



Communication Across Generations

**Applying Generation
Theory to the Future
of Freemasonry**

Grand Lodge Membership Committee

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Goals of This Module

- ❖ To gain a better understanding of our potential new members
 - How to **REACH** them
 - How to **RECRUIT** them
 - How to **RETAIN** them
 - How to show them the “*value of belonging*” to Masonry



A Generational “Who’s Who”

❖ Who’s out there?

- The Silent Generation
- Baby Boomers
- “Generation X”
- “Generation Y”/Millennials

❖ What one word sums them up?

- The Silent (“Greatest”) Generation: **ADAPTIVE**
- Baby Boomers: **IDEALIST**
- “Generation X”: **REACTIVE**
- “Generation Y”/Millennials” **CIVIC**



Silent Generation (1924-1946)

- ❖ Sometimes called “The Greatest Generation”
- ❖ Strong traditional views of religion, family, and country
- ❖ Key attributes
 - *Respect for authority*
 - *Loyalty, hard work, and dedication*
- ❖ True joiners – many joined Masonry
- ❖ Likes the written word in a formal format (with few pictures)
- ❖ Came through the ranks (i.e., paid their “volunteer dues”) to ultimately take leadership -- **ADAPTIVE**



Baby Boomers (1946-1964)

- ❖ Did not experience the same difficulties as their parents
- ❖ Were influenced by the Civil Rights movement, Women's Liberation, the space program, the Cold War, and Vietnam
- ❖ They are known to place a (some say inordinately) high value on:
 - *Youth and health*
 - *Personal gratification and material wealth*
- ❖ Optimistic by nature – they believe their generation changed the world -- **IDEALIST**



“Generation X” (1965-1980)

- ❖ Called the “misunderstood” generation
 - Often thought to be lazy, selfish and “don't want to get involved”
 - In reality, they need personally relevant value – the answer to “What’s in it for me?”
 - They also want active participation in problem solving
- ❖ Tend to be nontraditional, interested in new concepts and products, and has a global mindset
- ❖ Key motivator is an enjoyable experience -- **REACTIVE**



“Generation Y”/Millennials (1981-2000)

- ❖ Have no recollection of the Reagan era, do not remember the Cold War, and have known only one Germany
 - Their world has always had AIDS, answering machines, microwave ovens, and videocassette recorders
- ❖ This generation includes more than 81 million people, approximately 30% of the current population - and (believe it or not) are greater in number than the Baby Boomers
- ❖ They will join us but they need to be listened to. They demand input!
- ❖ Based on generation cycle theory, they are expected to be **CIVIC** minded
 - The leading edge of this generation has proved to be so

A collection of Masonic regalia is displayed on a light-colored surface. On the left, a blue sash with a white star and a central emblem is visible. Above it, a red sash with a white star and a central emblem is also present. A pair of gold-rimmed glasses lies horizontally across the center. In the bottom left corner, a silver compass is visible. The background is a light, textured surface.

*What are
the implications
for Freemasonry?*

*... and for how
we represent
Freemasonry to
these men?*



What Can Be Done?

- ❖ Change focus from “us” to “them”
- ❖ Understand that Membership is the only reason for our existence
- ❖ Focus on important things, not extemporaneous things
- ❖ Give them what they want



Communication Tips

❖ Silent Generation

- ✓ Build trust
- ✓ Interact face-to-face or in writing

❖ Baby Boomers

- ✓ Speak in an open, direct style
- ✓ Answer questions directly and expect to be pressed for details

❖ “Generation X”

- ✓ Learn their language and speak it
- ✓ Use e-mail as your primary communication tool
- ✓ Talk in short sound bytes to keep their attention
- ✓ Share information with them immediately and often

Communication Tips (cont'd)

❖ Generation Y

- ✓ Let your language paint visual pictures
- ✓ Use e-mail and voicemail as primary communication tools
- ✓ Constantly seek their feedback





Bridging the Gap

*What challenges & opportunities
do these differences bring?*

- New ways of doing business
 - e.g., have younger members chair committees usually reserved for the elder
- Use of ad-hoc committees to accomplish specific objectives with short time commitment
- “The new meeting”
 - High tech gadgets on site (e.g., PowerPoint presentations using LCD projectors!)
 - CDs and DVDs to take back with them
 - Something to offer those who can’t attend



New Member Bonding Steps

- ❖ Listen to the new member
- ❖ No man stands alone
- ❖ Make it personal
- ❖ Concentrate on the right things



Understanding the Difference

- ❖ Forty years ago, “Top Down Management” was the norm in US society
- ❖ Today, “Servant-Based Leadership” is expected and respected

Understanding Differences Makes the Difference!





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