



When our first son was born, Rite's mother, her grandmother and great grandfather were all still living. They covered an age range of a few months to 104. So we took the opportunity of having a 5-generation picture taken to celebrate the generations. It was very clear that our son was starting life in a very different world from the 4 generations above him.

In 2 Tim 2:2 Paul wrote to Timothy, his "son in the Lord" and said, *"What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* This verse brings the idea of working with 4 generations – Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others. Think about your own leadership role. When it comes time to delegate your role to someone else, you want to pass it on to someone faithful but also younger! When it came time for me to pass on my regional convening role for YWAM Western Europe, I was thinking about someone from the next younger generation, not my own. This usually means at least 10 -20 years younger.

We have a God who works with every successive generation. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and beyond. He knows how to communicate with each one. The problem comes when we don't take time to understand the generations above and below us. Whatever generation we are a part of, we can tend to think that the way we see the world is the way everyone sees it or should see it. By now you are aware that we are all very different.

So if you are 40 and part of a leadership team and you relate with DTS students of around 20 in a school, or relate to older members on the legal board or elders in the region perhaps in their late 50's or beyond, you have to adjust your thinking. Often we don't adequately think through the implications of working and decision making across the generations. We also generally think positively that we are YWAMers and can bridge the gap with no problem at all, but in reality we often miss each other in our communication, way of working and style of leadership.

In YWAM right now we are functioning with four distinct generations. Each of these generations think, feel and act very differently and so it is vital that we understand these differences, learn how to function in team and grow in our ability to pass on and share the responsibility from one generation to the next. Camille Bishop has written a great book called "We're in this boat together" which I can highly recommend.

The dates allocated for each generation in the chart below are obviously not an exact science but give an idea of the period where a certain type of thinking will occur. So for instance I am 59 and therefore a part of the late boomer generation. Take a look yourself to see where you fit:

<b>Your Age</b>	<b>Dates of birth</b>	<b>Generational Name</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
72-89	1925-42	Silent or Traditional Generation	The great depression with economic despair and World War II. Lifestyle of morality, duty, self denial & hard work. Pay as you go mentality. Leadership focused on getting things done regardless of the cost. Standard model was hierarchical.
54-71	1943-60  mid-late 50's	Early Baby Boomers  Late Baby Boomers	Massive change in society with the sexual revolution, crime rate increasing and morality breaking down. This was the hippy generation. They were idealists, goal oriented and workaholics. They experienced the start of the computer generation and prosperity begins to emerge. They are still strong in the workforce and don't want to retire as they enjoy and find identity in their work.
33-53	1961-81	Generation X or Baby Busters	The divorce rate doubled, with the result of an increase in broken homes & latch key kids. The cold war was replaced with regional wars and terrorist threats. They are becoming the most entrepreneurial generation excelling in technology. They work to live rather than the live to work (as their predecessors the boomers) which means they create boundaries for life and work.
12-32	1982-2002	Millennial Generation or Net generation	The technological and communication age. They relate through social networks. Self esteem is of utmost importance. They are the best educated, accept debt as the norm and are redefining the family. They prefer a string of short term assignments rather than commit themselves to anything long term.

The Silent generation were brought up with two words – authority and respect. These were automatic for anyone in a leadership role. For them it is considered normal to have a large gap between the leader and follower. They wouldn't expect their decisions to be questioned. The leaders are described with words like duty, commitment and perseverance. They enjoyed clear direction, roles and responsibilities.

The older boomer generation have behaved similar to the silent generation and were born during or after World War II. Words characterize their leadership like independence, optimism, opportunity, progress, responsibility, loyalty, obligation and driven. Although perhaps more collaborative in style they maintain a goal and outcome orientation as they climb the ladder to the top in order to make a difference. The younger boomers reflect more of a change with a questioning of authority, a desire to be included in decision-making and a freedom to disagree.

Gen-Xers develop trust and give respect when it's earned and that means demonstrating authentic character and integrity. Technology has contributed to the cultural gap between this generation and their predecessors – the boomers and silent generation. They like a more flexible schedule to assure they have a life apart from work (with their friends and family)! They desire training, mentoring, variety and continued opportunities for personal development. This need of supporting others has been a challenge for the boomers who often weren't mentored themselves and having been dropped in the deep end had to push through and emerge as leaders without the affirmation that perhaps they needed (many of course weren't even looking for help). To keep Gen-Xers around their leaders will need to be inclusive, relational and allow for flexibility and innovation.

