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Introduction

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**Generational Differences in the
Workplace**

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**“The trouble with the future is it
ain’t what it used to be.”**

“Don’t trust anyone over 30” was a common phrase in the ’60s and defined a generation that was quite different from the previous one. From it came the term generation gap. The workplace is changing dramatically: Mick Jagger (62) and the Rolling Stones are still touring, Desperate Housewives is a TV hit and the actresses are all over 40! There are more and more people working into their 60s, 70s and 80s. You may find a 50 year age gap in some work places.

Some older laboratorians think that younger workers are job hoppers and only interested in money.

On the flip side younger staff members often see their older co-workers as inflexible, technologically challenged, and entrenched in their jobs.

But, as we age, our values change. Folks in leadership positions must recognize the generational gap and try to build bridges between older and younger staff.

So... who is staffing the laboratory?

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Generations in the workplace today:

- Matures (Traditionalists/Builders/Veterans)- born prior to 1946
- Baby Boomers – Born 1946-1964
- Generation X – Born 1965-1980
- The Millenials (Nexters/Internet Generation) – Born 1981-1999
- “Cuspers”
- NOTE: be careful not to generalize too much!

Current shortage of qualified laboratory workers: aging pool of certified professionals.

Individuals born prior to 1945 are still a portion of that pool.

Much larger group is the baby-boomers (age 40-60_

In 2000, it was estimated that the average age of the MT(ASCP) was 45. So it is now over 50 years of age.

These are not absolute, individuals born on the cusp of 2 generations, may show traits of both.

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Bridging the generation gap:

- Suspend your assumptions and judgments
- Talk to each other! Start a dialog between generations

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What Matures consider major events/Pop culture icons:

- Born: 1922-1946
- Population: 44.2 million
- Events
 - Pearl Harbor bombing, WWII
 - The great depression, the New Deal
 - Korean War

May be retired and working part-time or PRN. Grew up in the great depression between 2 huge wars. These things had significant influence on their life styles. Waste not, want not, save everything. Very loyal to family, friends, their country and their job. Put your nose to the grind stone, work hard and you will succeed. Find the status quo acceptable and despise change.

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What Matures consider major events/Pop culture icons:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Icons<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Reader's Digest– Blondie– The golden age of radio | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Music<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Benny Goodman– Tommy Dorsey– Frank Sinatra– Ella Fitzgerald– Billie Holliday– Charlie Parker |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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What Baby Boomers consider major events/Pop culture icons:

- Born: 1946-1964
- Population: 76.8 million
- Events
 - Assassination of John F. Kennedy
 - Vietnam War
 - Civil rights movement
 - Women's liberation
 - The moon landing
 - Brown vs. the Board of Education

Baby-boomers are healthier than their parents at the same age. They are looking for ways to turn back the clock.

When they start to retire in large numbers, there will be a huge strain on the federal budget (social security, medicare, etc.)

They are products of the post-WW II era. The economy was expanding.

The biggest influence on the boomers was the introduction of television into households.

An optimistic generation does that does not accept the status quo... civil rights, war protests.

Many women in this generation work outside the home, unlike their mothers.

Many feel compelled to work 60-hour weeks.

However, as they age, this is changing. Many have been down-sized and have found that killing yourself for the job wasn't worth it.

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What Baby Boomers consider major events/Pop culture icons:

- Icons:
 - Television
 - Doonesbury
 - The peace symbol
 - Fall-out shelters
 - Discos
 - “Never trust anyone over 30”
- Music:
 - Elvis Presley
 - The Beatles
 - Rolling Stones
 - Jimi Hendrix
 - Woodstock
 - The Beach Boys
 - The Supremes
 - “Motown”

Because of improvements in health care and awareness of a healthy life-style, some Traditionalists and Baby Boomer may work well into their 7th or 8th decade or never retire. Changes in technology have reduced the physical demands of many jobs. Statistics show that employees between 50-60 will work an average of 15 years more at the same job than younger colleagues and that their attendance is better than other generational groups. This group is a good source of temporary workers. This generation is experienced and loyal. Some in this group may need to keep working because of down-sizing and retirement plans folding.

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What Generation X considers major events/Pop culture icons:

- Born: 1965-1978
- Population: 52.4 million
- Events:
 - John Lennon's murder
 - The Challenger disaster
 - Fall of the Berlin Wall
 - Operation Desert Storm

The “what have you done for me today” generation. Fiercely independent, somewhat cynical, appear to have a low sense of loyalty to the job. Have seen their parents be laid off or down-sized. They tend to work to live, not live to work. While often viewed as “slackers”, statistics show that they actually work as much as baby boomers.

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What Generation X considers major events/Pop culture icons:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Icons:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The personal computer– The Simpsons– Music videos– tattoos	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Music:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The Cure– U2– Madonna– Guns and Roses– Nirvana
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Gen-Xers want scheduling flexibility because of the importance of family life

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Generation Y or Millennials

- Person of the week on 60 Minutes
- Interviewed two entrepreneurs
 - Family and friends come first, not the job
 - Bosses have to be part coach
 - This generation wants praise and rewards
 - They know they are a hot commodity

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Generation Y or Millennials

- Very tech savvy and efficient
- Work should be fun
- Delaying finding the “dream job”
- Moving back home after graduation – makes economic sense to them

What Generation Y considers major events/Pop culture icons:


- Born: 1979 to present
- Population: 77.6 million and counting
- Events:
 - The Oklahoma City bombing
 - O.J. Simpson trial
 - Columbine school shooting
 - Clinton-Lewinsky scandal
 - 911
- Events:
 - Collapse of World Trade Center towers
 - Columbine
 - Gang violence
 - War in Iraq

Millennials, Generation Y (Why) are very techno-savvy. Just entering workforce. Have some traits of previous generations: sense of hopefulness, determination and respect. They are not afraid to voice their opinions and are socially active. Have greater access to data than any other generation. However, they are sometimes overwhelmed by too much data and have information overload.

