

FOREWORD BY STEPHEN M. R. COVEY



STICKING POINTS

HOW TO GET
4 GENERATIONS
WORKING TOGETHER
IN THE 12 PLACES
THEY COME APART



HAYDN SHAW

Author of the bestselling workshop by FranklinCovey®
LEADING ACROSS GENERATIONS™

Companies need to understand how each generation behaves at work, how they want to be managed, and their needs in order to retain them and keep them engaged. Haydn's book will help you unlock the value behind the generations and bring them together for the benefit of your company.

DAN SCHAWBEL, *Forbes* contributor and author of *Me 2.0* and *Promote Yourself: The New Rules for Career Success*

Johnsonville Sausage has always been about the people who ensure we produce the highest-quality products. When Haydn spoke to our leaders, he got us thinking about generational differences in new ways that help us better attract and empower employees of all generations. I'm glad Haydn's put the insights he shared with us into a book that can help thousands of others. You need this powerful book.

RALPH C. STAYER, CEO and owner of Johnsonville Sausage

The secret to future success lies in GQ: generational intelligence. Read this book and get smart about how to connect generations to unleash innovation and productivity.

TIM SANDERS, CEO of Net Minds and author of *Today We Are Rich* and *Love Is the Killer App*

When it comes to troubleshooting workplace issues and facilitating harmonious interactions among employees, FranklinCovey is the undisputed leader, and those who are currently managing four disparate generations need look no further than practice leader Haydn Shaw, whose book *Sticking Points* zeroes in on the areas—like organizational structure and use of social media—where communication is most likely to break down and cause a negative impact on the bottom line.

ALEXANDRA LEVIT, author of *#MillennialTweet: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Managing the Millennials*

Sticking Points contains insights and processes that do indeed work. We've had Haydn back many times to teach our managers the tools he has put into this book. I found it so valuable and enjoyable that I invited my wife to come hear his presentation. You'll come back to this book again and again when you run into a new generational challenge. But more

important, it will improve your ability to speak the language of other generations at work and in your personal life. A must-read.

JIM THYEN, president and CEO of Kimball International, Inc.

I go all over the world speaking to organizations about leadership, and Haydn has made a slam dunk with *Sticking Points*. He explains why people from different generations think and act the way they do. Why does this matter? When we understand the “why,” we can work with people to get outstanding results as teams or individuals. Understanding the “why” enables leaders to celebrate differences and capitalize on the creativity and innovation of each generation. It’s a must-read for leaders.

PAT WILLIAMS, senior vice president of the Orlando Magic

Sticking Points provides a practical road map for sidestepping the stumbling blocks that come with a multigenerational workforce. It is a great guide for business leaders feeling the pain of managing four completely different generations. I agree with Haydn Shaw—don’t try to change them; lead them. This astute and entertaining book is an important one.

TAMARA ERICKSON, a McKinsey Award-winning author and expert on organizations and the changing workforce

Four generations are challenging associations like the American Business Women’s Association to rethink how they attract, retain, and engage their members that are in various stages of their lives and careers. What works for Traditionalists and Boomers doesn’t necessarily work for Gen Xers and Millennials. *Sticking Points* is an excellent read that gives organizational leaders, teachers, and families essential tools to help them connect with every generation effectively. Our multigenerational membership loved Haydn Shaw’s breakout sessions, and I know you will appreciate his book.

RENE STREET, executive director of American Business Woman’s Association National

Understanding the four generations in the workforce is critical today for maximizing customer satisfaction and team productivity. Haydn is a true guide to better understand the differences of this issue and take advantage of the opportunities! I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants a well-researched, easy-to-read, and practical guide to this important subject.

STEPHEN G. OSWALD, CEO of Capital Safety

In his book *Sticking Points*, Haydn Shaw presents timely advice for executives and managers struggling to understand the newest generation of employees. His insights helped us unravel this mystery and provide a path to better communication, greater productivity, and exceptional performance and will do the same for you.

MICHAEL ENGLER, PhD, Chairman/CEO of Cactus Feeders, Inc.

Don't make . . . generational mistakes inside and outside of your business. Let Haydn put a smile on your face as he helps you navigate through the sticking points in every facet of your company and show you how multigenerational leadership wins out.

TIMOTHY P. BAILEY, retired chief credit officer and vice chairman, TCF National Bank

Thinking about my younger teammates—and teenage daughters—as “from another country” makes me smile. And it has improved my ability to listen and understand. This book is a must-read for those who want to work with, live with, and lead other generations effectively.

