

THE AGILE BUSINESS LEADER®



Trust and Generation Gaps

A generation is defined by a common age location in history and a collective peer personality.

Karl Mannheim in the 1920s created the concept of labeling different generations based on age. Now it is not uncommon to hear people talking about baby boomers, Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z.

The concept of generational characteristic is more a cultural idea than a demographic one. Generations describe a cultural period of a select group of people that spans all classes, races, nations and people, born in a certain period of time. The chart below summarizes the

five generations that Agile Business Leaders are associating with in the world today. Note: variations in birth years exist depending on the theorist commenting on the generation. This chart presents birth years that are used most commonly in the world today.

Generation	Birth years	Generational Perspective
Silent Generation <i>Alternative names:</i> Veterans Builders Silents Matures	1927–1945	Patriots: experienced World War II, Great Depression and Korean War. This created a value in teamwork, “doing more with less” and being task-orientated.
(Baby) Boom Generation <i>Alternative names:</i> New Agers Naggers “Me” Generation	1946–1964	Idealists- experienced post-war optimism, civil rights movement, Beatlemania, Woodstock festival and organizing against the Vietnam War. This created this generation to be tagged "The Me Generation" and a rejection or redefinition of traditional values.
Generation X <i>Alternative names:</i> Sandwich Slackers Skeptics Syn Tech Generation	1965–1980	Reactives: experienced merging technology and political and institutional incompetence along with an acceptance in diversity (race, class, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation). This created a skeptic, “what’s in it for me” attitude along with being pragmatic, perceptive, savvy but amoral and more focused on money than on art, approach to life.
Generation Y <i>Alternative names:</i> Gen Y Net Generation Nexters Dot-com" generation Trophy kids Generation Y Not Echo Boomers (<i>echo</i> of the Baby Boomers)	1981–1994	Optimists- experienced terrorism, post 9/11, and global social unrest. This familiarity with communications, media, and digital technologies has created a somewhat conventional, yet powerful style along with a desire for teamwork and a collaborative approach to politics and economics. Several children in this generation had parents who worked part time or stayed at home. Few attended day-care often associated with encouraging socialization in teams and group-play.
Generation Z <i>Alternative names:</i> iGen Gen Wii Generation C Cash Connectors Curators Creators Content Centric Computerized Community Oriented	1995–2007	Realists- experienced a lifelong use of communications and media technologies. This generation has more individualistic, impatient and instant minded behavior. Their impatient, instant gratification style has others finding them to be introverted, aloof and with a lower attention span. This generation often breaks the rules, defies convention and challenges the status quo to create a better future. They have grown up in a cocoon where everything is done for them. They tend to make a game out of everything, because for them, life is a game

For the first time in history all five generations are working together in organizations. A description and list of how these generations prefer to be led and what these groups typically value are shown below. Some of this information has been extracted from the work of Dr. Graeme Codrington, author of the book *Mind the Gap* and some information retrieved from *HR Magazine's* Research Quarterly First Quarter 2009 in an article titled "The Multigenerational Workforce: Opportunity for Competitive Success."

Silent Generation (born 1927–1945);

People of the Silent Generation were influenced in their youth by the Great Depression and World War II. They grew up in serious times, when everyone had to do their duty (whether you liked it or not), and when children "should be seen and not heard." Many had fathers who served in World War I. They grew up as the suffocated children of war and economic depression. They came of age just too late to be war heroes and just too early to be youthful, free spirits. They are conservative, hard-working, and structured, preferring rules, order, and formal hierarchies. They have a waste-not, want-not mentality, and hate getting into debt. Their idea of progress is slow, incremental advancement, while minimizing risk. They also believe that it is "good" and "normal" to work hard. In fact, they believe they can achieve anything by sheer hard work. Their teenage years were marked by music, fashion, and entertainment, causing this postwar affluent group to develop a greater sense of consumerism. They are suspicious of those who make money by luck or by gambling. This generation is typically:

- **Tech-challenged- slow to change work habits**

I find it hard to learn about new technology and work processes

- **Loyal- civic minded**

I must be loyal to your country and employer

- **Submissive- respect authority**

I am a team player and don't initiate conflict

Common Leadership Preferences for this Generation:

- Fair
- Consistent
- Clear
- Direct
- Respectful
- Honest
- Loyal

Common Guiding Principles or Values for this Generation:

- Dedication
- Duty before pleasure
- Adherence to rules, laws and order
- Hard work
- Respect for position
- Caution
- Self-sufficiency
- Patience and delayed reward