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What Generation Y considers major events/Pop culture icons:

- Icons:
 - The internet
 - Nintendo and PlayStation
 - Beanie Babies
 - Pagers/cell phones
 - Body piercing
- Music:
 - The Spice Girls
 - Backstreet Boys
 - Offspring
 - Metallica
 - Matchbox 20



Have grown up with cell phones, I-pods, the internet. Perceived to need constant stimulation.

They are the point and click generation and require more job structure and definition of responsibilities. Imagination and creativity may not be as evident, many are “menu” driven. However, given clear expectations they often excel. They need flexibility in the work place and may question long-standing policies. Can multi-task very effectively.

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Pervading Beliefs of Older Generations

- A job is what you are
- I remember when.....
- Good things come to those who wait
- If your hands aren't moving you can't possibly be working
- We have to have a system for everything

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Pervading Beliefs of Older Generations

- All this technology will never overcome the value of hard work

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Pervading Beliefs of Younger Generations

- A job is a contract, not a calling
- Focus on outcome, rather than the task
- In the long run, balance is more important than money
- Training, knowledge, and experience equal versatility

Gen-Xers and Millenials are highly sought by employers. They are in a position to move from job to job demanding flexibility and higher salaries.

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Pervading Beliefs of Younger Generations

- Management should be partners with employees
- Life is too short to “pay dues”

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Traditionalists' Career Goals

- Build a legacy
- Many in this generation expected to build a lifetime career with one employer or at least a single field
- Have a sense of responsibility toward the workplace

Organizations make a big mistake when they fail to recognize the Traditionalists' sense of personal responsibility toward their workplace.

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Boomers' Career Goals

- Build a stellar career
- They are less likely to job-hop, but employers can no longer assume that Boomers will wait forever for top positions
- Developing challenging career paths may be the best solution (does not mean more work, they think opportunity or visibility)

Boomer nearing retirement now want flexible scheduling and part time positions.
Employers need to keep mature, hard-working, experience employees.

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GenXers' Career Goals

- Build a portable career
- GenXers feel their careers need to move forward or they die
- They have switched from job security to career security, they want to keep building skills and experience that are portable
- Greatest fear- they will become stagnant

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Millennials' Career Goals

- Coached by parents to build extensive portfolios for college admission
- Already understand the importance of balance in life
- True “multi-taskers”
- They are looking for parallel careers

Raised by soccer moms

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On-the Job Strengths

	Traditionalists	Boomers	GenXers	Millennials
Job Strength	Stable	Service-oriented Team Players	Adaptable and Techno-literate	Multi-taskers and Techno-savvy
Outlook	Practical	Optimistic	Skeptical	Hopeful
View of Authority	Respectful	Love/Hate	Unimpressed and Unintimidated	Polite
Leadership	By Hierarchy	By Consensus	By Competence	By pulling together

When putting together teams in the workplace, be aware of the strengths and weaknesses each person brings.

Interestingly Millennials have some of the same characteristics of the traditionalists.

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On-the Job Strengths

	Traditionalists	Boomers	GenXers	Millennials
Relationships	Personal sacrifice	Personal gratification	Reluctant to commit	Inclusive
Turnoffs	Vulgarity	Political Incorrectness	Cliché'/Hype	Promiscuity
Diversity	Ethnically segregated	Integration began	Fully integrated	No majority race
Feedback	No news is good news	Once a year with documentation	Interrupts and asks how they are doing	Wants feedback at the push of a button
Work/Life Balance	Need help shifting	Balance everyone else and themselves	Wants balance now	Need flexibility to balance activities

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- ### Bridging the Gap
- Know who you are talking to
 - Find out about events that occurred when they were growing up
 - Avoid assuming that if a person is a certain age, they will act a certain way
 - Discuss expectations right away
 - Inquire about immediate tasks – How does A get you to B

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Bridging the Gap

- Instead of treating others as you like to be treated, find out HOW they want to be treated and respect that
- Ex: when working with someone older than you, don't assume you can address them by their first name – ask!

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Bridging the gap:

- Acknowledge differences
- Talk about how to learn and help each other
- You may have more in common than you think
- Break through stereotypes!

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Bridging the Gap

- Look at ways to cut bureaucracy and red tape
- Don't be put off by overt ambition
- Keep up with technology

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As a Manager:

- Focus on goals
- Make everyone feel included
- Break the bonds of tradition
- Invest in talent
- Show employees the future
- Little changes make a big difference
- Build it and they will come and stay

Resolve problems with dampening enthusiasm

Keep an open mind, encourage generations to mentor each other

Expect resistance when changing the status quo. Older workers may want to proceed with caution, while younger workers want to move ahead without worrying about the risks.

Help employees develop skills within the company and careers

Tell them where the organization is going and how they fit in.

Good people leave bad bosses, not bad companies

Employees of all ages place a high value on balancing their work and personal lives.

As a Manager:

- Make everyone feel part of the team
- Change your leadership style depending on who you are managing
- Create a supportive environment
- Provide pathways to personal growth
- Provide diversity training

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Identify Motivators

- Ask people what motivates them!!
- Leaders have to be part coach/ part boss, the trick is to know when to do each.



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Exercise

- Take 2 or 3 minutes and make a list of what motivates you.

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Exercise

- As the workforce continues to become more diverse, employees will face special challenges.
- Take 2 minutes and list some of the challenges/barriers you think you will be facing in the future.

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Summary

- The diverse workplace today can be very challenging, but exciting.
- Appreciate differences in others
- Be willing to learn, teach, and mentor.

- “You can’t always get what you want.” – The Rolling Stones