Millenials are eager for a variety of experiences and hesitate to make long term commitments preferring a string of short term assignments. They are innovators, technologically talented and good team players but they bore easily. Work should be interesting, stimulating and lead to advancement. They are concerned for the environment and have more of a focus on healthy living. Like the Gen-Xers they look for relationship and understanding. They have loyalty, but it's not to the organisation, it is to the people and the vision they share.

As YWAM or YOUTH with a mission, we want to continue to champion the Millenials in our midst to take on challenges and opportunities, to move into leadership and have a seat at table. So take a good look at the generational make up of your team, base and nation. Who are the leaders? Are they from one generation or a mix? Some pioneer situations may be made up of only Millennials while other more established works will have all four generations included. I was just talking with a 28 year old who has been championed to lead a major base. His challenge will be mentoring up and bringing inclusivity to the other generations.

10 things to think about generations:

1. Always reserve seats on your leadership teams for members from each generation – especially the Millenials at this point in time. They are our future and they have a keen desire to be included or they will find somewhere else that will involve them. Senior leaders also need a seat at the table as wise elders who can bring their influence and wisdom of years.
2. Gen-Xers are the sandwich generation, relating up to the boomers and down to the Millenials. This is always a challenge and it's easy for them to feel that they are missed out in the process. However there is every evidence to suggest that Gen-Xers will be the most entrepreneurial generation yet, so watch this space! They understand both generations above and below and can be a glue to help join the generations in functioning together.
3. In order to keep Millenials focused and engaged, any training, teaching and development input must be dynamic. Talking heads just doesn't go down well for them. A pure lecture mode is a thing of the past, connected to previous generations. This generation wants things fast,

creative, changing, hands on, and with full involvement. A good example of this is “Ted talks” which have been reduced to 15 minutes with the Millennials in mind. (If you haven’t watched any, check out [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)) If we can’t say it in 15 minutes, we probably shouldn’t say it yet!!

4. Remember the strategies of the Millennials will be different from other generations. They are the first generation to be brought up with so much technology surrounding them from birth. Give them room to create in communications and PR and to think out of the box in every ministry because it's a new world developing out there, with a potential huge generation gap.
5. It’s time for Boomers to be thinking more about eldership roles where they will be influencing the work rather than perhaps directly leading bases and ministries. It’s a huge challenge for the boomers who have enjoyed decision-making and don't want to give away their leadership.
6. For boomers who are still booming with vision and energy, the challenge is to pass on the major established roles and press into the new vision. Like Caleb, go for your mountain but don't hold on to the previous ones.
7. If the general age group of your base staff aren’t in their 20/30’s, perhaps one of the reasons is because you don't have enough of them in the leadership!
8. Remember that if you don't develop Millennials you will lose them. They want face time and opportunity to jump around from role to role for experience.
9. In order to welcome Millennials into leadership, our leadership teams have to take on the characteristics of being transparent, caring, releasing, coaching and creating space.
10. The leadership style changes dramatically with the transition from Silent to Boomer and to Gen-X, from strongly hierarchical to collaborative approaches of team leadership. This goes further with the Millennials, and they are looking for leaders who are dedicated, creative and care for them personally.

We are in this learning process of understanding the generations. We just finished a training week for emerging leaders aged from 16 to 30 and had a staff team working with us including millennial, Gen-Xers and Boomers. We all functioned very well together but made sure we passed our schedule and processes by the millennial staff person, who gave some very concrete and helpful feedback to make sure us oldies didn't veer into boringness! We focused on key content with regular activities & exercises, involved creative application in worship, intercession and teaching. We also made sure the training style included film clips, workshops, discussion and laughter. To top it off we created an environment of long healthy & tasty meal times with opportunity to talk and relax around the pool. (the pool and 30+ degrees does help!) We finished with the sense of being family together.

If we are going to live and work together in unity and understanding across the generations, it will require something from all of us: - humility, listening ears, extending grace, much love and always making room for the younger

generations to express themselves and be included.

*“Let’s make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*  
Ephesians 4:3

Until next month

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