



DESIGNING STRATEGIES®

Business Strategies for the Design Industry

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Generational differences are responsible for myriad corporate challenges like low morale, high turnover rates, absenteeism, poor communication, high stress and low productivity. Getting the generational

Terri L. Maurer, FASID groups to work together in a cooperative and cohesive manner is the challenge facing corporate leaders and managers. Diversity and sensitivity training programs are being introduced to foster understanding among the generations.

Buckminster Fuller, architect, mathematician, inventor and designer of the unique geodesic domes, popularized the term *synergism*. Synergism allows for the inclusion of divergent perspectives as a means of achieving a sum that is greater than its individual parts. Simply put, one plus one can easily equal more than two. Any project will result in a superior solution when viewed from a number of different perspectives.

What better way to optimize your work force than to incorporate the various generations, their values, assets and characteristics in a focus on growth and success? Have you looked at your employees lately? Perhaps the pertinent question is: have you really seen them as members of very different generations with their own perspectives on life, work, play, ethics and success?

Determining how to capture those unique qualities and capitalize on them is your challenge. Include members of different generations on your planning committee, in your customer service center, and on your board of directors. You will be amazed at how broad your view of your business and the world in general will become. *Different* is good!

**Visualize - Analyze - Strategize.
Plan for success!**

Maurer On The Move

Below are scheduled speaking engagements where you can see and hear Terri's informative presentations on a variety of business topics. If you have questions about an event or topic, contact Terri at: tmaurer@juno.com.

October 18th	November 1st
Fall Market	ASID Design Source NE
D & D Building	Boston World Trade Center
New York City	Boston

It seems like an eternity that the hottest business topics have surrounded employment issues – hiring will go up dramatically; it's not going up but it should be. Clawing our way out of a long drawn out economic slump, this slow-to-recover economy has placed human resources issues at the top of everyone's mind. Do we hire, or not hire? Out source jobs or go off shore? How do we keep our most valuable key people? Where do we find talented employees to fill vacancies?



Management struggles with these issues attempting to maintain stability, or to grow stronger by cutting costs and increasing productivity. Just finding an *adequate* employee to fill a desk and complete a task is no longer sufficient. HR staff, management and leadership all need to learn the fine art of successfully combining several very different generations of workers within their organizations. Remember the conflicts between you and your own parents and your own children, usually based on differences in the way each generation thinks, their differing values, and work ethic. There is now and always has been conflict between generations. Now with life expectancy at 80 years, people remain in the work force longer than ever before, resulting in up to four generations attempting to work together under the same roof.

Visualize

So, how can you keep things running smoothly? Locating high quality employees to accomplish your plan for growth and success is a difficult enough task. What do you do with the mixed bag that you find working in your facilities? Our work force is now made up of four generations, beginning with Traditionalists born between 1928 and 1945, all the way through the early cusp of Millennials born between 1981 and 1999. Add in the Baby Boomers and Generation X and you've got a very interesting mixture of age groups, all of whom present very different and often conflicting characteristics and challenges to management.



Traditionalists, still making up about 25% of the work force, are a dedicated and loyal group that adhere to rules and show great respect for authority. The Baby Boomer 'ME' generation seek personal gratification and growth, like to work in teams, tend not to disagree with their peers and are overly sensitive to feedback. Gen Xers bring a higher level of technological literacy, but they are a very independent and adaptable group, not at all intimidated by authority figures, positions held by Traditionalists and Baby Boomers.

Millenials bring a high level of civic duty and ethical behavior, are also quite technologically advanced, and want to do meaningful work. Unlike Boomers, for Gen Xers and Millenials, work isn't everything. These are offspring of the inventors of the 60-hour workweek. Being raised by a generation of workaholics, these groups plan to work as a means to achieving a meaningful, balanced life. They come to you well educated, talented and achievement-oriented. They have higher expectations than the other generations, and any employer who does not find a way to match their expectations, will find they quickly go elsewhere in search of someone who will.

Analyze

So, how do you make this mixed bag of personality and characteristic types work harmoniously for the success of your organization? What is the answer? Or, more correctly, what are the answers? Insightful and creative managers will be needed to successfully meld these divergent characteristics and assets. Addressing the range of characteristics and assets each group brings to the table through a variety of filters will present a wide range of solutions. Educating generations about each other's unique traits will go a long way toward understanding. Think of generational diversity like tossing a salad: a little of this, a little of that, toss it all together to create a blending of ingredients with unique tastes and textures. Finding just the right combination of generational differences can result in the success of a project, a strategy, or an entire organization.

Strategize

Here's Something To Think About...

"The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done; men and women who are creative, inventive and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept, everything they are offered."
Jean Paiget (1896-1980)

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