

Changing Times

by
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“It was the best of times –it was the worst of times.” I never really understood the impact of those words from A Tale of Two Cities until now.

This thought seems to even more relevant today with four generations currently in the economy as employees, employers and customers. From the Post War generation to Generation Y – we have the most diverse consumer and employee base we have ever seen.

I watch as those who teach customer service, sales and productivity, stress management and personal development struggle to make their material relevant to nearly four decades of generational diversity.

What’s a business to do in today’s ever changing, ever evolving world? That’s a great question, and one I’m often asked. So let’s take a look at three areas in your business that definitely will be affected by this generational diversity and the questions to start asking.

For many businesses, your customer base has dramatically changed or will change very soon. The Generation X and Y’ers are not as focused on developing retail friendships as their grandparents or parents.

The young buyers of today are usually not as loyal or price driven as in the past. They are *extremely* well educated shoppers and have limited patience for “traditional sales techniques.” They grew up in an “instant” mentality from how they cook their foods to how they take in their information.

They are the “*MTV and Dilbert*” generation rather than the “*Beatles and The Fonz.*” A good question to ask is “**What do the younger generations value and how do we match what we do with what they need?**”

The second area of change many organizations are seeing is the people who apply for the entry-level positions. Unlike past generations, many of the Generation X and Y’ers do not, or will not follow traditional hiring patterns. From casual attire to nose rings, they seem to want to test how far from the traditional roles they can wander. We also see the Post War (65+ in years) applying for entry level jobs since their savings are dwindling or gone and they never expected to live this long.

The younger generations are quicker to learn if taught in non-traditional ways and are more independent on solving problems. They are less loyal to professional associations and more likely to change jobs and careers much quicker than Boomers (estimates are Generation Y will change careers, not jobs up to 5 times in their lifetime. They are intelligent, intense and independent. A good question to ask is “**How do we access the talents and future wisdom of these staff members before they move on to their next career?**”

The third area where you will see a change in your business is how your staff interacts with your customers. There naturally is a communication break down between the Post War Babies, Baby Boomers, Cuspers (between the Boomers and the X'ers) and Generation X and Generation Y.

Understanding the difference in the rate of information intake between the various generations will help you to develop a customer service program that follows the "Platinum Rule." Do unto others, as THEY want done unto them!

A good question to ask is **"Where do I find information on the different styles of communication and how do I best use this information?"**

Understanding that the newest generation to enter the workforce and customer playground plays the game much differently. They not only have changed the rules, but also brought their own referees.

Develop your annual business plan to include the flexibility for generational differences and the vision to see the success in continually developing a list of questions that not only break down the generational differences but encourage open and honest dialogue from all generations. If we can combine the wisdom of the past with the fluidity of present, we will encounter a new era in the world of business.

KAZ is an international speaker, author, consultant and coach who focuses on working with people who want to **BE** more and organizations that want to **DO** more. For a free booklist, more articles or a copy of **KAZ's** speaking topics simply visit www.CompetitiveBalance.com and let us know how we can help you.