Leaders Communicating Effectively

John A. Kline

The value of leaders communicating effectively is demonstrated daily in all organizations. Indeed, since 1938 when Chester Barnard concluded that communication was the main task of managers and executives, leaders have emphasized improving communication in organizations.[1]

Years later a study by Dr. Dan B. Curtis and others supported what previous studies by other researchers had found: Effective communication skills are tantamount to the success of an organization.[2] Results of that nationwide survey and later ones led Curtis to conclude that chief executives and other senior leaders place the highest value on effective interpersonal communication because they know that productivity depends on effective communication.[3]

Commanders and supervisors must communicate effectively. Air Force military and civilian members must be informed. But not only is communication down the chain of command important, subordinates need to keep each other and their leaders informed. In other words, to be effective, communication channels need to be open down, up, and throughout the organization.

Effective communication is especially important to Air Force leaders. In a study of over 500 leaders from a variety of Air Force organizations, Dr. Richard I. Lester found that ineffective communication was rated as the number one concern.[4]

The primary responsibility for communication in any organization rests with those in leadership positions, since subordinates take cues on how to communicate from those above them. What, then, can we as leaders do to improve communication in our organizations?

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Establish the Working Climate

The first step in improving communication is to provide a good working climate. Nearly four decades ago a leading authority on communication and leadership, W. Charles Redding, said, "A member of any organization is, in large measure, the kind of communicator that the organization compels him to be."[5] This fact is no less true today. And one of the most compelling factors influencing communication is the organizational climate imposed by the leaders. Three basic climates might be labeled (1) dehumanized climate, (2) overhumanized climate, and (3) situational climate.

The Dehumanized Climate

For years, many organizations were founded on the model of a master-slave relationship. Certainly, the military has not been exempt from this kind of thinking. The work of Frederick W. Taylor in the early part of the twentieth century is often associated with the dehumanized climate.[6] Taylor has been credited with suggesting a leadership philosophy that neglects human relations in the workplace.

The basic assumptions of the dehumanized climate are that subordinates are lazy, won't take responsibility, lack desire to achieve significant results, demonstrate inability to direct their own behavior, show indifference to organizational needs, prefer to be led by others, and avoid making decisions whenever possible. Leaders communicate their belief in such assumptions by withholding information (since confidential information is not safe with subordinates), telling subordinates not only what to do but how to do it, doing all the upward and lateral communication themselves (if the subordinate's idea is good, the leaders handle it themselves; if they think it is bad, they crush it), and talking individually with subordinates (seldom in groups) to keep each person competing for their favor.

This communication behavior of leaders, in turn, affects the communication behavior of subordinates. Since information is not shared, subordinates become very ingenious at ferreting out secrets. And a secret is of no status unless it can be shared. This is how leaks occur. Because leaders also show lack of confidence by telling subordinates how to do the work, subordinates fulfill the lack of confidence by not readily assuming new tasks. Considering that leaders attempt to handle all upward and lateral communication, subordinates learn little about other parts of the organization, and, therefore, prove their assumed indifference to organization

needs. Since leaders of this type either kill ideas or send good ones forward themselves, subordinates are not motivated to present new ideas. When leaders do not communicate with subordinates in groups, subordinates form informal alliances to spread information.

Overhumanized Climate

The overhumanized climate is at the other end of the continuum. Instead of dehumanization, there is undue preoccupation with human relationships. Though the dehumanized climate can be traced to the work of Taylor, the overhumanized climate has its roots in the famous Hawthorne studies, which highlighted the importance of social relationships to production.

The basic assumptions of the overhumanized approach are that human relations are more important than organizational objectives, conflicts and tensions should be reduced at all costs, motivation of subordinates should be almost totally intrinsic and self-directed, and participative decision making is always superior to decisions made by one or a few. Leaders communicate their belief in this approach by emphasizing individual needs more than organizational ones.

