



gen z

gen x

boomer

mi

GEARED TOWARD LEADING

Understanding and successfully managing multiple generations of team members in the parking workplace.

By Scott Lesnick



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I BECAME UNPOPULAR. Yes, I did what I always do. I stirred things up. This time it was the generational pot. Five years ago, “millennial” was a bad word. Five years ago, I would get my fair share of side-eye from some audience members when I began to do what few were doing at the time: flying millennials’ flags high, showing why they were so important, and upsetting baby boomers and Xers along the way.

Today, millennials’ leadership can be seen in the parking profession as well as businesses and associations across North America.

Thankfully, after awhile, most folks would begin to see things as I saw them. I’d even have women and men come up to me after I presented and thank me for helping them understand the generation’s unique talents, characteristics, and motivation.

Well, it’s that time again, folks. But this time it’s millennials on steroids mixed with a healthy dose of the generation preceding boomers: the vets, aka. the Greatest Generation. We’re talking about the iGen, Generation Z, globals. This generation ranges in age from seven to 21. And they are massive in numbers

at around 84 million in the U.S. Their productivity and work ethic is great, once you get to know them.

Getting to Know Them

A few things to keep in mind when working with this generation:

- They love their technology. Generation Z was born just before the age of smartphones and grew up using them. Don’t take them away. This is their lifeline. The employer who works with this information is better positioned to retain these passionate young women and men.
- College. Sure, but not the way you necessarily want them to. Globals, aka Generation

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Z, have seen the debt their siblings, parents, and others accumulated to get a degree and they're scared. They're also angry. The thought that tens of thousands of dollars must be spent along with high-interest rate debt is more than just upsetting. So some are opting to go from high school to the workplace while earning their degree online or during evenings/weekends. They may not come to you with a college degree, but they'll most likely get one and it will be their way. The employer who understands this newer trend will be poised to hire and retain a young and talented pool of employees.

- This generation is more conservative when it comes to job security. They've heard about downsizing. They've listened as family members described the struggles of 2008. They're cautious and desire job stability. Offer this and you're more likely to retain them and get their friends to consider working for you, too!

The iGen are poised to rock the economy, the workplace, and our lives. If you're ready, you have a distinct advantage. If you welcome them, you will be adding a new layer of young talent to your staff. However, if you wait on the sidelines to see what they're all about—if they've got game and will perform well—your competitors will pass you by in a blink of an eye.

Don't Panic

I recently had a phone conversation about this newer generation and more and wanted to share the highlights for your consideration.

I could feel Carmen, a manager, clutching her phone on the other end of the line. Her voice was curt, the anger palatable, and her confusion very real. She read one of my articles about generations and reached out with an email that at first glance appeared to be a short novel. Carmen, her staff and other leaders were having trouble successfully navigating the five generations at her company.

I knew how to help her connect millennials and Gen Z. After reading her email, I replied, "Not a problem, I can help you. Let's chat." I sent her a few ideas and documents that would help her think differently and take action even if she didn't want to talk.

The tone of her email suggested that she was reaching a desperate-measures phase where employees could get written up, lectured, or even fired! It was serious.

We spoke the next day:

Carmen: Thank you for taking the time to speak with me, Scott. I need help. We have poor communications between generations, and it is causing friction, anger, and lowering our productivity. What've you got?

Me: My pleasure, Carmen. Your email pointed to the communications, and I agree. With understanding, information, and clear perspectives from each generation, you'll grow connections and relationships between employees. I'm very confident that these steps will address your main pain points and improve productivity, too.

Carmen: Perfect! When can you come out to see us? The sooner the better.

Me: There's more. Generation Z is young and open to your guidance. They will stay at a job longer and want to be mentored and guided. Millennials are a little older, better established, and have the different work perspective you mentioned in your email. I want you to consider connecting these two generations now, today, because they're huge in numbers and speak a similar language.

Our conversation changed to Gen X and boomers. Of course, I had solutions and happily offered a few. Then Carmen told me she's a millennial. "I believe in what you said, but I can't seem to get upper management and staff to come together. We're stuck," she said. No worries, I told her. We'd solve it and have some fun along the way.

This is not difficult. Once we begin to understand what's getting in the way of our communication between generations or departments the sharing of information and productivity begin to grow. It's a really cool thing to watch.

Retaining the Team

The pendulum has swung back in favor of workers. Businesses are hiring, unemployment is hovering

HIRING GENERATION Z

Businesses are hiring, unemployment is hovering around 5 percent, and workers understand that there are many more work options available.

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Our competition is stronger than ever. Our business goals increase yearly, but the leaders with unhappy staff will lose them in the blink of an eye. New hires understand that the options are out there and will make up their mind within 30 days of starting a job how long they plan on staying. You ain't got much time to make them satisfied, comfortable, and committed. Great leadership is essential!

Excellence comes from more employee training; a watchful eye on their wants, needs, and desires; and an overall feeling that they matter and that you care.

When I conduct breakout sessions, I often include an activity that allows us to deep-dive an issue. Sure, I can present, but a room full of talent can always come up with more ideas, thoughts, and recommendations than one person can offer.


What Employees Want

Here is what I learned at three different conferences I presented at last summer about what employees want. I've shortened the list down to seven things:

1. Training, training, and more training. The reason: more knowledge and better opportunity for advancement and improved skills.
2. Cross training. Employees want to better understand what others at the same company do and how those things affect their role. Plus, they may find an area of the company they are better suited for than their current role.
3. Employee recognition. Sure, you remember when we did more of that! Well, they want it to come back. Gas cards, bonuses, lunch. Employees need to hear that they matter, make a difference, and are an integral part of your team.

4. Ask them. Asking for feedback and input grows trust and builds relationships. Great ideas can come from anyone at work, but you must ask.
5. Cross mentoring. Attendees have convinced me that mentoring not only works, it moves projects and employees along faster. We are now seeing boomers and Xers specifically working with millennials, and the results are mostly very positive. Millennials can offer fresh perspectives, are whizzes with technology, and are fast learners. Older generations have plenty of experience and are often in higher-profile positions. Legacies are left by those in their 40s and older, mentees advance faster than those who are not mentored, and succession planning is stronger as a result.
6. Humor me. Lighten up, lose the boss attitude, and come down to our level. Today's best leaders understand that relationships increase productivity, grow business, and make for a lower stress work environment. No laughter, no fun, no appreciation. Where would you rather work?
7. Social gatherings. We understand that outside of work people let their hair down and tend to relax. Some more than others! New bonds are formed, relationships grow, and leaders show their 'offsite' personality. When offered and organized, the results can be tremendous and the cost-to-benefit ratio positive!

Excellence in anything requires dedication, assistance, and time. Today's leaders lead from the sideline, in the trenches, and wherever they can to be effective.

How do you lead? 



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