

# Building Bridges Across Multiple Generation Gaps: Navigating the Multigenerational Workplace

**Notes / Excerpts**

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# Are there any drawbacks to using these models or theories?

- Anything used to characterize behaviors has the potential for stereotyping individuals.
- When do this become stereotyping?
- It is possible to adopt such a rigid view of where I fit in the model that I am frozen into its limitations.
- It's even more tempting to categorize my coworkers and end up blinded to their range of natural responses.
- The tools don't provide you with either an excuse for or with a license for particular behaviors

**Remember, “the map is not the territory”.**

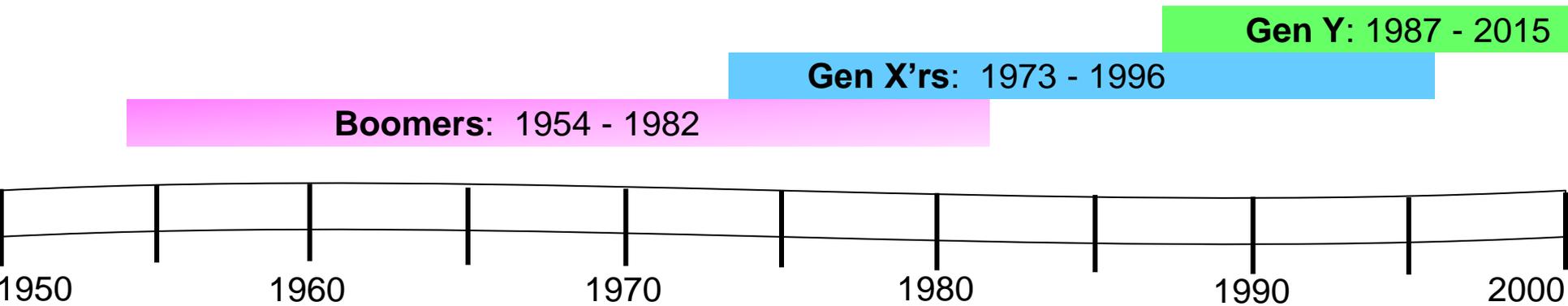
## Some definitions

**Generation** – similar to a family generation, but because there’s great variation in families, defined as all people born together in a particular group of years (sometimes referred to as *historical* or *cohort* generations)

– often refined by geography and the sharing of formative events at about the same point in maturation

**Impact Zone** – those “formative years” – from roughly age 8-10 to age 18-20, when generation-defining events seem to have the greatest impact