In some instances these assumptions will produce positive and productive results, but there is a high frequency of undesirable responses. Subordinates often respond to the overhumanized climate in ways not in the best interest of the organization. The consistent concern for needs and welfare of individuals further emphasizes that these are more important than organizational goals and may eventually lead to the destruction of the organization. Since absence of conflict is emphasized, attempts are often made to create the appearance of harmony and warm interpersonal relationships, even when tensions and conflicts are present. Therefore, instead of manifesting themselves through conflict at the workplace, tensions and emotions are often relieved with husbands, wives, families, and friends—ultimately more damaging to individuals than conflict at work. Undue emphasis on intrinsic motivation suggests that something is wrong with individuals who are motivated by external factors, such as raises or promotions. Belief in decision making exclusively by the group causes subordinates to be dissatisfied with directives from those above them.

Situational Climate

The situational climate might be viewed as somewhere between the dehumanized and overhumanized climates. More correctly, however, this approach contends that organizational goals and individual goals need not be at odds with one another. Certainly one of the best-known advocates of this view was Douglas McGregor.[7] McGregor called for an "appropriate" approach, based on an assessment of individual and organizational needs. By definition, the situational approach suggests that an "appropriate" climate be established for each situation. When necessary to use a strict uncompromising discipline, it is used. When necessary to structure work experience to enhance a person's self-development, it is done.

There are three assumptions basic to establishing a situational climate. First, a flexible climate that can adapt to the complex and changing nature of individual and organizational needs is superior to a fixed climate. Second, individuals are not naturally passive or resistant to organizational needs or reluctant to assume responsibility. Third, since individuals are not basically lazy, work can be structured to bring individual and organizational goals in line with one another.

The leader who communicates willingness to establish a situational climate—one that fits individuals and situations—can expect certain responses from subordinates. First, subordinates' feelings of self-worth and respect for others will likely increase. This increase will most likely lead to improved communication. It may also bring expressions of disagreement that can then be dealt with. Second, perception of similarity between personal and organizational goals should promote increased productivity, which, in turn, may increase the amount of intrinsic motivation and a greater sense of responsibility by subordinates. Third, subordinates will probably bring other work behaviors in line with organizational objectives. Establishment of the appropriate organizational climate promotes effective communication. In addition, there are positive steps a leader can take to improve communication in the organization.

Ways to Improve Communication

Often leaders shy away from simple lists of suggestions and guidelines. Yet by following basic suggestions we can become better leaders and enhance communication. Here, then, are practical suggestions for effective communication.

Encourage Feedback

Subordinates discover quickly what leaders want and supply that information to them. But subordinates are unlikely to provide negative feedback or communicate bad news to those above them since they fear that, much like ancient messengers delivering bad news, they will be punished. The familiar story of "The Emperor's New Clothes" illustrates unwillingness of subordinates to communicate honestly to superiors.

What then can you do to help accurate feedback reach you?

1. *Tell subordinates you want feedback.* Encourage them to give you both good and bad news. Welcome disagreement on issues. Then, make certain you positively reinforce rather than punish them for such information.

2. *Identify areas in which you want feedback.* Do not encourage indiscriminate feedback consisting of idle talk or personal gripes about others in the organization. Do commu-

nicate your desire for feedback on issues and areas that can help the organization.

3. *Use silence to promote feedback.* Listen, and encourage feedback rather than taking issue with comments raised by subordinates.

4. *Watch for nonverbal cues.* Most persons do not control nonverbal responses as well as verbal ones. The person who says, "I am so happy to meet you" as he draws away from the other person, probably communicates more by actions than by words.

5. *Consider scheduling feedback sessions.* Since it is easier to prevent illness than to treat it, set aside time for feedback. A planned feedback session will usually get more response than an impulsive, "How are things going?"

6. *Use statements to encourage feedback.* Statements such as "Tell me more about it," or "That's interesting," or questions that cannot be answered yes or no will help you find out what is going on in your organization. Start your questions with what, why, when, where, and how in order to encourage feedback.