- Sacrifice conformity
- Modesty

Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964)

The Baby Boomers were born just after World War II, a time that included a fourteen-year increase in birthrate worldwide. Baby Boomers were part of the 1960s' counterculture of a postwar generation renowned for drugs, sex, and rock 'n' roll. They had a hippie subculture that began in the United States during the early 1960s and spread around the world. They were disillusioned with traditional institutions and began to look for more authentic ways to live. These people created their own communities, listened to psychedelic rock, embraced the sexual revolution, and used drugs such as cannabis and LSD to explore alternative states of consciousness. They initiated anti-Vietnam War rallies and were the initiators of the information technology revolution. They love conspicuous consumption and have created more wealth (and accumulated more debt) than any other generation ever. They are a workaholic generation—driven, goal-oriented, and bottom-line-focused. Boomers are passionately concerned about participation in the workplace, motivated by vision, mission and strategy, and care about creating a fair and level playing field for all who agree with them. This generation is typically:

- **Independent- confident, independent and self reliant**
I know I can change the world.
- **Work Centric- hardworking and motivated by position**
I'm defined by my professional accomplishments
- **Competitive- clever, resourceful and strive to win**

I believe in hierarchal structure and rankings. I have a hard time adjusting to workplace flexibility trends because "face time" at the office is important.

- **Goal Orientated- achievement, dedicated and career focused**

I welcome exciting, challenging projects so

I can make a difference

Common Leadership Preferences for this Generation:

- Warm and caring
- Competent
- Honest
- Loyal
- Treated as equals
- Mission defined
- Democratic approach in their approach

Common Guiding Principles or Values for this Generation:

- Self-image, realization and expression
- Excellence in work
- Health/wellness
- Nostalgia
- Personal gratification and growth
- Optimism and positive attitude
- Political activism

- Involvement and Teamwork
- Autonomy and freedom
- Free-market capitalism

Generation X (born 1965–1980)

Generation X'ers grew up as latchkey kids, many children of divorced parents who experienced an era of crises—from Watergate and Vietnam, to end of the Cold War and fall of the Berlin Wall.. To them, it was clear that adults didn't know what was going on. Adults had also become busier, and X'ers experienced the first period in history where mothers could take a pill if they chose not to have any children. They are the MTV generation, influenced by fashion trends, music, and slang terms shown in music videos. They chose to cohabitate with their parents after a brief period of living alone and then boomeranging back to their place of origin. They grew up through an economic recession. As young adults they dealt with the sexual consequences of AIDS. They dated and married more cautiously than previous generations. They're skeptical of corporations, realizing that long-term commitment is unlikely to pay the dividends it did for their parents and grandparents. They need options and flexibility, dislike close supervision, and prefer freedom and an output-driven workplace. They love change so much they actually need it. X'ers strive for balance in their lives: they work to have a life, rather than living to work. They want rules but from the right authorities only. Their "now" matters more than their future. They don't want to know, "Is it true?"; they want to know, "Does it work?" They are spiritual seekers who believe in the supernatural. Music is huge in their lives, the "window of their soul" and the language they use to express themselves. This generation is typically:

- **Technologically adept- civic minded**

I am very comfortable using my PDA, cell phone, e-mail, laptop, Blackberry and any other new technology out there.

- **Individualist- independent, resourceful and self-sufficient**

I value freedom and responsibility because I typically came from a two income family who was divorced and I was a 'latch-key' kid.

- **Flexible- adaptable and tolerant of alternative lifestyles**

I am ambitious and want to learn new skills. I'm not committed to one employer and will change jobs to get ahead. Let's be clear..... I want to accomplish things on my terms.

- **Value Work/Life Balance- work to life (not live to work)**

I think life is too short to waste it, I want to have fun at work and think humor and games should be incorporated into the workplace.

Common Leadership Preferences for this Generation:

- Willing to challenge the system and create change
- Direct
- Competent
- Genuine
- Informal and flexible
- Results-oriented
- Honest
- Loyal

Common Guiding Principles or Values for this Generation:

- Choice and change
- Techno-literacy
- Individualism resulting in survival and self-reliance
- Lifelong learning
- Immediate gratification
- Pragmatics
- Informality and fun
- Diversity and tolerance
- Life balance
- Global thinking and eco-awareness

Millennial (born 1981–1994); also known as Net Generation, Nexer, Generation Y, Bridger, Echo Boom or New Boomer