JENNIFER COLOSIMO, VP of Wisdom at DaVita; coauthor with Stephen Covey of *Great Work, Great Career*

Haydn Shaw's new book *Sticking Points* is definitely the right resource at the right time for twenty-first-century organizational leadership. Having experienced Haydn's practical wisdom at numerous retreats, I have learned that the principles laid out in the book are widely applicable across different types of organizations. I unreservedly recommend *Sticking Points* as a must-read for any organization's leadership team.

ROBERT VAN ALLEN, PhD EE, cofounder of SVS Inc. and executive/program manager for the Boeing Company (retired)

Sticking Points is an excellent book, a valuable glimpse of how generational differences impact organizations. We've brought Haydn to our staff and events we've hosted for other universities because our students and staffs span the generations. Leveraging the generational differences is critical to our success and yours. You need this book.

JUDITH FLINK, executive director of student financial services for the University of Illinois

This generation that has grown up digital continues to bring big changes to the workplace. *Sticking Points* provides a practical way to turn generational tensions into team results so we don't miss the *many* benefits this new generation can bring. Your whole team will want to read and talk about this book.

DON TAPSCOTT, author of 15 widely read books, including *Macrowikinomics: New Solutions for a Connected Planet* and *Grown Up Digital*

Sticking Points by Haydn Shaw helps readers sort out how to get all five generations working together rather than complaining about each other. Insightful and well balanced, this book will make you smile while it explores generational myths and provides a practical process for leading every generation more effectively.

KEN BLANCHARD, coauthor of *The One Minute Manager®* and *Trust Works!*

Haydn's caring, sincerity, and inspirational sense of humor put him in the top one percent of speakers in the nation. Now he's going to the top as an author. *Sticking Points* tackles one of the major problems in organizations all over the world—the friction between generations. And now, in one book, you can gain understanding and learn how to deal with all four generations in a very practical hands-on approach so that your organization can achieve its highest priorities.

RUTH WILLIAMS, author of *How to Be Like Women of Influence* and *Happy Spouse, Happy House*

With over 30,000 employees around the world, it was imperative that we build collaborative and effective teams across multiple functions and geographies. Haydn was able to unlock the obstructionism we saw across generations. His delivery was motivating, and his methods and insights were clear and empowering. With the path illuminated, our teams rose and worked effectively and passionately, from 22 to 62.

MATTHEW RUBEL, former chairman, CEO, and president of Collective Brands (Payless ShoeSource)

In *Sticking Points* Haydn does an amazing service. He not only turns automatic contention between the generations into understanding, but he also reveals the opportunities for creating true synergies. This book is a must-read for leaders of all ages.

RON MCMILLAN, coauthor of four *New York Times* bestsellers, including *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*

Sticking Points



STICKING POINTS

HOW TO GET
4 GENERATIONS
WORKING TOGETHER
IN THE 12 PLACES
THEY COME APART



HAYDN SHAW



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Sticking Points: How to Get 4 Generations Working Together in the 12 Places They Come Apart

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CONTENTS

	Foreword by Stephen M. R. Covey	xiii
	Preface	xvii
Chapter 1	Sticking Together or Coming Apart	1
Chapter 2	Blue Screen of Death: The Difficulty of Leading Four Generations	13
Chapter 3	Getting Unstuck: Five Steps for Leading through the Twelve Generational Sticking Points	29
PART 1	GHOST STORIES: UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR GENERATIONS	
	Introduction: Telling Ghost Stories	43
Chapter 4	Traditionalists: Keep Calm and Carry On	49
Chapter 5	Baby Boomers: Do Your Own Thing	61
Chapter 6	Generation X: Get Real	75
Chapter 7	Millennials: Can We Fix It? Yes, We Can!	91
PART 2	STICKING POINTS: HOW TO GET FOUR GENERATIONS WORKING TOGETHER IN THE TWELVE PLACES THEY COME APART	
	Introduction: Decoding the Generations	107
Chapter 8	Communication	111
Chapter 9	Decision Making	123
Chapter 10	Dress Code	131
Chapter 11	Feedback	139
Chapter 12	Fun at Work	149
Chapter 13	Knowledge Transfer	159
Chapter 14	Loyalty	169
Chapter 15	Meetings	181
Chapter 16	Policies	189
Chapter 17	Respect	199
Chapter 18	Training	207
Chapter 19	Work Ethic	217
Conclusion	Sticking Together	227