Listen Effectively

To receive feedback leaders must listen. Listening is the neglected communication skill. All leaders have had instruction in reading, writing, and speaking. But few have had any formal instruction in listening. This lack of instruction is especially interesting in light of research showing that people spend seven out of every 10 minutes awake in some form of communication—10 percent writing, 15 percent reading, 30 percent talking, and 45 percent listening. Here are some things you can do to improve your listening.[8]

1. *Prepare to listen.* Effective listening requires physical and mental preparation. Put aside papers, books, and other materials that may distract you. Have the secretary hold your calls or have callers leave a message on voice mail. Avoid unnecessary interruptions. Be ready to catch the speaker's opening remarks. The rest of the message often builds on the opening statement.

2. *Listen for ideas, not just for facts.* Concentration exclusively on the facts often causes leaders to miss main ideas. Facts may be interesting in their own right, but the reason facts are given is usually to develop a generalization from them.

3. *Keep an open mind.* Often the subject or the delivery of the speaker may seem boring or uninteresting. Certain subjects or individuals may cause the listeners to become judgmental, hear only certain parts of the message, or just hear what they want to hear. Effective listening requires an open mind.

4. *Capitalize on the speed differential.* Thought operates several times faster than the normal rate of speech. In other words, listeners listen faster than speakers speak. Do not fall into the trap of daydreaming or trying to think about some-thing else while listening. Use this time differential to summarize and internalize the message.

5. *Put yourself in the speaker's place.* Understand the speaker's perspective. What do you know about the speaker's knowledge, background, and grasp of the subject? What do speakers mean by the words and nonverbal communication they use?

Reduce Communication Misunderstanding

Although there are many barriers to effective understanding, four of them arise directly from misunderstanding the message. Knowing these barriers can help you reduce problems of communication.

1. *Barrier #1:* Misinterpretation of the meanings of words. There are two basic problems here.

a. *Same words mean different things to different people.* This problem is common wherever two or more people attempt to communicate. You may tell a colleague that the temperature in the office is quite comfortable. For you, 75 degrees is comfortable. For her, comfortable means 68 degrees. The same word can mean different things to different people. A friend tells you he will be over in five minutes. To him, five minutes means "soon"—perhaps any time in the next half hour. On the other hand, you attach a literal meaning. Five minutes means five minutes—300 seconds.

b. *Different words mean the same thing.* Many things are called by more than one name. Soft drink, soda, and pop all mean the same thing. The name used depends on who is doing the talking. Both this barrier and the first one can be overcome by realizing the following fact: Meanings are not in words, meanings are in people. Leaders communicate more effectively when they consider the message in relation to its source and its recipients.

2. *Barrier #2:* Misinterpretation of actions. Eye contact, gestures, facial expression are all action factors. When someone walks quickly out of the room during a meeting or taps a pencil on the table during a conversation leaders may conclude that the person is in a hurry or is bored. These conclusions may or may not be correct. If others twitch or seem unsure while speaking, we may conclude that they are nervous when, in fact, they may not be.

3. *Barrier #3:* Misinterpretation of nonaction symbols. The clothes you wear, the automobile you drive, the objects in your office all communicate things about you. In addition, your respect for time and space needs of others affects how you interpret their messages. For example, if a subordinate is to see you at noon, but arrives fifteen minutes late, his tardiness may affect how you interpret what he says to you.

4. *Barrier #4:* Misinterpretation of the voice. The quality, intelligibility, and variety of the voice all affect understanding. Quality refers to the overall impression the voice makes on others. Listeners often infer from the voice whether the speaker is happy, sad, fearful, or confident. Intelligibility or understandability depends on such things as

articulation, pronunciation, and grammatical correctness. Variety is the spice of speaking. Rate, volume, force, pitch, and emphasis are all factors of variety that influence understanding.[9]

Communication with Key Personnel

It probably goes without saying that you should communicate one-on-one with your key persons often. Certain guidelines apply to establishment and maintenance of effective communication with key subordinates:

1. Show genuine interest and concern with facial expression, head nods, gestures, and bodily posture which reflect openness and positive reinforcement.