Millennial is the generation with the largest population in history. They are also known as the Text Generation, since they grew up with cell phones. They are defined as the generation growing up after the Cold War and in the new era of globalization, communication technology, and wireless connectivity. They are living in an age of unprecedented diversity and exposure to other cultures. They have an ability to filter out every command, every request, and every instruction that is not bundled with acceptable rationale. They demand reasons and rationale. The traditional “because I said so” does not work with them. They are growing up in a world that is cracking under the strain of our

lifestyles, and every day they are made aware of the fragile environment. In response they are emerging as ethical consumers who want to change the world. This generation is typically:

- **Tech Savvy- rely on technology for communication and job performance**

AAMOF BIF the 411 4 ppl 2 C im Bz is IM BOL ;p

(As a matter of fact, before I forget, the information for people to see I'm busy is IM. Best of luck Wink)

Note: *When Eileen (a Baby Boomer) checked with her son to confirm this type of language was correct for this book, his 'Millennial' answer was... "Why Text like a retarded monkey when Siri and AutoCorrect do so much of the work?"*

Bryan Dowse.

- **Family Centric- strive for work/life balance**

My family and life is important. I want meaningful work and a flexible schedule to help me achieve work/life balance.

- **Achievement Orientated- confident and ambitious**

I have high expectations of my employer, I want new challenges and will question authority to ensure I have a solid learning curve.

- **Team orientated- loyal, committed**

I will ask others for input and want affirmation that I am doing a good job.

- **Attention craving- staying connected, wants to be included**

I want feedback, guidance, frequent praise and reassurance that I am going in the right direction.

Common Leadership Preferences for this Generation:

- Scientific progressivism
- Motivational
- Educated
- Organized and clear in giving direction
- Achievement-oriented
- Willingness to challenge the system and create change
- Honest and congruence in words and actions
- Able to coach and collaborate
- Supportive giving freedom to work at their own pace and in own way
- Loyal

Common Guiding Principles or Values for this Generation:

- Optimism
- Confidence and high self esteem
- Traditionalism and conservatives
- Networking
- Ethics
- Achievement
- Community minded with collective action
- Moral
- Sociability especially with family and friends
- Street-smarts and experience

Generation Z (*born 1995–2007*), also known as *Generation Z* for “click,” “connected,” and “computer” or *Digital Generation*

This generation has grown up in a world with widespread equality of the sexes at work and at home, and where single-parent or same-sex parent families are commonplace, as are two-income families. Their lives are full of structured activities and parents using new technology tools as teaching aids and entertainment for their children. This new generation is being molded from the outset to be unique since they are growing up with widespread broadband access, mass consumption of video games over the Web, and enormous online environments. They are digital and virtual natives. They are exposed to an environment that is heavy on stimuli and weaker on interpersonal relationships. They are very active consumers, with a high degree of influence over their parents’ purchasing decisions. This generation is typically:

- **Social Animal 2.0**
 - Home equipped with latest wireless home technology
 - On the grid 24/7
 - Social interactions take place on the Internet- that’s where you can express your opinions and attitudes
 - The size and diversity of their networks is vast.

I expect access to tera-peta bytes of data for new texts, images audio and video on an ongoing basis

- **Culturally Liberal Politically progressive, upwardly mobile**

- **Materialist asked as consumers to watch, listen, play, and passively consume.**

I want to create, produce, and participate.

Common Leadership Preferences for this Generation:

- Inspirational visionary
- Decisive and Consultative
- Diplomatic- able to transcend cultural boundaries
- Enthusiastic
- Integrity-driven
- Collaborative and team- oriented
- Communicate rationally
- Manage practically and
- Lead directionally and strategically. Effective leaders d
- Connect relationally- demonstrates not just IQ but EQ – sharing knowledge and information yet understanding emotion and connection

Common Guiding Principles or Values for this Generation:

- Optimism
- Competence
- Ambition
- Loyalty and caring
- Cooperation
- Innovation and change

- Empathy in their working environment
- Challenge the status quo to create a better future
- Reduction of waste
- Broad-Minded- honoring uniqueness of perspectives / Gender neutral

By virtue of when a person was born, members of each generation live through unique times shaped by unexpected historical events, changing political climates, and evolving socioeconomic conditions. Generations come in different sizes and ethnic groups. What is necessary for the Agile Business Leader who attempts to enable people from all five generations, placing an emphasis on understanding a person's values. The emphasis should *not* be placed on changing other people/generations or working to conform or change that generation. Instead, Enablers must put the focus on understanding other people for who they are, what they need and what principles they operate by. When taking this mindset and approach Enablers will benefit by

- Building trust.
- Positively influencing productivity and profitability for the organization.
- Reducing problems in communication.
- Increasing motivation.
- Improving interactions.
- Increasing respect and understanding.