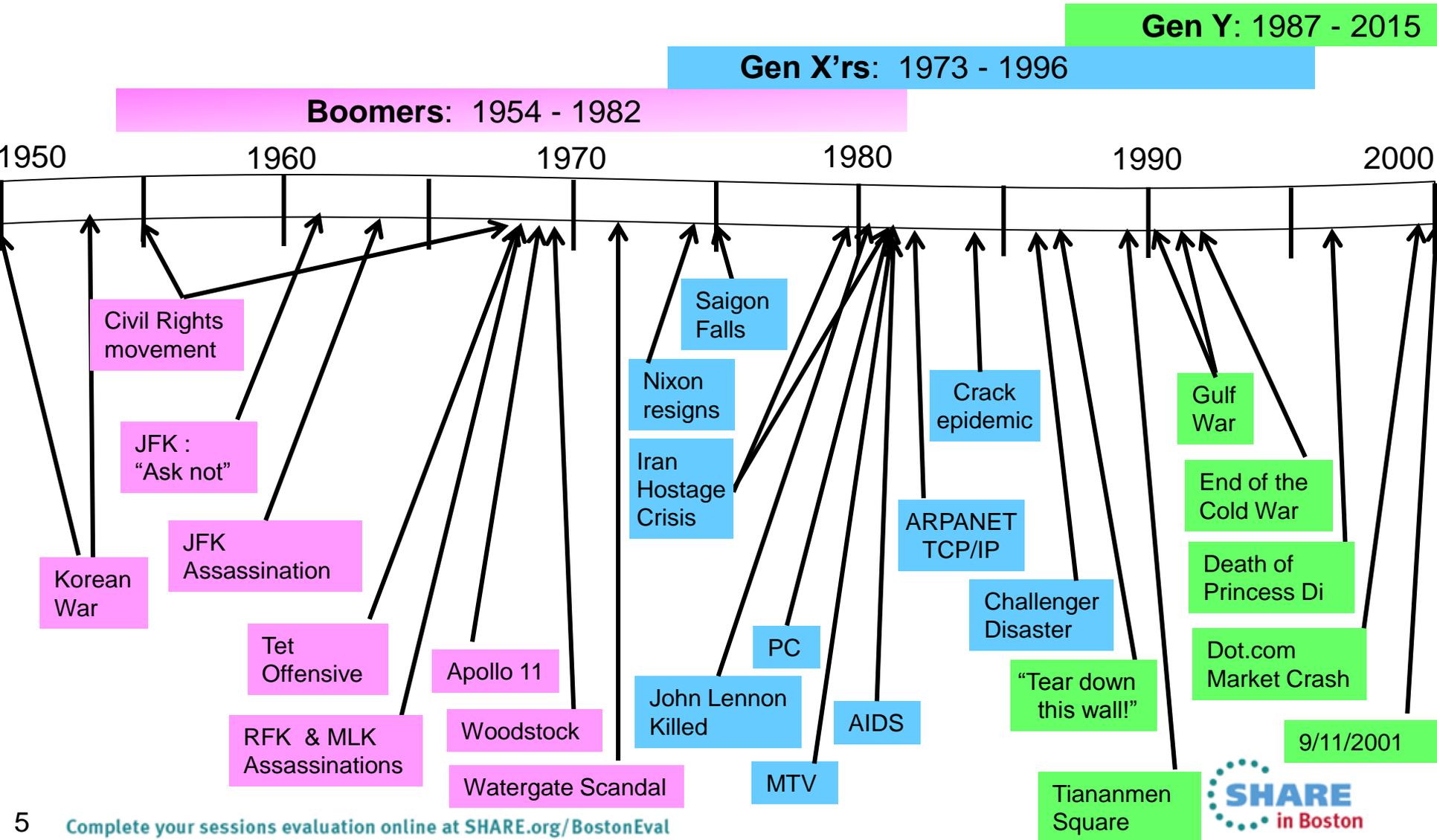
# Impact Zones



Let's say that I need to be 8-10 to be able to emotionally and logically process the significance of an event at the moment that it occurs

Boomers born 1946-1964 will be 8 years old in 1954-1972 and 18 years old 1964-1982.  
Gen X'rs born 1965-1978 will be 8 years old in 1973-1986 and 18 years old 1983-1996.  
Gen Y'rs born 1979-1997 will be 8 years old in 1987-2005 and 18 years old 1997-2015.

# Impact Zones



# Feeling a little workplace tension?

- At least 4 and in some cases, 5 generations are working side-by-side for the first time
- On the topic of work ethic...
  - 68% of Boomers feel that “younger people” do not have as strong a work ethic as they do
  - 32% of Gen-X feel that their youngers lack a good work ethic
  - 13% of Gen-Y say that the difference in work ethics causes friction, but they believe that they have a good work ethic for which no one credits them.
- Different values, experiences, attitudes, formative events combine to create:
  - the identification of separate groups: “we” vs “them”
  - frustrations with variations in generational cultures and mores
  - bad assumptions and frequently resulting misunderstandings

# Got a few questions for you --

If 60 is the new 40, what just happened to the GenX? GenY?

With a rough economy, Boomers not retiring – impact on GenX? GenY?

Impact of the numbers of GenY will only increase as they continue to move into the workplace (they're only 16-34 today).

