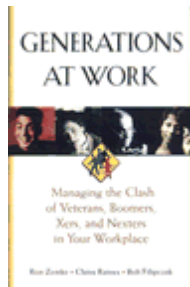


# Generations Truly Works

(A Book Review)



Over the last 15 years, a few books have genuinely captured the attention and admiration from people across the business community. Such successes tend to reflect the contemporary tide in economic thought while still provide some insight into a narrow aspect of business. Among the better known of these works are Don Tapscott's *Paradigm Shift*—focusing on technology's affects on society, Peter Senge's *Fifth Discipline*—explaining organizations' internal operations, David Foot's *Boom, Bust and Echo*—revealing society's shaping by waves in demographics and Walid Mougayar's *Opening Digital Markets*—discussing ways businesses can take advantage of the Internet.

Now, with the growth of e-commerce, more business and economic models are being developed and published faster than ever before. The result: it seems impossible to place into perspective the vast amount of genuinely good business insight. This is where *Generations at Work* is an invaluable resource. Penned by three members of the American Management Association, *Generations* does what many writings aspire to, but fail to accomplish—clearly and concisely suggest a linkage between widespread social and economic trends, organizational behaviour and people's behaviours on the job.

The premise of *Generations* is neither new nor complicated: *people resemble their times more than their parents*. However, in demonstrating their point, the authors extend the work done by other social demographic specialists, such as David Foot, and combine considerable research into fairly digestible chunks. In so doing, they provide a reference from which anyone can gain a meaningful glimpse into the generations that have shaped and will continue to influence our homes, workplaces and social institutions.

The authors begin by ordering our society into widely recognized groupings based on dates of birth. Their careful attempts to guard against making stereotypes while providing some typical demographic profiles more than makes up for their reliance on terms that we are all too familiar with, including Veterans, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Nexters (Gen Y).

After 'sizing-up' each segment, the authors go into painstaking detail to help us better understand the mind-set of each of these groups at home, at work and with one another. For each segment the authors describe the following:

At Work	... and Beyond
Work ethic	Core values
Preferred work environments	Seminal events
Messages that motivate	Cultural memorabilia
Leadership style	Heroes
Team member style	Sense of humour, preferred readings, spending style
Follower style	What other generations think of them
Principles for recruiting and orienting	An average Day in the Life
Guidelines for developing careers	Common myths

Because *Generations* appreciates that most people's lives consist of work and non-work, their analyses are particularly relevant. So, whether your mission in life is to supply or to demand, this text will add value. It is worthwhile if you need to make a prediction about or understand the individuals, organizations or social institutions of our society. *Generations* provides insight into the heart and personality of your colleagues and teammates, your clients, your business partners and yourself.

*Generations* does however suffer from some flaws. First, you can quickly detect an American bias. For example the authors did not address the different demographic segments in other areas of the World that have seen more drastic inter-generational schisms and considerably more growth. Second, the parallel structure of the book's core is terrific for comparison purposes across chapters but often makes you feel like you're reading a textbook. Finally, the authors, no doubt recognizing how static their structure, realigned some of the information in a question and answer format. This might have been their attempt to make much of the information more palatable for popular business journals. However, the questions and answers alike come across as forced.

Combine *Generations* with the works of Tapscott, Senge, Foot and Mougayar along with a model of how people process information and you'll have a strong foundation of how our workforces, businesses and institutions are currently evolving.

### *Generations at Work*

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