STICKING POINTS

	Acknowledgments	231
Appendix	Frequently Asked Questions	233
	1. Aren't generations more alike than they are different?	
	2. Isn't a lot of what gets called "generational differences" just about life stages?	
	3. How widely do the generational generalizations apply in different regions of the United States?	
	4. To what extent do these generational generalizations apply in other countries?	
	5. Is this book describing all Millennials or only middle-class Millennials in professional jobs?	
	Notes	239
	Index	259
	About the Author	263

Foreword

I'LL NEVER FORGET THE DAY I was working with an organization where the senior managers and employees were debating the merits of a new approach to how their work might be done. The company's youthful staff had proposed that some of them didn't necessarily need to come in to the office at set times and with set hours. "Let us work when we want," they said. "Just hold us accountable to getting our work done well and on time." But the older senior management team was sincerely questioning whether they would get a full day's work out of these people. The arguments went back and forth and round and round—with no resolution in sight.

I was witnessing a generational sticking point, one of the twelve places the generations are most likely to collide.

We are all seeing generational sticking points pop up in our own organizations or families more and more frequently. As Haydn explains, we've never had so many generations in existence at once, and we're not quite sure what to do about it. That's why we need this book.

I have known Haydn Shaw for more than twenty years, from the time he started at FranklinCovey at the ripe age of twenty-eight. He was one of our two youngest consultants, but honestly, he didn't look a day over twenty! I was still managing a sales team at the time, and my team worried that clients would wonder what they were getting when we first sent Haydn out alone. It didn't take long for us to realize what our clients quickly discovered: Haydn is exceptionally smart, practical, and funny. He quickly became an in-demand presenter and consultant—one of our very best. In short, he succeeded tremendously at what in our business is a very young

age, so he knows from personal experience that younger people can make a contribution, and he wants to show us how to let them.

Over the last twenty years I've watched Haydn lead large client projects, develop multiple training programs, and provide thought leadership for FranklinCovey's leadership practice. He has taught my father's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* program more than almost anyone else in the world. All the while he has been observing and researching generational differences. So in 2008, when FranklinCovey decided to develop workshops on generations, Haydn was already an expert who had spoken to and helped organizations create more productive teams, reduce turnover, and retain top talent by showing them how to sort through their generational differences. More than just spouting theories, Haydn has real-world, hands-on "generations" experience with literally thousands of people, enabling him to connect with people (and readers) in profound ways. As Carl Rogers put it, "That which is most personal is most general."

As you'll see in this book, Haydn has the ability to see the big picture through vast amounts of information in multiple disciplines while simultaneously providing practical insights and tools that can be used immediately. Haydn has the rare gift of taking complex things and making them simple—without being simplistic, which is what he has powerfully done with *Sticking Points*.

When I wrote *The Speed of Trust*, my foremost objective was to help people *build* trust, not just talk about it. That's what I love most about *Sticking Points*. Haydn doesn't simply explain the differences between the generations; he shows us how to use his five-step process to work through and transcend each of the twelve most common generational conflicts—what he calls "sticking points." He beautifully teaches the *why* behind the *what* and helps us gain real understanding of our generational differences, enabling us to leverage today's opportunity of having multiple generations at work at the same time.

Haydn is particularly witty and funny. His approach is to get us laughing at ourselves so we are more open to understanding and trusting other generations. Even though this book addresses a serious topic, you'll catch glimpses of his sense of humor that makes his generational presentations both engaging and penetrating. Haydn's experience and capabilities are what make this book smart and practical; his personality is what makes it interesting and funny.

Most of all Haydn has a vision for organizations empowering people and running with the strengths of each of the generations like no one else

I know. He sees a future for your organization where generations can work together in order to produce extraordinary results. More than anything else Haydn sees generational differences not as problems to be solved but as opportunities to be leveraged.

The problem is that both Haydn and I see too many corporate cultures poisoned by infighting between the generations. We witness simmering fights about checking e-mails and texts in meetings. We hear older colleagues whispering about new hires who don't seem loyal to the organization. We walk into workplaces that can't attract new and younger people to work there or keep the Boomers from longing for retirement.

What excites me about this wonderful book is how it paints a vision of another way—a *better* way. A way to transform a team stuck in generational differences into a team that sticks together.

