assassination of JFK



Defining Moments: Generation X

Events that shaped them:

- Oil crisis
- End of the Cold War
- HIV-AIDS epidemic
- Challenger disaster
- Trends
 - Corporate down-sizing
 - Environmental movement
 - State budget cuts
 - Gen Xers accuse Boomers of greed mentality



Defining moments: Generation Y

Events that shaped them:

- Fall of the Soviet Union
- First Gulf War
- 9/11
- Rise of Information Age/Internet
- Trends
 - Share social views of Boomers
 - Share culture with Generation X



What Really Matters

- In addition to the coincidence of birth, a generation is also defined by common tastes, attitudes, and experiences; a generational cohort is a product of its times and tastes.
- Those times encompass a myriad of circumstances- economic, social, sociological, and, of course, demographic.

The Challenge

Each generation has:

- unique work ethics
- different perspectives on work
- distinct and preferred ways of managing and being managed
- idiosyncratic styles
- unique ways of viewing such work-world issues as quality, service, and, yes...just showing up for work

Realities

- How can I get my older employees to sit down and discuss projects with my younger ones, when they can't even share a cup of coffee without snarling at each other? (Or even agree on what a cup of workplace coffee *is*?)
- How can I convince my young employees to listen to their older counterparts when they don't see anything relevant in the older employees' experience? And when my oldsters insist on communicating like World War II generals?

Common areas of generational conflict

- Work Ethic
- Organizational Hierarchy
- Dealing with Change
- Learning Styles
- Managing Technology



Common areas of generational conflict

- Work Ethic
 - Attitudes, practices, and perceptions differ
 - Work hours
 - Number of hours of work put in vs. quality/quantity of work accomplished
 - Punctuality (What does it mean to be “on time”?)
 - Salary expectations
 - Professional dress
 - “Paying dues” (i.e., expectations for pace of advancement vs. experience/seniority)



Common areas of generational conflict

- Hierarchies
 - Acceptance of organizational hierarchies
 - Older employees tend to accept hierarchies
 - Younger generations resist formal structures
 - Tend to have more informal relationships with supervisors and department heads than in previous generations
 - Older employees can resist/resent supervision by younger employees

Common areas of generational conflict

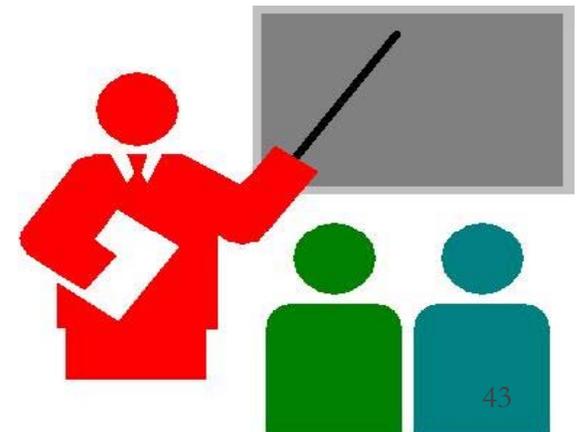
- Dealing with Change
 - Younger employees tend to adapt to change more easily than older employees
 - Using rapidly changing technologies
 - Accepting different ways of accomplishing work
 - Adapting to organizational restructuring
 - Changing career paths and moving among organizations



DON'T BE
AFRAID OF CHANGE.

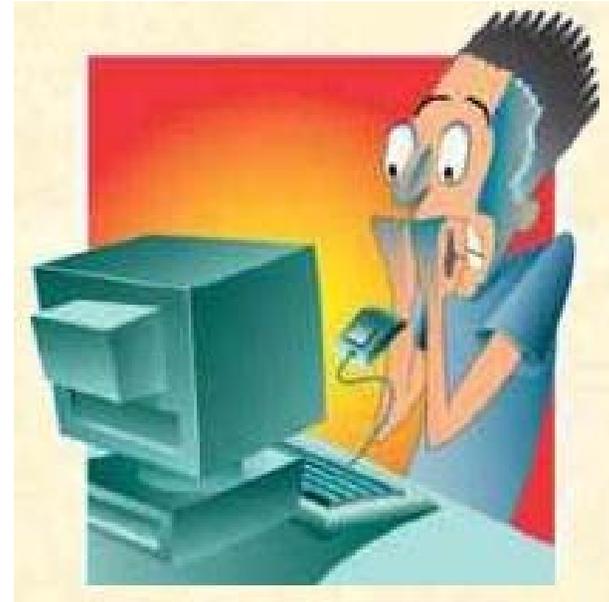
Common areas of generational conflict

- Learning styles
 - Veterans and boomers learn from study and repetition
 - Gen X can go either way.
 - Gen Y learns in bursts/microbursts of information, how they process and relate information is difficult for older educators.



Common areas of generational conflict

- Technology Issues
 - Generations have different levels of comfort with technologies
 - E-mail
 - Cell phones
 - Blackberries
 - Web
 - Variety of communication forms necessary for transmitting important information broadly



Managing the Generations

- Veterans: want to be a part of the company's future
- Baby Boomers: want to move up within the company (have huge personal and financial responsibilities)
- Generation X: want to know exactly what they'll be doing, are they on the right career path
- Generation Y: help them see the future/what role they will play

Understanding the generations

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Managing the Generations

	Boomers (1946-64)	Gen X (1965-80)	Gen Y (1981-95+)
Key Values/ Motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power • Money • Status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence • Resilience • Flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teamwork • Technology • Entertainment
Recruitment/ Socialization Keys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain Org Mission • Recognize desire to get quickly assimilated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight-talk about negatives • Have their peers present/involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid, hands-on orientation • Encourage them to figure what's next in the company
Management Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link pay & performance • Focus on fairness and equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help them build their skills • Help them feel they work "with" you not "for" you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured, but supportive work environment • Use of "reverse" mentoring

Language that works

- **Veterans**
 - Your experience is respected
 - It is valuable to hear what has worked in the past
- **Boomers**
 - You are valuable, worthy
 - Your contribution is unique and important
- **Gen Xers**
 - Let's explore some options outside of the box
 - Your technical expertise is a big asset
- **Gen Y/ Millennials**
 - You will be collaborating with other bright, creative people
 - You have really rescued this situation with your commitment

Final Thoughts

- **There's no "I" in team.** A four-generation team that works together well will undoubtedly produce stronger results than any single focus group could.
- **It's not what you say, but how you say it.** Generational clashes often stem from miscommunication in tone or style.
- **Age doesn't have a number.** Adopt "ageless thinking" and look at how each generation shares a common history.

Final Thoughts

- **Get to know the different generational motives.** For example, anyone managing Gen Xers should know that money isn't usually the motivating force -- it's quality of life.
- **Don't judge a book by its cover.** Look beyond appearances. When a Traditionalist offers you advice, realize that there probably is memory and wisdom there.

Always Remember Ray's Disclaimer

Always keep in mind that people are individuals.

While it is sometimes efficient for experts to place people into generational groups for analysis, in the end, even with certain common traits and behaviors, **individuals must be judged on their own merits.**

Questions

Thank you for listening !!!

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