

Bridging the Generations

Differences between you and your Apprentice



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Each generation has different goals, interests, motivations and work habits. Understanding how the younger generation views the world can help us connect and provide the learning environment they need to flourish as an Apprentice and later as a dairy farmer. The descriptions in this tip sheet are generalizations and certainly don't represent everyone, but they can help us understand behaviors and attitudes that may be different from what we expect.

Influencing events for the four main living generations

GI Generation	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Millennials
1930 to 1946	1946-1964	1965-1984	1982-2004
World Wars I & II	Vietnam War & the Civil Rights movement, Assassinations of JFK, MLK, RK	The "Latch-key" generation, Emergence of AIDS, End of the Cold War	9/11 and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, School shootings
The Great Depression	A period of economic stability and prosperity	Globalization, Decreasing job security (loss of union protections, rise of 401K retirement plans)	The Great Recession
Beginning of the industrialization of agriculture	Silent Spring (Rachel Carson)	Rise of Sustainable Agriculture	Climate change

The GI Generation (Ages 70-90s)

- Children of the WWI generation & fighters in WWII & young in the Great Depression.
- Strongly interested in personal morality and near-absolute standards of right and wrong.
- Strong loyalty to jobs, groups, schools, etc., likely to have stayed with the same job their entire life. They are the assertive, energetic doers, community-minded.
- Disciplined, self-sacrificing, & cautious.

Baby Boomers (Ages 52 to 70)

- Two sub-sets:
 - Save-the-world revolutionaries (Hippies) of the '60s & '70s
 - Party-hardy career climbers (Yuppies) of the '70s and '80s.
- Dr. Spock parenting resulted in the "me" generation, self-righteous & self-centered.
- The first divorce generation, where divorce was beginning to be accepted more widely.
- Strong desires to change the common values for the good of all.
- Tend to be more positive about authority, hierarchal structure and tradition.
- Optimistic, driven, team-oriented.

Generation X (Ages 35 to 50)

- "Latch-key kids" grew up street-smart but isolated, often with divorced or career-driven parents.
- Late to marry and quick to divorce...many single parents.
- Cynical of many major institutions, which failed their parents, or them, during their formative years.
- Focus on individual rights over the common good.
- Skeptical, entrepreneurial, self-reliant.
- Want to save the neighborhood, not the world.
- Desire a chance to learn, explore & make a contribution.

Millennials (Ages 16 to 35)

- Nurtured by omnipresent parents (Soccer Moms), they have been told they are special, and expect the world to treat them that way.
- They feel enormous academic pressure.
- Optimistic, focused, respect authority, they schedule everything.
- They feel like a generation and have great expectations for themselves.
- Prefer digital literacy. Have never known a world without computers! They get all their information and most of their socialization from the Internet.
- With unlimited access to information, can be assertive w/strong views.
- View the world as a 24/7 place; want fast, immediate processing.

Generational differences in attitudes toward work

The economy has changed dramatically over the last century and those external changes, along with individual upbringing have affected how each generation views work. The biggest changes have been a decreasing level of income security and increasing importance of doing meaningful work.

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1930 to 1946	1946-1964	1965-1984	1982-2004
Loyal to employer, expect to work entire life at one job	First generation in which a large proportion of women worked outside the home	Entrepreneurial and very individualistic.	The 'Gig Economy', many have not been able to find secure employment
Strong identification with career—their work was their life. In farming, tended not to retire.	The first generation to use the word "retirement" to mean being able to enjoy life after the children have left home.	Tend to commit to self rather than an organization or specific career. Average 7 job changes in lifetime.	Looking for meaningful work and opportunity to contribute to a greater good or personal satisfaction

Understanding your Apprentice's goals for their career can help you shape their training so that each new skill has a meaning and purpose toward their long-term goals. Explaining why you do things the way you do and each task's place in the bigger picture of your farming operation can help the Apprentice gain an appreciation for the dairy farm as a system.

Generational differences in views on money and income

From the Great Depression to the Great Recession, attitudes toward money and income have changed dramatically. Baby boomers grew up in a time of both relative prosperity and job security. Things have changed dramatically and more recent generations are changing in response.

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"Use it up, fix it up, make it do, or do without."	Rise of consumerism, growth of the Middle Class	Want what they want and want it now but struggling to buy.	The Great Recession has affected attitudes toward wealth
Avoid debt...save and buy with cash.	Buy it now and use credit.	Many are deeply in credit card debt.	More frugal than previous generations

To many Millennials, working hard to acquire a comfortable lifestyle may not be as motivating as it was for previous generations. Some are returning to values similar to those of the GI Generation who survived the Great Depression.

For a dairy grazer, knowing when to spend and what to spend on is a key to being financially successful. This should resonate with our Millennial Apprentices. Identifying what motivates your Apprentice and shaping their training to harness those motivations will make the experience that much more meaningful for them and allow them to more effectively apply what they learn to their own farming career.