Sticking Points will be my reference guide for years to come as a go-to resource for both understanding and resolving generational differences. I predict it will become a reference guide for you, too, filled with ideas and insights you can apply from a person you can trust.

Stephen M. R. Covey

MARCH 2013

Preface

WHEN I'M SPEAKING and consulting on generations, people frequently ask me to recommend a book to help them handle generational differences in their workplaces. They say they don't have time to read three or four books. They just want something that's up-to-date and covers all four generations—Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and especially Millennials—an easy-to-read book that both managers and associates of all generations will like. They want practical ideas they can put to work, not just research or theories that don't translate into concrete results. When I told them I didn't know of any one book that would do all that, they told me I'd better start writing.

In this book, I wanted to provide a practical resource for those people who approach me—a guide to all four generations, following a methodology that has helped thousands of people deal with the twelve issues most likely to pull teams apart.

This book is specifically written for the workplace context, but it has much broader applications. Generational differences don't just show up in the conference room. They surface in the home, on the school or nonprofit board, and at religious organizations. Anywhere people get together, what I call the “ghost stories” of the different generations impact the way they think. When we understand why another generation thinks the way they do, we are much more likely to appreciate their differences and speak their language. We are much more likely to stick together.

A quick note about my research. This book is . . .

- based on conversations and interviews with thousands of people from the four generations as well as the latest published research.
- about all four generations (with extra attention to Millennials since they are new) so the whole team can read it together and then put it to work.
- fast to read, with a touch of humor. (If we can't laugh at our generational differences, they'll always irritate us.)
- practical. If you can't apply what a book recommends, what's the point?

To make it practical, I've included . . .

- comparisons of how generations think, which a major client described as “the answer key to the generations.”
- a five-step plan for leading rather than managing generational differences.
- ways to apply this five-step plan to each of the twelve generational sticking points you face at work (or home).
- answers to the most common questions I get asked about generational differences.

Generational tensions are inevitable, but they don't have to leave you stuck. This book will help you to get the four generations working together in the twelve places they tend to come apart.

CHAPTER 1

Sticking Together or Coming Apart

CINDY SNEAKED OUT before the conference wrapped up. Seeing me by the registration table, she looked at her watch and asked, “Can you answer a question about your presentation? I’ve got a big problem on my team.”

“Sure,” I said. “We have a few minutes before people start coming out.”

She glanced at her watch again and started in. “For six months I’ve been working with Human Resources, trying to figure out what to do with Cara. I’m leaving the conference early to finalize the paperwork to fire her. But after listening to you, I’m wondering if maybe there’s something generational about this. I lead an information technology department, and Cara surfs the Internet three hours a day.”

“Sounds like a lot,” I said. “If she’s surfing that much, her work must not be getting done. Who on your team is picking up the slack?”

“No work falls to other people,” Cindy said. “She actually carries the heaviest workload in my department. She supports more software programs and more users than anyone else.”

“Oh,” I said with surprise. “Seems strange to fire your highest producer. Do her customers complain about her work?”

She hesitated. “No . . . she has the best customer satisfaction scores of anyone in our department. The vice presidents often tell me to do whatever

it takes to keep her because she is the best in my department. That's why Human Resources and I have been trying so hard to figure out how to make it work with her. But we are stuck."

"If she does more work and has better results than anyone on your team, why are you firing her?" I asked.

"Because she sets a bad example for the rest of the department. I have other techs asking me why they can't surf the web if Cara can. Plus, we pay her for a full day, and she's not working three hours of it. What if everyone did that? At first I offered to promote her since she is so good; I knew that would fill her plate. But she says she likes the job she has. I've coached her for a year now that she needs to stay busy. I've offered her extra projects, but she says it wouldn't be fair."

I finished her thought. "She says that being able to surf the Internet is her reward for getting her work done faster. She shouldn't be punished by having to do 30 percent more work than everyone else without 30 percent more pay."

Cindy almost shouted, "That's exactly what she said!"

Cindy was in the middle of a sticking point.



"My wife and I have two kids in their twenties, but they are certainly not like we were," Stan, a fifty-six-year-old accountant, stated once we had found a seat. We'd met in the food line at an open house for a recent high school graduate. At first when people find out I do leadership training and consulting, they nod politely. But when I mention I've been researching the different generations for twenty years, they can't stop talking.

As I started eating, Stan continued. "By the time I was twenty-five, I already had a house, a kid, and another on the way. But my kids don't look like they're ever going to settle down."