The lists describing a generation's characteristics can seem like stereotyping. The intention in sharing this information is to provide insight into the values and styles of each generation so that leaders can leverage the strength of each generation and be more effective

in enabling a person to succeed. In fact we are all a mix of different cultures and values. It is the Agile Business Leader that makes an effort to understand and learn different values, principles, perspectives, and reasons for behavior, with the sole purpose of *overcoming* ethnocentrism—the belief that one’s own group is superior to other groups. The focused ethnocentric leader sees a person with different values or from a different culture, as not only being different from themselves, but also being wrong to some degree. The ethnocentric leader says, “My views are real and legitimate, yours are not.”

The opposite to the ethnocentric leader is an Enabler, who makes a special effort to work through intergenerational dynamics and offers their organization a higher competitive advantage by building a collaborative environment, one that emphasizes the value of each generation’s similarities and differences. The Enabler can tolerate complexity better than others.



Agile Illustration

One example of an Enabler is Peter Ma, who built his business because of his high acceptance for ambiguity. In his book *Global Literacies: National Cultures and Business Leadership*, Robert Rosen writes of how Ma embraced the benefits of merging values.

Peter Ma is CEO of Ping An, an insurance company founded in 1988 as China’s first partially employee-owned company. During its first year, Pin An had 10 employees and \$30 million in assets. Today it has more than 130,000 employees and \$30 billion in

assets. Ping An Insurance became the first company to sell life insurance in China. Ma claims that much of Ping An's success comes from its ability to keep one foot in traditional Chinese culture and one foot in the world of innovation and young business ideas while constantly learning and modernizing how the Chinese culture does business.

Peter Ma blended the values of the people within his company and his efforts have paid off.

Trust, Values, and Results

When action is needed for building relationships of trust, Enablers can deal with a range of responses from people with different values and styles. They do this by considering alternative viewpoints and making the best use of other people's expertise and abilities. Through this collaboration, respect, and involvement, Enablers build trust and strengthen relationships.



Agile Illustration

Mark Patterson exemplifies the leader who values building trust and relationships.

Mark is the CEO of GroupM Asia Pacific. GroupM is a global media communications firm consisting of four global agencies and a series of companies offering specialist services.

GroupM serves as the parent company to MAXUS, MediaCom, CIA, and Mindshare.

When we asked Mark about leadership, trust, and working with the diversity of different cultures and generations, he shared these insights with us:

There are three things I try to explain to everybody: they are trusted, respected, and admired for what they contribute. You could argue that you can get away with just two of these attributes, but you have to have trust. In business, you need to use a very human, very real approach to day-to-day leadership. You need to create an environment where people feel happy within their team, to say what they think, to express their opinion, and to engage others with their own style of leadership. We are a group with a broad range of leadership styles, so there's no one individual who does or knows it all. The culture we must maintain is one of accessibility. Yes, we have a hierarchy, but it's not something we abuse.

I believe that leaders who live without an ego, but who have connectivity or good communication skills, will endure and empower others. Connectivity and communications are the key points. Our business is vast and diverse, and these leadership skills ensure that people feel secure about our direction and have a sense of purpose for what they are doing. As leaders, we have the responsibility to put a stake in the ground, then get everybody moving with a sense of clarity of direction. We need to focus on getting the majority of people moving toward our desired future state and keeping them happy. A leader should live and breathe the values of the organization; he should be an example of how to behave, which is easier said than done.

I think as an individual, working for over twenty years as a leader, I must continue to adapt and learn from people I come into contact with. I can probably name half a dozen individuals throughout my career from whom I have learned so much. These people have been a strong part of my personal leadership portfolio.

Fortunately, I have worked with many talented people. Because of this I have learned how to get things done. I have gained what I call “corporate wisdom.” That wisdom continues to develop the style, tone, and manner of my leadership. I think I’m fairly consistent in the traits that I have, and I use whichever trait is needed at the time to achieve success. This is an important leadership behavior for building trust, particularly in an industry that moves so quickly. Every year or two the media industry will change dramatically. Therefore, leaders must be able to sense the changes in their work environment. I compare this environmental fluidity to surfing. You’ve got to stay on the wave and yet keep looking around for the next one. We have people who fall off their wave and get straight back onto the next one; these are our leaders of the future. The people who paddle around for ages waiting for the perfect wave tend to fall behind and never catch up.