2. Put the other person at ease by appearing relaxed and breaking down barriers with friendliness.

3. Be natural, because genuineness and sincerity are foundations for effective communication.

4. Do not assume a superior manner or pretend to be what you're not.

5. Adapt to the conversation as it develops with spontaneous comments rather than plowing ahead with "prepared" comments or arguments.

6. Respect the other person's point of view.

7. Seek to understand what the other person really means and not necessarily what is said.

8. Reduce your own defensiveness.

9. Do not dominate the conversation to the point that you shut the other person out.

10. Listen attentively by concerning yourself with what the other person is saying instead of planning what you are going to say.

Promote Consensus

One of the biggest problems leaders face is getting a group to reach consensus. There are many times, of course, when you must make an independent decision and stick to it. But generally, policy decisions are hammered out in the give-and-take of small-group discussions. Problem solving is certainly a goal of decision-making groups at all levels, but often consensus or agreement is just as important. If a decision is reached without consensus, morale and unit satisfaction both may suffer. With genuine consensus, a unit tends to support and implement the new policy willingly.

The following five suggestions for reaching consensus are based on a longer list formulated after much research and careful analysis of decision-making groups.[10]

1. *Clarify the discussion.* Make sure that the group's activity is understandable, orderly, and focused on one issue at a time. Consensus comes more easily if factors are weighed individually and systematically. Encourage each person to stick to the subject, to avoid side discussions, and to clarify the issues with questions.

2. *Use process statements.* Process statements deal with what is happening in the group. While process statements may relate to the content, they primarily stimulate and facilitate discussion: "What you've said seems to make sense. How do the rest of you feel?" or "So far, we seem to agree on the first two points. Let's move on to the third," or "Have we heard from Joe yet?" or "This is really a productive discussion." When both the leader and group members use process statements effectively, agreement will come more readily and satisfaction will be increased.

3. *Seek different views.* All persons should be encouraged to present their views and provide information and evidence to support their views. Expression of a wide range of opinions and views allows a great opportunity for learning to take place. At the same time, participation by all persons will allow them to have their voices heard and will increase their satisfaction with the discussion and conclusions reached.

4. *Remain open to different views.* This suggestion is clearly the corollary to the preceding guideline. We have all known people who seek the views of others with no intent to be influenced by them: "Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up." When others present irrefutable facts and figures, or even a good idea that you may not have thought of before, don't be afraid to alter your position or admit that you may have been wrong. Good leaders often learn from their subordinates. Also, leaders can serve as models for the behavior of others in the matter of not being overopinionated. Studies have shown that low or moderately opinionated leaders are held in higher esteem by others than highly opinionated ones.

5. *Use group pronouns.* Studies show that less cohesive groups—groups that are less successful in reaching consensus—tend to use more self-referent words, such as *I, me, my,* and *mine*. Groups that reach consensus and are more cohesive, on the other hand, are more apt to use group referent words such as *we, our,* and *us*. As a leader, talk about the group. Talk about what *we* hope to accomplish and how *we* can work together to achieve *our* objectives. Do not emphasize what *I* want done or what is best for *my* interests. Stress that while all persons should be concerned with their own unit or division, they should also be interested in the needs of others in the group.

Conclusion

Effective leaders recognize the importance of good communication. Communication problems can cause bottlenecks in the organization. But before you blame subordinates for bottlenecks, stop and examine a bottle. Notice where the neck is. It is not at the bottom.

Responsible leaders communicate effectively. They work hard to prevent bottlenecks and keep channels open up, down, and throughout the organization by (1) establishing an appropriate working climate and adjusting their communication behavior to fit the situation, and (2) practicing techniques to improve communication in their organization.