The brisket was good, so I kept eating and listened to Stan. He went on, "Our oldest son, Brandon, is a good kid, but he's taking his time figuring out what he wants to do. He's twenty-six, and he moved back home five months ago because he says things are just too expensive on his own. Living with his parents doesn't seem to faze him or his friends. I would have died of embarrassment. And I know his mother would never have dated me if I'd lived at home, but it doesn't seem to bother his girlfriend, either. She's a really nice girl with a good job, but after dating for four years, they never talk about marriage. Most of my friends were married by twenty-six; most of Brandon's are still dating."

“That seems about right,” I said. “The average age for marriage has jumped. My oldest son had thought about getting married at twenty-two, and everyone said he was crazy. *I* thought he was crazy, and I got married at twenty-two. Actually, his *grandmother* thought he was crazy, and she got married the day before she turned seventeen. It’s a different world.”

Stan hadn’t touched his food. “I’m not saying he should get married. He has moments of maturity, but I don’t think he’s ready for commitment yet. He hasn’t finished his college degree or found a job that he wants to stick with, and he still plays a lot of video games. It’s not getting married later that I don’t understand; it’s that he and his girlfriend don’t want to get serious. I’m a little worried about what’s going to happen to him and his friends.”

Stan was stuck (and his brisket was getting cold).



Hector had asked if we could talk at a seminar lunch break, and he got straight to the point: “Haydn, my team is stuck. We had an important presentation recently that started out fine but ended in disaster.”

Hector Perez was a forty-three-year-old vice president of a new division formed to help his midsize manufacturing company move into green technology. Even discouraged and noticeably tired, Hector’s hands never stopped moving. He waved his fork like an orchestra conductor as he talked: “Larry Broz, our CEO, is great. He asked me to fly in my team, who are mainly Generation Xers like me, to make our pitch to the management team for increasing the research and development spending on green technologies. Larry’s why I left a great company to come here. He may be almost seventy, but he thinks as young as I do. And my team did great. They looked professional, they knew their stuff, and even when the executive team began to throw out strong challenges, they listened and responded like they were old pros.

“But then the meeting crashed, and our proposal went with it. One of my team members, Rachel, was texting under the table. She finished quickly, but later, when the head of operations launched into one of her pet topics, which we’ve all heard many times before, Rachel began texting again, in full view of the others in the meeting. The head of operations then lectured Rachel, Rachel defended herself, and I tried to make a joke about my team texting in my meetings to ease the tension, but that got the head of ops even more fired up.

“The whole meeting just imploded,” Hector said. “Once the CEO got

the head of operations calmed down, we met for another hour, but it was awkward, and the energy was gone. People were still thinking about Rachel using her cell phone rather than the strategy. Larry finally put the meeting out of its misery and asked the executive team to submit additional comments in writing.”

Hector continued, “Rachel was just doing what our whole team does in our own meetings. She texts while I’m talking, too, but it doesn’t bother me because I know she’s dialed in to what we’re doing. On the flight home, two of my people agreed that Rachel should have left her phone alone but complained that senior management is out of touch with how people communicate now. I’m stuck in the middle. The senior execs want me to keep my team in line, but my young team members wonder if they’re just spinning their wheels here, if this is the place for them long term. If senior management can’t adjust to smartphones, will they ever be able to embrace these new green technologies they want us to implement? I came here to make a difference, not keep the peace.”

Hector was stuck between dueling generations.



Cindy’s and Hector’s companies didn’t know it, but they had run into seven of the twelve most common generational sticking points I’ve identified from interviewing and working with thousands of people. And Stan’s family was tangled in four different sticking points as well. Each generation in these situations thought the others were the problem. The groups tried in vain to ignore or avoid their generational differences. Typically, as at Hector’s company, the generation in charge tells a younger generation to get it together, hoping that will solve the problem. But it never does.

These groups’ approaches predictably didn’t work, and they weren’t sure why or what to do about it the next time. Generational friction is inevitable today, and “the next time” will come more and more often and create more and more tension. If only the companies and family I described had known the following:

- For the first time in history, we have four different generations in the workplace (and five in families). These generations might as well be from different countries, so different are their cultural styles and preferences.

- Of the four approaches organizations can take to blending the generations, only one of them works today.
- Focusing on the “what” escalates tensions, while focusing on the “why” pulls teams together.
- Knowing the twelve sticking points can allow teams to label tension points and work through them—even anticipate and preempt them.
- Implementing the five steps to cross-generational leadership can lead to empowering, not losing, key people.

