



Introduction

Why I Wrote and You Need to Read a Book on GENgagement™

The goal we should be seeking, as a society and in workplaces, is a workforce of ideas, creative inspiration, and connection, rather than accepting and acting on assumptions about the abilities of workers linked to age and generational stereotypes based on Census Bureau definitions.

Unfortunately, observed from my many years of consulting to firms and as reported in the legal and business media, the following symptoms and outcomes have become too familiar.

- People are puzzled about how to establish rapport with different generations and retain/sustain productive, ongoing, trusting, mutually beneficial, and enjoyable relationships. It's frustrating and stressful.
- Senior management fears loss of productivity, talent, clients, market position, and their control as younger generations demand changes that challenge what's worked in the past and "what they know they know."
- Newer workers aren't clear about what is expected of them, how to gain respect and trust, and how to prove their value. They don't know how to use and adapt the established culture, norms, and operational systems to influence change.
- The tenor of the times has brought unhealthy changes within even conservative industries (like law) and firms to the levels of civility, professionalism, and cooperation, and often leads to what I call a "collidescope" (opposite of kaleidoscope) culture or tendency to retreat into tribes rather than seeking unity of personnel.

The legal profession faces many kinds of challenges as firms, like states and countries, and have ignored the need for necessary

infrastructure and repair. I believe that if there is a cross-generational will, the humans occupying the firms and different facets of the business could collaborate to make the ideals and mission of the legal calling more inspiring once again. There is a need for new agile architecture and purpose that better *serves both the “employee experience” and client journey and outcomes.*

Firms and individuals have reached out to me over more than a decade with the increasing problem of getting personnel from multiple generations to work effectively as a solid team despite their differing values and points of view. They seek to retain the best talent, boost loyalty of clients of different generations, and increase profits.

GENgagement (my trademarked word) means getting all of the generations to understand each other, their worldviews, and influences so they can work collaboratively, productively, and loyally. As I define it: The state of achieving harmony, cooperation, and mutual involvement, a sense of flow and ongoing absorption in work with people of different generations; to transform workplaces into more engaged environments for solving problems and to be perceived as great places to work with purpose.

The generations of workers and external stakeholders cannot unite unless they make a serious attempt to clear away misunderstanding and misinterpretations. They must confront erroneous stereotypes and bias and sincerely care to do it.

This book is a handy reference guide to aid that process. You will take away:

- Understanding of the implication of generational patterns, similarities, and differences.
- Greater understanding and feeling of urgency for change.
- Specific steps to follow to stand up, speak out, and achieve measurable results toward generational harmony to advance your career and the clients you serve.
- Greater appreciation of your purpose in promoting sustainability of the entities you work for and personal fulfillment as a professional.

The Author's View on Age

The “checklists” in each of the sections of this book represent what I have learned from my work experience, relationships, and research

with five generations (from Traditionalists to Gen Z). This book is a compilation of fact, widely accepted interpretation by experts in the generational field and demographers, and projected implications. Below is a capsule of my personal views from experience and the perspective of a Boomer who has observed and worked with three younger generations entering the workplace. At the end of the book is my call to action on “collaborageism.” That’s my word for both multigenerational collaboration at work and joining together to eliminate the negatives of ageism.

To Sum Up My Key Views on Age:

- I consider myself cross generational because I strongly identify with three generations (Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials) at work and don’t believe in chronological age as meaningful anymore, other than for such things as government entitlements like Social Security and Medicare. It is difficult to describe a person of any age fairly and accurately in our modern world. Using age as a criterion has led to erroneous assumptions and biases and is rarely a valid criterion for hiring, judging capabilities, skills, talents, or even athletic ability.
- I do believe there are “typical” patterns of attributes of many members of generational cohorts that are derived from formational influences and are useful to know as clues to work interactions on expectations, preferred environments and type of media use, worldviews, perspectives, and more. Studies, consulting, and coaching observations over the last few decades, starting with the work of William Strauss and Neil Howe as well as numerous articles, including mine, are widely published and cover this in detail, confirming the patterns and influences with attention to avoiding stereotyping. Strauss and Howe are known for their generational theory, called the Fourth Turning, and later were credited with naming the Millennial generation.
- I believe **age diversity is the missing piece** that has not been recognized or addressed widely, or considered as urgent as it really is (more every day), because generational differences and attitudes inform and influence worldviews, attitudes, and behaviors relating to all other aspects of diversity. If the same message is sent out to people of all generations and ages, it is likely to be received and often interpreted differently.
- As I wrote, as the premise of my book *You Can’t Google it!*, I believe that equally, or more importantly, for success than the

data we can search for on the internet, are the conversations and relationships we have with people of all generations at work.

We've entered a world some people see as upside down reporting relationships: Approximately 40% (up from 34% in polls in 2013), and increasing as Boomers leave the workforce, of workers in the U.S. report to someone younger, according to Labor statistics. The managers and managed in these relationships often have different work preferences, styles, expectations, and ideas on how things should be done. These types of relationships exist and are growing in law, though not yet in the same proportion as some industries. It's important that members of older and younger generations be comfortable and respectful working together for optimal productivity, profit, retention, and workplace harmony.

A few words about **the format** of this book:

Whatever generation we identify with, we all have much to read. This format, using bulleted items following a paragraph or so of introduction on an array of topics concerning several generations of lawyers working together, enables you to quickly get right to the heart of the issues, advice, and action steps. I want to make it easy to find what you are looking for in the shortest amount of time.