

HRMA

PeopleTalk



Measuring the Dividends of Diversity

Hear and Now:
The Art of Listening

The New Language of Business:
Courage Required

XYBOOM: Eight Key
Generational Issues (& Opportunities)

How Accessible is Your Workplace...Really?

GEN-Y: HELLS
GENERATION
GETTING ME!
NO ROOM
FOR ME!
GEN-X:
I AM
WAITING.
BOOMER:
I'M NOT
RETIRING.

XYBOOM: Eight Key Generational Issues (& Opportunities)

By Jane Terepocki, CHRP

"The world has never been richer, and yet we somehow cannot see how we can leave the next generation a world better than what we inherited. Are you willing to imagine together and take risks to realize possibilities for a better future?"

GREAT IDEAS ARE MOST OFTEN BORN of tough questions.

In May 2013, I was a panelist for the XYBOOM Conference, a multi-generational event that owes its origins to a good conversation—in this case between a few 20-somethings scratching their collective heads.

How was it that such a well-educated generation was unable to find work in their fields of interest?

From that conversation, the first full day event emerged in 2012 with a simple, yet complex, mission: to facilitate intergenerational understanding and collaboration of shared dialogue, and to develop mentorship and research opportunities.

Well run, dynamic and thought-provoking, the relevance of the XYBOOM Conference continued to grow in its second year. From two morning panels to live case studies in the afternoon followed by a Wisdom Café, the opportunity to share views and questions were constant throughout via social media and face-to-face.

Our panel tackled a question on the minds of all in attendance: "In the Workplace: What Generational Issues Hinder Organizations Today?" Together with Carol Chiang, partner, KPMG, Val Litwin, VP, franchise operations, Nurse Next Door and James Palmer, VP, sales and marketing, Great Little Box Company, the panel generated a strong exchange of ideas and a succinct summary of eight key issues.

1. Intergenerational Issues in the Workplace Are Not New: However, new dynamics such as employees staying in the workplace longer and flattened organizational hierarchies have forced

intergenerational issues to the forefront. There is more generational blending with various generations working as cohorts rather than hierarchical structures, which may also result in more space for generational conflict.

Opportunity: Different generations working closely can foster different perspectives and increase creativity—it is important to embrace generational diversity and challenge organizations or systems that don't. There are also more opportunities for mentorship within the wider spectrum of experiences.

2. Practice Emotional Intelligence:

With the various generations together in the workplace, it is important to practice emotional intelligence and be aware of individual and generational preferences

Opportunity: Knowing when to compose an email that demonstrates formality and respect vs. an email that is brief and to-the-point may involve understanding generational preferences. Communications need to be customized based on who the audience is. The ultimate goal, regardless of generation, is effective communications.

3. Culture-based Hiring: Those in hiring positions make decisions based on limited time spent with the candidates (e.g. the 45 minute interview) while candidates often focus on short-term needs such as immediate pay.

Opportunity: When hiring, more time must be spent on determining cultural fit and soft skills; these traits should take precedence over generational perceptions and hard skills.

4. Fostering Passion: Individuals can and should bring their passion to an organization. However, organizations must have a clearly communicated rallying cry that channels these passions effectively.

Opportunity: If people know what the organization needs from them, it will help to drive the passion within themselves. Passion can also be complemented with recognition and reward programs.