Notes

1. Chester Barnard, *The Function of the Executive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938).

2. Dan B. Curtis, Jerry L. Winsor, and Ron Stephens, *The Ideal Entry-Level and Management Profile* (Central Missouri State University Research, 1985–1986), 21–25.

3. Dr. Dan B. Curtis, interviewed by author, 16 February 1995.

4**.** Richard I. Lester, PhD, "Top Ten Management Concerns," in *Management of Organizational Behavior,* 7th ed., Paul Hersey, Kenneth Blanchard, and Dewey Johnson (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 8.

5. W. Charles Redding and George A. Sanborn, *Business and Industrial Communication: A Source Book* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 29.

6. Frederick W. Taylor, *Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1911).

7. Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1960).

8. For a more comprehensive treatment of listening, see John A. Kline, *Listening Effectively* (Maxwell Air Force Base [AFB], Ala.: Air University Press, 1996).

9. See John A. Kline, *Speaking Effectively* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1989).

10. For a more complete discussion, see John A. Kline, "Consensus in Small Groups: Deriving Suggestions from Research," in *Small Group Communication: A Reader*, ed. Robert S. Cathcart and Larry A. Samovar, 4th ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Publishers, 1984).

Civil Air Patrol

Generational Trends

27 July 2007

Generational Trends

by Robert B. Smith

Table of Contents

Overview

CAP is an organization of members spanning a number of generations. By understanding generational trends, CAP can plan now to maximize potential future growth.

Defining what exactly constitutes a "generation" is difficult. Some might say that a generation is the span of time between when a person is born and his or her offspring are born. Generations can also be defined as a "coming of age" period.[1] Most social researchers have labeled these "coming of age" periods as phases like young adulthood, midlife or senior adulthood.

Interestingly, social researchers have identified that historical events that occur within these life phases have more to do with generational trends than age alone. For this reason, a 30-year-old today has less in common with the last generation's 30-year-olds.

Social researchers have looked at these trends and have identified observable behaviors that these generations emulate through time. Such research has shown that many children emulate not their parents or grandparents, but earlier generations, typically the great-great grandparents.

This report uses the generational definitions and age ranges identified by *Harvard Business Review*: [2]

- **The Homeland Generation** (those born after 2005), our next generation of Cadets

- **The Millennial Generation** (those born 1982 – 2005), also known as Generation Y who are our current Cadets and young adults

- **Generation X** (those born 1961 – 1981), our young adults

- **The Boom Generation** (those born 1943 – 1960), also known as Boomers who are at the midlife phase

- **The Silent Generation** (those born 1925 – 1942), also known as the Traditionalists, who are our senior adults

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[1] Princeton.edu WordNet.
[2] *Harvard Business Review*, "The Next 20 Years: How Customer and Workforce Attitudes Will Evolve," by Neil Howe and William Strauss, July-August 2007, pgs. 41 - 52.

- **The GI Generation** (those born 1901 – 1924), our elders.

Your generational phase may have some characteristics of the next closest generation, especially those who are close in age to the next generation.

