



**2016 CLM Annual Conference
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“M2: MOTIVATING MILLENNIALS and B3: BRIDLING THE BABY BOOMERS”

Over the past 10 years, there have been enumerable studies regarding the fact that four to five different generations now share the workplace. People are starting to go to work sooner and, at the other end of the spectrum, people are working much longer before choosing to retire. The difference in the generations is observed in work ethic, values, leadership style, communication methods, motivations and work life balance. These must all be taken into account when working side by side with someone from a different generation.

The idea for this panel discussion came about during a casual lunch, during which two baby boomers were discussing, okay, maybe complaining, about the perceived differences between baby boomers and millennials with respect to work.

Before commencing the discussion, it is important to first define each generation and its characteristics. It is important to note, however, that this is only a guideline. We must remember that everyone is an individual and not everyone fits into a categorical analysis. In other words, we will necessarily be speaking in generalizations, for what they are worth.

The four generations about which we will be speaking are the Greatest Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, and Millennials.

The Greatest Generation, also known as the traditional generation, is the oldest generation in the workplace, although many are now retired. These individuals were born

between 1930 and 1946. They are people who fought and died in World War II and the Korean Conflict. They are people who suffered through The Great Depression. They have been described as being conservative and disciplined, as having a sense of obligation and as observing fiscal restraint. Their work ethic includes loyalty and commitment, hard work, respect for authority, sacrifice, duty before fun and adherence to rules.

The Baby Boomer generation is generally people born between 1943 and 1965. This generation has had the largest impact on society due to its size, roughly 78 million, and the period during which it “came of age”. Baby boomers saw political and social turmoil, the Viet Nam War, civil rights riots, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Watergate and the sexual revolution. They grew up in an era of “prosperity and optimism” bolstered by the sense that they are a special generation capable of changing the world. They equate work with self-worth. Therefore, they are workaholics, they work efficiently, and they look for personal fulfillment, desire quality and question authority. Many law firm partners fall into this category.

Generation X and Generation Y are not well-defined as separate generations. Generation X are those born between 1965 and 1984, and Generation Y are typically born sometime in the 1970s through the early 90s. Members of Generation X are children of the older boomers who grew up in a period of financial, familial and societal insecurity. They witnessed their parents get laid off and a decline of American global power. They grew up with a stagnant job market, corporate downsizing and limited wage mobility. They are the first individuals predicted to earn less than their parents did. They have grown up in homes where both parents worked, or in a single parent household because of high divorce rates, and as such they became “latchkey kids” forced to fend for themselves. Generation Xers are self-reliant, want structure and direction and are skeptical. They strive for work life balance and naturally question authority figures by whom

they are not intimidated. Generation Y typically is a carryover from Generation X, but have been more shaped by parental excesses, computers and technological advances. They have been characterized as demanding and the most confident generation.

Finally, the Millennials were born between 1982 and 2004. This is the first group to grow up with technology fully integrated into daily life. They don't remember a time when email, and cell phones weren't in use. Their brain pathways have developed differently from earlier generations. The Millennials are tolerant, team-oriented, confident, and believe they are special. They look at work as a means to an end. They want feedback at all times and they also want meaningful work.

QUESTIONS FOR PANEL DISCUSSION

1. How do we motivate millennials who value work life balance and who feel they should be able to leave the office at 5:00 p.m.?
2. How do we ensure that the work we give millennials is meaningful and fulfilling?
3. How do we provide enough re-enforcement and feedback to the millennials who seemingly need it constantly?
4. How do we communicate our own work ethic and values to the millennials so that they understand the different approaches to work?
5. How do the baby boomers achieve a better work life balance without sacrificing quality of work?