Name	Birth year	Percentage in US Workplace 2008	Percentage in US Workplace 2013
Traditionalists	(1901-1943)	4%	2%
Baby Boomers	(1944-1964)	40%	32%
Generations Xers	(1965-1981)	40%	39%
Millennials	(1982-2003)	16%	27%

*From Haydn Shaw, percentages in workforce developed from [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) data*

## A little audience participation....

- Why you want people like me on your team (strengths we bring to the table)
- What makes me a little crazy about working with you
- Here are some things you could do that would make working together so much easier for us

	<b>Boomers ( 49– 67 )</b>	<b>Gen X ( 35- 48)</b>	<b>Gen Y ( 16- 34 )</b>
<b>Heroes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JFK</li> <li>• Martin Luther King, Jr.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ronald Reagan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Princess Diana</li> <li>• Bill Gates, Steve Jobs</li> </ul>
<b>Career values and goals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a great career</li> <li>• Loyal workaholic</li> <li>• Job hopping bad</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loyal to person(s), not organization</li> <li>• Multiple jobs +</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn't have to be straight line</li> <li>• Fit &amp; meaning critical</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idealistic</li> <li>• Optimistic / can-do</li> <li>• Seeks to please</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent</li> <li>• Creative / adaptable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-tasking</li> <li>• Quick / committed</li> <li>• Civic minded, idealistic</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitive</li> <li>• Judgmental</li> <li>• Controlling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rebellious</li> <li>• Impatient</li> <li>• Skeptical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Criticism = pain</li> <li>• Short attention span</li> </ul>
<b>Relationship to manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arms-length</li> <li>• Feedback Rx annually</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it real-time</li> <li>• Don't overcomplicate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual ok (ala gaming)</li> <li>• Lots, often, positive</li> </ul>
<b>Communicate How?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings, in person.</li> <li>• Note, memo, email</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media; email</li> <li>• Sound bites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile; texts</li> <li>• email SUBJ line</li> </ul>
<b>Learn how?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lectures, workshops</li> <li>• Books, manuals</li> <li>• Seek expert teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands on / kits</li> <li>• Solo study, not in group / classroom</li> <li>• Role playing / games</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eLearning (blogs, webcasts, YouTube)</li> <li>• Mobile anywhere / anytime; bursts</li> <li>• Peer learning</li> </ul>
<b>Technology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Willing to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tech savvy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tech dependent</li> </ul>

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# Practical Tension Relief Suggestions

- See if you can be specific about what's bothering you
  - dress code
  - work ethic
  - communication
  - respect
  - loyalty
  - coordination
  - language
  - punctuality
  - making decisions
- What bothers you about the situation?
  - Is the friction caused by a business requirement?
  - Or is this a personal cross-generational issue?
- What can **we** do about it?

# Advice for Boomers

- Take a look in the mirror first
- Actively bridge the gap – build a bidirectional mentoring relationship with a GenX / Y
- Recognize & respect the diversity – you are more like the GenY than X regarding teamwork & collaboration
- Be very clear & specific about your expectations; verify understanding; show expected results & how the pieces fit
- Rewards – practice flexibility & creativity; tailor rewards
- Communications – tailor your communication (content/media); provide backstory; never again say “it’s always been that way”
- Share knowledge AND wisdom; support test flights!
- Do not assume. Do not prejudge. Do not stereotype.



# Advice for GenX

- Take a look in the mirror first
- Working in teams works – learn to “play well in the sandbox”
- Actively bridge the gap – build a bidirectional mentoring relationship with a Boomer / GenY
- Expectation management – communicate your expectations, don’t assume, don’t make me read your mind, work with us
- Communications – pay attention, don’t multi-task in meetings ( it looks like inattention and rudeness)
- Style – Watch the fine line between skepticism & distrust, between dry humor & sarcasm, between being direct & blunt
- Do not assume. Do not prejudge. Do not stereotype.



# Advice for GenY

- Work on getting to know thyself
- Get it – not all work will be collaborative – good news is the Boomers also like teams, (although not so much GenX's)
- Actively bridge the gap - build a bidirectional mentoring relationship with a GenX / Boomer
- Expectation management – ask for clarification; minimize assumptions; don't expect to be in charge immediately
- Rewards – explore the topic with your managers & peers
- Communications – improve your skills in areas that make sense (business communications, finance, presentations)
- Do not assume. Do not prejudge. Do not stereotype.

