

Generational Characteristics

Silent or Traditional Generation – (1925-1942) – Type: Adaptive

Characteristics:

- Value hard work and thriftiness
- Emphasize traditional morals
- Hold work values of conformity, consistency, and uniformity
- Value safety and security
- Value loyalty and commitment
- Value the system over individual enterprise

Learner Characteristics:

- Authority of educator clear and respected
- Find technology challenging

Baby Boomer Generation – (1943-1960) – Type: Idealist

Characteristics:

- Have the buy now, pay later mentality
- Rebellious and questioned the status quo
- Moved away from extended families
- Identify with their jobs
- Equate work with self-worth
- Are driven and dedicated
- Believe they can change the world
- Believe they do not have to grow old and sedentary

Learner Characteristics:

- Accustomed to being dependent on educator
- Want to have a say in own learning
- Want a caring environment
- Respond to positive feedback, desire to do well
- Connect learning to outcomes
- Want to feel connected to others in the learning environment

Generation X – (1961-1981) – Type: Reactive

Characteristics:

- Are ironic, cynical, adept, clever, resourceful
- Define themselves in opposition to their parents
- Do not belong to any group
- Know how to win
- Manage independently and participate in discussions
- Balance job and leisure time
- Adapt well to change
- Tolerant of alternative lifestyles
- Become anxious when faced with the many decisions of adulthood
- Believe that early adulthood is the time where they must determine the meaning in their lives
- Try to attain several goals all at once

Learner Characteristics:

- Are comfortable with technology
- Self-directed learners; work in teams
- Want clear information of practical value
- Use fun and humor; games and activities are appropriate
- Can manage delayed gratification

Generation Y, Millennials, or Net Generation – (1982-2002) – Type: Civic

Characteristics:

- Are optimistic, assertive, positive, and friendly; believe they will be rich
- Accept authority; are rule followers
- Are accustomed to structure
- Are cooperative team players, gravitating toward group activities
- Are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation
- Think of themselves as global

Learner Characteristics:

- Grew up experiencing digital media and internet access
- Use mobile devices to access and process information
- Technology is expected
- Prefer to work in groups and teams
- “always on” connectivity blurs work time and learning
- Want “augmented reality” – real work environments similar to the work setting such as simulations and virtual reality.
- Active learners; seek innovations; want immediate response to learning needs and questions
- Have difficulty focusing on one thing; prefer to multitask
- Have difficulty honing skills of critical analysis necessary to read between the lines due to volume of available information.
- Use “hyper-learning” models as opposed to linear acquisition of information; want to construct information on their own; are independent.
- Enjoy being mentored by older generations

(Adapted from Billings and Kowalski, 2004; Johnson & Romanello, 2005).