The business world is quite ruthless. There are waves going everywhere, there are some tough breaks, and sometimes it’s out of your control, so leaders must develop their ability to read the water. I’ve seen many people get dumped over the years; I’ve tried to learn from those who get the best rides.

I’m driven by not experiencing failure, by winning, by feeling success, and by enjoying a sense of achievement. I want to enjoy my job every day. I’m really competitive by nature, so goals and tasks are important for me as a leader. This success

mentality is behind the corporate vision program that I've been working on in the company. I want everybody to understand where we are headed and how we are going to get there. And a big part of that is building relationships of trust. I always like to overachieve, so I tend to make a strong commitment to myself and hope that will trickle down to others. I'm quite impatient, I know that. I'm always looking for speed of work. These natural leadership traits can be a benefit and strength, in some cases. They can also be a challenge when wanting to build strong relationships on trust, which results in winning and achieving success.

I still can clearly remember an event in October 2007. I was in London presenting the results of a staff survey. The results showed that our people in GroupM did not know where we were or where we were heading as a company. It was obvious we needed to do something different and build trust in the organization and in the leadership. When I arrived back to Hong Kong from London, I set myself a goal of achieving clarity on our direction for the benefit of the whole company. I knew that we needed to build trust by responding to what the people were saying in the survey. Together with my leadership team, we worked with Barry to facilitate the development of our animated Cartaphor (we called it a digiphor!). As a result of the leaders getting on board, we were able to get clarification on our direction and get specific on how to convey trustworthiness to our people. The digiphor is now what I believe to be a unique, incredibly dynamic, living vision of our values and culture. It is a statement that everyone understands and can trust.

I've noticed that during the really tough times, leadership tends to disappear into a black hole. In high and low markets, as leaders must be realistic in their

relationships with people and in how they build trust. They must tell people what is going on and be pragmatic and authentic in their communication. These are the key traits of good leadership. I look at the start of the financial crisis as a natural shakedown. Yes, culling goes on, but if you look at it as a phenomenon of nature, then it is simply nature looking after itself. This is like attributing the revitalization of a forest to bushfires. When you take that thinking and transfer it to leadership, I would say to young leaders: Don't think "failure." Instead, plan, be confident, and believe in your own abilities to achieve. Most important, stop and take a look at what you have learned along the way.

In the development of the digiphor, the one I talked about before, we started with all the leaders. Halfway into the eight-month project, we realized that if our company mainly comprises people who are thirty years old and younger, then we need to get them involved. We need to embrace all different perspectives For that reason we selected a group of Gen Y'ers from across the business and invited them to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to join the Vision, Mission, and Values development team.

From my experience, most organizations have some form of executive committee (ExCo) or operational committee (OpCo) that runs the business. I have also read many publications that depict Gen Y'ers as ambitious, impatient, and expecting to run the business within the first two years of getting a job. I understand why this perception has developed. As a leader, if my job is to be authentic and pragmatic, then as a leadership team we need to work with this phenomenon and not go against it. This is why I am thinking of setting up a "YCo." We have ExCo and OpCo, so why not have a GenY Company and see what they recommend for the future of the business?

This YCo would operate at a local-market level. They would help set criteria for staff selection and work in partnership with ExCo to ensure that our corporate values are reflected across the whole organization. The membership to YCo could rotate every twelve months. I believe this would provide some real learning and insights into the next generation that will eventually run the business. This is how you build a company of trust, be open to possibilities, and embrace the values that currently exist. This defines your role as an Enabling leader, one who gets people involved and gives them the confidence to achieve.

Those who are successful at building trust usually talk about it and, more important, live it. Mark certainly falls into the category of living the principles of building trust.

Enablers like Mark Patterson leverage and balance the five critical elements of trust:

1. **Openness**—sharing information, ideas, thoughts, feelings and reactions.
2. **Sharing**—offering materials and resources to others to help them move forward and accomplish goals.
3. **Acceptance**—communicating a high regard for others and their contributions to the work.
4. **Support**—communicating to others that you recognize their strengths and believe they have the capabilities they need to do the task.
5. **Cooperative intentions**—expecting that you are going to behave cooperatively and that everyone else will also cooperate in achieving the group's goal.

In a high-trust environment, an individual's trustworthiness becomes the standard for conduct and productivity flourishes. People within the organization are allowed to be frank and candid. People who cannot trust each other end up cooperating only under a system of formal rules and regulations, which may have to be negotiated and enforced by coercive means. The Enabler knows that trust is the lubrication that makes organizational success possible.