Of the 55,255 members in CAP on 19 July 2007, nearly 60% are Millennial and Generation X ("Xers"). Boomers comprise about 27% of CAP's population. The Silent and GI Generations make up the remaining 13%:
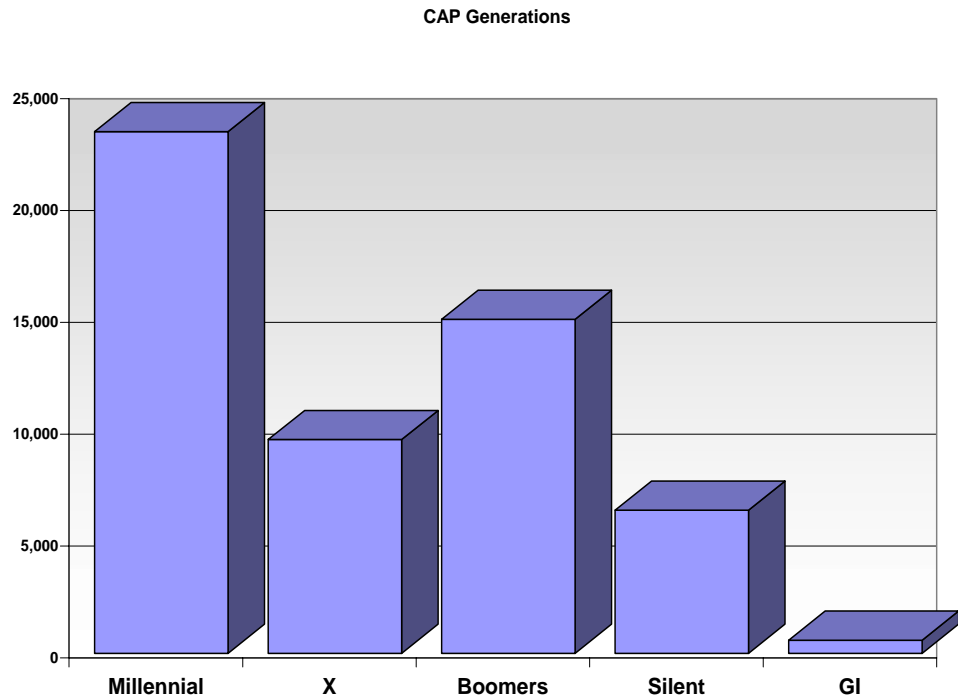
CAP Generations

Not surprisingly, the younger generations have fewer years in CAP on average than the older generations, even though they comprise the largest group. The average years of service:

Years of Service by Age
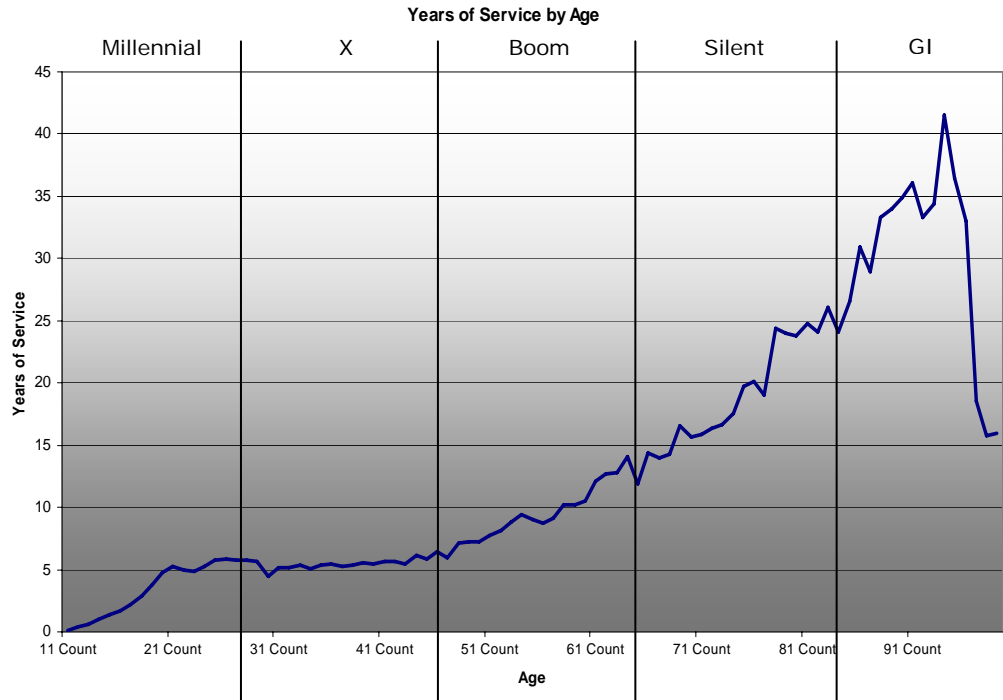
While this trend is due mainly to the limited time that the younger generations have been alive, there are other factors that have limited these younger generations from staying involved. For example, the Millennials are establishing their first careers after graduation and many are starting families. For most, their focus is on these life events.