But they didn't know these things. And neither do most organizations or families. Sticking points are inevitable, and they often get teams and families stuck. But they don't have to. *The same generational conflicts that get teams stuck can cause teams to stick together.*

Stuck in the past or sticking together going forward: it's a matter of turning a potential liability into an asset. And it's not that hard to do, as you will soon discover. (In later chapters, I'll pick up the stories of Cindy, Stan, and Hector and share the advice I gave them about working through their generational sticking points.)

“THEY DON'T GET IT”

The most common complaint I hear from frustrated people in all four generations is “They don't get it.”

“They,” of course, means a boss, coworker, or family member from a different generation who the speaker believes is the cause of a problem. And in my experience, “it” usually refers to one of the following twelve sticking points—places where teams get stuck:

1. communication
2. decision making
3. dress code
4. feedback
5. fun at work
6. knowledge transfer
7. loyalty
8. meetings
9. policies

- 10. respect
- 11. training
- 12. work ethic

Anyone in today's workforce can identify with most, if not all, of the twelve sticking points.

"They don't get it" is usually a sign that a sticking point is pulling the team apart. Team members of the same generation begin tossing around stereotypes, making jokes to each other about the "offending" generation. Each generation attempts to maneuver the others into seeing the sticking point their own way.

And that's the first mistake—viewing a sticking point as a problem to be solved rather than as an opportunity to be leveraged. The goal becomes to "fix" the offending generation rather than to look for ways to work with them. The irony is that when we say another generation doesn't get it, we don't get it either.

Once we get it, we realize that these sticking points are more than inter-generational differences. They are catalysts for deeper understanding and appreciation that can make teams stronger and better balanced. Sticking points can be negative if you see them as problems or positive if you see them as opportunities for greater understanding and flexibility. Sticking points can make things worse or better depending on whether the four generations can work together in the twelve places they naturally tend to come apart.

We'll spend the next two chapters looking at why generational sticking points usually get teams stuck, and we'll see how we can change them into the emotional glue that sticks teams together to achieve exciting results.

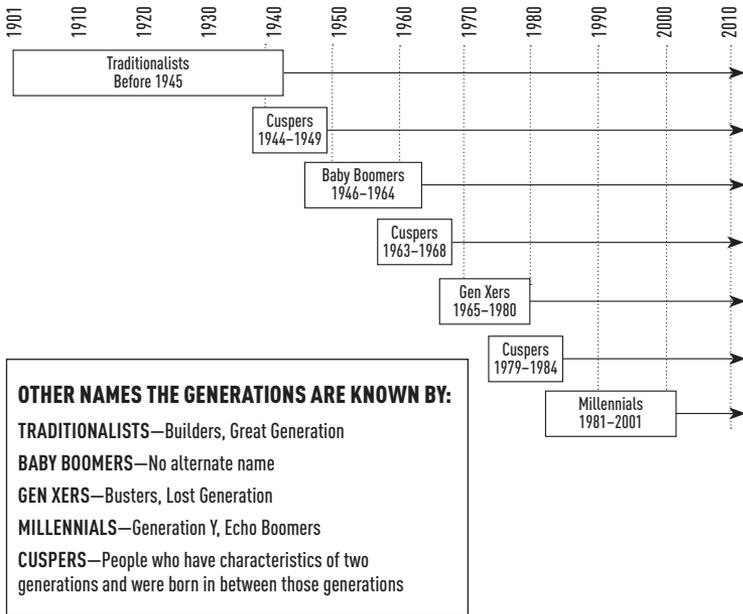
FOUR GENERATIONS: THE NEW REALITY

Generational friction is inevitable today because we've never before had four generations in the workplace.

Different researchers label the generations—or more technically, "age cohort groups"—using different terms. For simplicity's sake, I've summarized the most common names along with each generation's birth years so you can see where you and others fit.

I'm using the term *Generation X* (or *Gen X* for short), even though the members of that generation don't like the label. Who can blame them? It came from the title of a book about a lost and rootless generation—and *X* is

STICKING TOGETHER OR COMING APART



often a symbol for something that’s missing or an unknown factor. But unfortunately, that’s the name that has stuck.

Not everyone would agree with the dates I assign the generations. Some of us disagree by a couple of years, especially about the length of Generation X.¹ Age cohort groups are determined by the way a generation buys, votes, and answers surveys, so of course there is no easily identified date when the Boomers ended and the Gen Xers began.

