**Communicating Across Generations Information Sheet**

Communicating across generations is challenging in any field. It is especially challenging in farm and ranch transfer situations because they often are emotionally charged. Today five generations are actively involved in farming and ranching and it can be tricky to balance beliefs and expectations between them.

Between the Traditionalists who were born before 1946, and the Zoomers who were born after 1996, communication channels have changed dramatically. No longer limited to being in person, writing letters and using land line telephones, today people communicate virtually and digitally, through a computer screen, internet, text messages and social media platforms.

Yet with as much as 40 percent of American farmland owned by seniors aged 65 and older, successful farm and ranch transfers often rely on intergenerational exchange. Embracing differences and moving beyond them builds empathy and trust, cornerstones of successful relationships which lead to successful farm and ranch transfers. Other ways to build relationships include things like sharing family stories, preparing a favorite meal, teaching a new skill, or sharing life experiences.

Each generation is shaped by history and brings a set of social beliefs and filters through which it sees the world. While not every person will share them, each generation has its own personality. When building relationships between people of different generations, it is helpful to keep in mind their common traits and the ways they prefer to communicate.

The chart on the following page summarizes the common traits, communication styles, and preferred modes of communication between the five generations:

1. Traditionalists, born between ~1927 and 1945.
2. Baby Boomers, born between ~1946 and 1964.
3. Gen X, born between ~1965 and 1980.
4. Millennials, born between ~1981 and 1996.
5. Gen Z, born between ~1997 and 2012.

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| **Snapshot of Key Traits of 5 Generations** | | | | |
| **Generation** | **Roughly Born Between** | **Common Traits** | **Communication Style** | **Communication Modes** |
| **Traditionalists**  aka  The Silent Generation | **1927 – 1945** | Conservative and comfortable with “command and control” leadership, Traditionals have a strong work ethic, are disciplined, risk and conflict averse, and hierarchical. They tend to be private, respect rules and authority and believe in duty and sacrifice. | Appreciate being consulted  Formal  Grammatical  Respectful  Silent | One-on-one  Telephone  Written |
| **Baby Boomers**  aka  Boomers | **1946 – 1964** | Accepting of diversity and more liberal than Traditionalists, Baby Boomers tend to follow the “chain of command.” Competitive, optimistic, and goal oriented, they coined the term “workaholic.” Team players, they are loyal, favor group decision-making and self-sacrifice, and appreciate security. | Appreciate background information  Direct  Formal  Outspoken  Use digital technology but technically challenged | Email  Face to face  In-person meetings  Telephone  Voicemail |
| **Gen X**  aka  Baby Bust | **1965 – 1980** | Gen Xers tend to be adaptable and entrepreneurial. While favoring collaborative processes, they are  independent, individualistic and  pragmatic. They seek work/life balance and are skeptical of authority. | Appreciate continuous feedback  Courteous  Informal  Restrained | Email  Telephone  Texting  Social media  Voicemail |
| **Millennials**  aka  Gen Y | 1981 – 1996 | Adaptable, collaborative, and entrepreneurial, Millennials are confident, comfortable with technology, and thought to be demanding. Fast paced, fun loving and flexible, they seek work/life balance.  Independent, tech savvy multitaskers, they are socially responsible and value teamwork and collective action. | Appreciate daily communication and continuous feedback  Authentic  Informal  Outspoken | Coordination technology  Email  Social media  Texting |
| **Gen Z**  aka  Zoomers | 1997 - 2015 | The most diverse generation, Zoomers are authentic and inclusive. They use gender neutral pronouns and are tuned into social and environmental causes. Fast paced and tech savvy, they process large amounts of information quickly, expect instant feedback and use technology as an extension of themselves. | Appreciate frank, to-the-point, "in-person" interactions  Authentic  Avoid confrontation  Casual  Concise  Visual | Coordination technology  Face to face  Social media  Texting |

References/Resources for M4:

* Claire Raines “The X Factor: Managing & Motivating Generation X.” 1998, corVISION Media, Inc.
* [Communicating Across Generations](https://advising.ucsc.edu/advisers/forum/docs/2014/WB-Comm%20Across%20Generations%20Diversity%20Inclusion.pdf)
* Anick Tolbize, “Generational differences in the workplace.” 2008. Research and Training Center on Community Living: [generational\_differences\_workplace.pdf](http://dwashingtonllc.com/pdf/generational_differences_workplace.pdf)
* Anja Bojic, “How to improve communication across generations at work.” 2022. Blog: [improve-communication-across-generations-at-work](https://pumble.com/blog/improve-communication-across-generations-at-work/)
* [from-boomers-to-zoomers-crossing-the-communication-divide-at-work](https://www.mdlinx.com/article/from-boomers-to-zoomers-crossing-the-communication-divide-at-work/5sGEpOlr4ShazPsyrVoXJP)