Xers (about ages 26 – 46) have grown up in cultural wars, the dot-com bust, reality-TV and Enron. Many employers have shifted from pension packages for longevity of service towards merit pay to weed out those who underperform. As a result, Xers are more pragmatic over the realities of today's work environment. However, Xers will gravitate to organizations where they feel that they can add value.

For both the Millennials (about ages 2 – 25) and the Xers, their involvement in volunteer service will continue to be more limited than previous generations. The older generations have more disposable income, grown children out of the household and more perceived time to devote to community interests. Even with the limited involvement of these younger generations, they will stay longer with organizations that demonstrate fairness and offer value.

The Generations of CAP

Social researchers differ on exact ages for each generation and focus on generational phases instead. However, for the purposes of this paper, these ages define the generations of CAP:

	Homeland	Millennial	X	Boom	Silent	GI
Ages	< 2	2 - 25	26 - 46	47 - 64	65 - 82	83 - 106
Born	2006 +	1982-05	1961-81	1943-60	1925-42	1901-24

According to *Harvard Business Review*,[3] the Homeland Generation is considered the next generation even though its starting age is not yet fully established. Neil Howe and William Strauss list the following characteristics in *Harvard Business Review* about these generations spanning CAP's membership:

The Homeland Generation (20 or so years in the future – about age 1)

Gen Xers are adopting a highly protective style of nurturing this generation, but half of its babies will have Millennial parents. The rules created for the Millennials, no longer controversial, will become customary. Homelanders will be tracked by mobile digital technology, screened by psychological software, and surveilled by entertainment controls that limit their access to anything inappropriate. Older Americans will regard them as well-behaved and diligent.

The Millennial Generation (about ages 2 – 25)

Millennials as a generation have seen steady decreases in high-risk behaviors. As the oldest of them graduate into the workplace, record numbers are gravitating towards large institutions and government agencies, seeking teamwork, protection against risk, and solid work-life balance. Their culture is becoming less edgy, with a focus on upbeat messages and big brands. Their close relationships with their parents are carrying over into their young adult lives.

Generation X (about ages 26 – 46)

This generation grew up in an era of failing schools and marriages. They learned early on to distrust institutions, starting

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[3] *Harvard Business Review*, "The Next 20 Years: How Customer and Workforce Attitudes Will Evolve," by Neil Howe and William Strauss, July-August 2007, pgs. 41 - 52. Used with permission.

with the family. By the mid-1980s MTV, hip-hop, and a surging interest in business and military careers had marked a new and hardening pragmatism in their mood. Over the next decade crime and teenage pregnancy soared. Many of them have begun to construct the strong families that they missed in childhood. In jobs, they prefer free agency over corporate loyalty. They are already the greatest entrepreneurial generation in U.S. history. Xers believe that volunteering or helping people one-on-one is more efficacious than voting or working to change laws.

The Boom Generation (about ages 47 – 64)

During the Boomers' youth, crime rates, substance abuse, and sexual risk taking all surged while academic achievement and SAT scores fell. During the 1980's many Boomers refashioned themselves as yuppie individualists in an era of deregulation, tax cuts, and entrepreneurship. During the 1990s they waged scorched-earth political battles between "red" and "blue" zones. As parents, they have developed very close individual relationships with their children, to the point of hovering. Their generation has suffered declining economic prosperity.

The Silent Generation (about ages 65 – 82)

Its members came of age too late to be war heroes and just too early to be youthful free spirits. They became America's leading civil-rights activists, rock and rollers, antiwar leaders, feminists, public-interest lawyers, and mentors. They were America's moms and dads during the divorce epidemic. They focus on discussion, inclusion, and process but not on decisive action. They have entered retirement with unprecedented affluence.