To deal with the transitional years when it is impossible to separate generations because people have characteristics of both, marketers developed the term *Cuspers*. For example, I am a Cusper, born in 1963—just when the Baby Boomer generation was ending and Generation X was beginning. Cuspers are a blend of both. I identify in some ways with Boomers and in other ways with Xers. (My wife jokes, “You overwork like a Boomer, and you are cynical like an Xer. I’ve married the worst of both worlds.”)

While Cuspers can create problems for marketers who can’t tell which generational pitch to aim at them, Cuspers are often able to bridge generations. They have one foot in both camps and can sometimes serve as translators and negotiators between generations.

I mentioned earlier that there are five generations in the home. The fifth generation (children of the second half of Gen Xers and the first half

of Millennials) doesn't yet have an established name or even a start date. We assume that the Millennial generation will be about the same length as the Boomers and Xers, but that may not be the case. Assuming the fifth generation starts somewhere from 2002 to 2004, those children are already consumers and influencers of massive amounts of government and parental (and grandparental) spending. They may not be in the workplace, but they certainly are consumers.

For the first time in history, there are four generations in the workplace and five in the marketplace. This new phenomenon complicates our work and our relationships because while people of all generations have the same basic needs, they meet those needs in different ways. The rest of this book will detail the commonalities and differences among the four generations we find in the workplace.

SEVEN WAYS THE GENERATIONS WILL INCREASINGLY IMPACT YOUR ORGANIZATION

If you've never paid much attention to generational differences, here are seven organizational realities you need to be aware of. I'll divide them into internal and external impacts.

Internal Impacts:

1. *Conflicts around generational sticking points.* How do you get four generations of employees to play nice together in the sandbox? Increasingly, organizations are recognizing that younger employees don't see things the same way their elders do and that it's impossible to create policies that don't annoy someone. How do you get through the differences and get back to work? Generational friction is inevitable; generational problems are avoidable—that is, if you and your team have a working knowledge of why the generations are different and of how to lead them rather than simply manage them.
2. *Managing and motivating different generations.* Whether it's older supervisors trying to motivate younger employees or younger supervisors trying to direct people their parents' age, generational differences complicate things. While people are motivated by similar needs, how they seek to fulfill those needs differs. And that causes challenges in engaging and motivating different generations.

3. *Replacing the Baby Boomers in the war for talent.* Who will you hire following the coming exodus of Baby Boomers? Even in economic downturns, organizations compete for the best employees, what's commonly called the "war for talent." Traditionalists have already largely left the workplace. Over the next decade, many of the Baby Boomers will follow—and the ones who return will do so on their own terms. Who will replace them in your organization, and how will you adjust to the younger generation's different approach to work? How will you transfer the Boomers' experience, job knowledge, and customer relationships? Further complicating the shift, lower birthrates in the industrialized world and longer life spans could create a labor shortage over the next two decades.²
4. *Succession planning.* Do you trust Generation X to run the place? The president of one of the United States' thirty largest banks confided to me, "Anywhere we have a Boomer in the succession plan for the top spots, we're pretty confident. But if it's a Gen Xer, we don't know. We just aren't sure they get the business." It's a common sentiment. Organizations made their peace with Gen Xers ten years ago, after a decade of fretting and calling them "slackers." But handing over the keys to the company causes differences in work ethic and loyalty to resurface. In the late 1990s, succession planning was a hot topic as organizations began to do the math on Boomer retirements. But it faded with the global downturn of 2002. If your organization is typical, well over half your leaders will retire in the next decade. You can't put it off any longer. Ready or not, you must have a succession plan.³
5. *Leadership development.* Where will you get your leaders? Generation X is a much smaller generation, and Xers do not tend to stay in one company throughout their careers. As we'll see, the leadership development processes that served the Boomers are not working for the next generation.

External Impacts:

6. *Shifting markets.* What do the different generations want? You thought your website was great, so why isn't it working? We all know generations buy differently. That's the basis of generational market research. If your organization must market to multiple generations, you need to understand what appeals to each generation and learn to speak their language.

7. *Connecting with five generations of customers.* Most people relate well to two of the generations but not four or five. Will your salespeople miss half your customers? How will you prepare your employees to satisfy five generations of customers?

THE PEOPLE ISSUE OF THE NEXT DECADE

This generational math adds up to the people issue of the decade for your business—or hospital or government agency or political campaign or military unit or church or school or nonprofit or foundation or symphony or association or family.