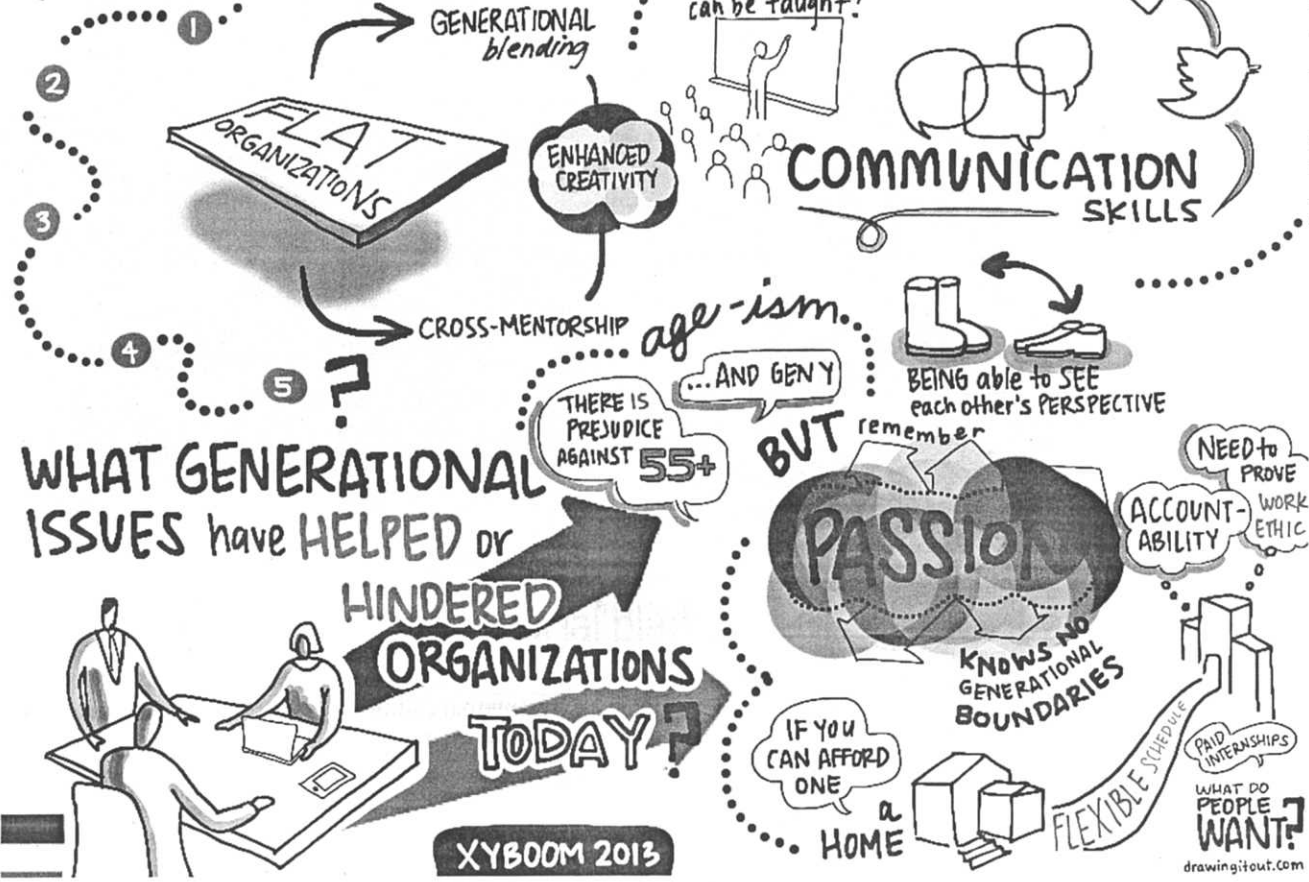
5. Succession Planning: People change careers more often today and retention strategies need to keep pace. The average duration for individuals of any generation with a company is about five years. This, combined with flattened organizations and people delaying retirement makes workforce management especially tough.

Opportunity: Companies need to balance succession planning for tomorrow vs. managing the perceived bottlenecks of today.

6. Work/Life Balance for All Generations: There is a shift taking place that puts higher importance on work-life balance. When compared to other countries with rapidly growing economies such as China or India, our workforce is not as high strung.

Opportunity: Create meaningful flexibility for employees. For instance, flexibility can be in the form of allowing work from home when it makes business sense, or a focus on output rather than hours worked. BC-based businesses may need to manage perceptions they are not as competitive as their counterparts in other parts of the country and globally.

but what about
**SUCCESSION
PLANNING**



Yolanda Liman, drawingitout.com

7. Work Ethic and Perception: It is evident that all generations work hard, but do younger generations expect to be recognized and rewarded for their hard work faster? There is a perception that Gen Y-ers are not as willing to put in the hours to build a strong foundation but are more focused on instant gratification. While companies need to be transparent that long hours are the norm (if that is the case), potential and new employees still need to understand strong work ethics are what is valued.

Opportunity: Mentorship is important for putting expectations in context. It can be a great way to build organizational trust and empowers individuals to be their

own leaders and figure out how they want to move forward. Mentors can be sought within an organization but also in the community, which can then extend mentorship into life experiences.

8. Unpaid Internships: There appears to be more and more unpaid internships. Young people and new graduates are faced with the cost of working in unpaid internships in order to gain experience to be more competitive for paid positions.

Opportunity: If faced with the decision to accept an unpaid internship, negotiate what other benefits the position would result in (e.g. contacts, leads for paid employment).

It is amazing how one day of exchanging ideas and experiences can help define the genuine generational issues at the heart of the workplace AND unearth a wealth of possible solutions. At the end of the day, it does not matter if you are X, Y or Boomer, only that you recognize the dreams and aspirations of others. In that regard, forums such as XYBOOM which bring all generations together, go a long way towards creating the working solutions needed most. **P**

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Changing the mindset of the community to promote instead of look down on trades. #xyboom - Jonathan Tsang @OfficeCritic

Blend of working together, cross-mentorship, coaching and sharing lead to better partnerships - Carol Chiang #XYBOOM - XYBOOM

Conference @XYBOOMdotCOM "It's about emotional wisdom & respect, acknowledging that we are at different stages and backgrounds"- @vilitwin #xyboom - CYBF BC @ CYBFBC

Last audience question: how do you get dialogue to start within your company? #XY-BOOM - XYBOOM Conference @ XYBOOMdot.COM

#xyboom panel highlighting the need for effective workplace communication skills to help unleash passion & chemistry - Connie Chong @connie_chong

Audience question: Younger generation demands flexibility, but is the current workplace feasible to achieve this? #XYBOOM - XYBOOM Conference @ XYBOOMdotCOM

It's the relationship building and informal conversations that lead to successful formal business pitches and ideas #XYBOOM - Carolyn Shum @shumbum1210

Overheard at #XYBOOM: "At the end of the day we are all human" - XYBOOM Conference @XYBOOMdotCOM