

How Boomers Differ from Their Parents

Veterans: Followed traditional roles (male/female, ethnic, etc.)

Boomers: *Redefined roles and promoted equality.*

Veterans: Were loyal (to their marriages and their companies).

Boomers: *Left unfulfilling relationships to find more fulfilling ones.*

Veterans: Were willing to be disciplined and patient, waiting for their rewards.

Boomers: *Sought immediate gratification.*

Veterans: Played by the rules.

Boomers: *Manipulated the rules to meet their own needs.*

The Baby Boomers

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“Second-halfers”

While every member of the Baby Boom generation can say there are aspects of their generation’s perceived personality that are not reflected in their own lives, there is no greater dichotomy within the generation than that between the Boomers born in the first half of the “boom” and those born in the second half.

“Second-halfers” find “first-halfers” to be more idealistic and more likely to put career first, family second. “Second-halfers” do not have quite the same attachment to the 1950s as do their “first-half” counterparts, and their participation in such “movements” as Vietnam, free love, and women’s lib was more relegated to observer’s status.

Late Boomers tend to be more laid back and cynical, particularly where professional matters are concerned. They got the first taste of downsizing the country had experienced since the Great Depression, making them considerably less gung-ho about management than the early Boomers. They recognize that good work habits and positive attitudes are not always rewarded, and often they are not enough to save a job, regardless of how well it has been done.

So how does one manage such a diverse generational group today?

1. Find out how they want to be managed. Boomers are the first generation to be asked how they wanted to be managed. Determining this is both strategically and tactically important to your business.

2. Expect a reaction if things don’t go well.

Boomers tend to make life hell if you’re mismanaging them. They do not suffer in silence, but may not choose to confront issues directly. Be prepared to deal with problems, particularly if the Boomers on your staff make “boss” a four-letter word.

3. Give them opportunities to succeed. Teach your Boomers the politics of information; give them the inside edge on your company’s know-how. Stress learning and improvement in the opportunities you give them, and be prepared to show them how that improvement has value not only to them, but to your organization as well. In other words, show them how they can make a difference.

4. Motivate them. Give your Boomers lots of public recognition (inside and outside your company) and perks (a company car, an expense account, etc.). Get them involved in decisions when this is possible; Boomers thrive on participative management and consensus. Give them a chance to prove their worth, and

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How do You Keep Boomers from Feeling Stagnant?

Many Boomers place job enrichment high on their list of priorities, yet many companies wonder how well they’re doing at enriching (as opposed to enlarging) their jobs. They want to know whether their workers of this generation are feeling stagnated and, if they are stagnating, what can be done to combat that.

Companies must recognize that work is a critical issue in the personal satisfaction quotient for most Boomers. Many of them have lost jobs to the downsizing trends of the last decade, losing not only their major means of financial support, but also their personal foundation. As befits a generation so dichotomous, many other Boomer workers have found their span of control increased.

When considering the stagnating of the Boomer generation, recognize that Boomers have the tendency to keep themselves challenged, sometimes to the point of over-commitment, and they should be recognized for that. Tell them regularly that you and your organization appreciate the work they do and the hours they put in to do that work. Reward their work with stress-reducing perks — comforts and conveniences that make, for example, traveling easier. Such rewards as business class upgrades, quality hotel accommodations, and the occasional afternoon off during a busy week serve two purposes: 1) they allow employees to decompress and refresh themselves during stressful periods; and 2) they let the employees know they have enriching, important jobs, and that their efforts on behalf of their employers are appreciated.