In many ways, the impact on nonprofit organizations will be more intense sooner. Successful businesses can buy a little time with higher pay. Most nonprofits don't have that luxury, especially after the Great Recession that began in 2008 restructured the economy. They need to know about sticking points now. Here are some organization-specific generational challenges that will need to be dealt with in the immediate future:

- *Hospitals and medicine.* Gen Xers and Millennials did not have Sputnik and the space race to drive national passion in science. The average age of nurses in many places is increasing as medicine struggles to attract and retain Gen X and Millennial nurses. Some hospitals are already forced to hire temporary surgeons due to the shortage.⁴ (Think of the implications as the Baby Boomers hit their high-medical-need years.) Whereas businesses like Hard Rock Cafe can pick a demographical target, hospitals must serve all five generations. Without generational understanding, a highly skilled Millennial nurse can bring down customer satisfaction scores with a Traditionalist patient just by being more informal in language and approach. What to a Millennial is friendly can seem disrespectful to a Traditionalist.
- *Government.* Millennials went into government studies in much higher numbers than Gen Xers but have not been staying in government jobs. I tell my governmental clients that they have an “empty middle.” With well over half their staff and most of their managers eligible to retire in the next seven years, and relatively few Gen X managers to take over, they have a generational gap that will be a challenge to fill.
- *Political campaigns.* Capturing the vote of the two younger generations was key to Barack Obama's coming from obscurity to

the presidency and then to his reelection.⁵ In the 2008 election, the first BlackBerry-carrying president lured away one of the three founders of Facebook, who at twenty-four led the customization of social-networking technology and changed the rules of politics. One example: Obama's Vote for Change site registered over one million voters with only a few part-time staff. In the past that would have required two thousand full-time staff.⁶ Campaigns at every level learned from his victory and raced to adopt technology-driven, grassroots-based campaigns. In Obama's reelection, his campaign put even more focus on social media but added precision data mining that will set the playbook for the future.⁷ Campaigns that don't take seriously all generations and their communication technologies will struggle.

- *Military.* A United States Army commander told me in 2004 that the boot camp staff's most hated recruiting slogan was "An Army of One." Recruits came in expecting the army to accommodate their goals and preferences.⁸ He and his peers begged the recruiting office to go back to "Be All You Can Be" (used 1981–2001), but that slogan has ceased to resonate with the younger generations. The Army switched slogans to "Army Strong" in the fall of 2006 because they missed recruiting goals due to the Iraq Conflict. When recruits knew they would most likely be shipped off early in their career, the self-fulfillment promises of "Be All You Can Be" couldn't be met.
- *Religious organizations.* People often turn to religion for comfort and guidance in a changing and sometimes confusing world but find that with five generations, it is impossible to keep everyone on the same page. Younger generations are not willing to wait for styles and approaches to change—they simply go somewhere else or stay home. Because religious organizations survive only if they are able to attract the next generation, this may be the most important issue they face.
- *Schools.* Similar to hospitals, K–12 schools struggle to attract and retain Gen X and Millennial teachers. In many areas, the dropout rate for new teachers is 50 percent. Internally, faculty struggle just as businesses do to understand the different generations. One med school professor told me she asked her dean if she could record herself teaching so she could work on research rather than offering ongoing classes. The school no longer required class attendance, so half her students didn't show up. (He said no.)

- *Nonprofits/foundations.* Without business-level salaries, nonprofits and foundations have to motivate and inspire each generation if they hope to win in the war for talent. Moreover, the generations have different ideas of what volunteer involvement looks like and how organizations should be run. Add to that the changing expectations of donors, and the same changes that have impacted political campaigns will continue to change fund-raising.
- *Associations.* When I ask my association clients to name their key challenges, these themes emerge: How do we get younger members to join? How do we get them to attend and, better yet, volunteer? And how do we deal with the tensions between generations when younger members try to jump in but don't want to do things the way they've always been done?
- *Families.* Raising children is definitely different today. Teens spend hours online with fifty friends and have to be forced to go outside. You know it's a different world when your child asks for the "Totally Stylin' Tattoos Barbie" for her (or his) birthday.

All organizations have to understand sticking points to ensure that their teams stick together instead of being stuck in generational conflicts. Sticking points are unavoidable; staying stuck in them is a waste. With the right tools and understanding, they can instead be huge opportunities to make our organizations more effective.