The GI Generation (about ages 83 – 106)

As young adults, they were the first Miss Americas and all-American athletes. In midlife they built up the postwar "affluent society," erecting suburbs, inventing miracle vaccines, plugging missile gaps, and launching moon rockets. They are greatly invested in civic life, and focused more on actions and behavior than on values and beliefs.

Cross Generational Communication

CAP is a diverse organization comprised of multiple stakeholders performing a wide range of missions for America. Generational differences are just one aspect of this diversity. While generational differences influence behavior, this does not mean that such differences determine our interactions.[4]

Successful leaders find a way to let every generation be heard. This appreciation of generational diversity allows each generation to be a part of the growth of CAP.

But such diversity can at times seem conflicting. For example, the Silent and Boom generations now have a tendency not to challenge authority or the status quo while the Xers and the Millennials tend to now take on the speak up and challenge everything roles. Navigating these potential conflicts require the generations to better understand one another.

Lynne Lancaster and David Stillman wrote in *When Worlds Collide*[5] some guidelines to help bridge communications between the generations:

The Millennial Generation

This generation is used to praise and may mistake silence for disapproval. They need to know what they are doing right and they welcome insights into what they are doing wrong. Their needs include "feedback whenever I want it at the push of a button."

Generation X

Xers need positive feedback to let them know that they are on the right track. This group asks, "Sorry to interrupt but how am I doing?"

The Boom Generation

Boomers are often giving feedback to others but seldom receive feedback, especially positive feedback. This group believes in "feedback once a year and lots of documentation."

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[4] *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*, by Ron Zemke, Claire Raines and Bob Flipczak, AMACOM, New York, 2000.
[5] *When Worlds Collide*, by Lynne Lancaster and David Stillman, Harper Collins, 2002.

The Silent Generation

Traditionalists seek no applause but appreciate a subtle acknowledgement that they have made a difference. Their mantra is "no news is good news."

<u>When Generations Fail to Communicate</u>

Lancaster and Stillman sound a cautionary note when giving or receiving feedback from other generations. Feedback styles that may appear informative or helpful to one generation might seem formal or "preachy" to another.

For example, Xers want and need immediate and honest feedback, but older generations are reluctant to do so because these generations have been taught that there is a time and place to present such news.

Another example involves the Millennials who are the most technologically savvy. This generation may fail to listen to the older generations who aren't using such technologies to communicate. As a result, Millennials may miss valuable guidance if they are biased more towards the message delivery system instead of focusing on the message content.

Ned Lee, the current Deputy Chief of Staff for Cadets Programs at CAP's Pacific Region, notes the following will happen in CAP when generations fail to communicate: [6]

- May impact retention rates
- May impact morale
- May impact perceptions of fairness & equity
- Makes for a dull meeting!

The co-author of *Managing Generation Y*, Bruce Tulgan, argues that older generations have wrongly stereotyped the Millennials as being disloyal, not willing to pay their dues and in need of constant praise.

Tulgan points out that the Millennials are loyal, but not to a blind-loyalty. Millennials are loyal if a company demonstrates loyalty to them. For example, Millennials want to know that they will be compensated fairly for the hard work that the do.

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[6] "Cross Generational Communication: Implications in the Character Development Program," PowerPoint presentation by Ned & Chris Lee, undated.

The older generations will have a harder time understanding the mindset of the younger generations who proclaim, "OK, I did all this grunt work; what do I get?" Tulgan understands that the Millennials will do the "grunt work" as long as they see the relationship between their work and the overall mission.[7]

Social researchers provide broad-brush strokes in making sweeping statements of entire generations, so individuals may respond differently than these researchers predict. However, to successfully communicate across generations, such broad-strokes provide a general frame for others to respect as they interact one with another.

Strategies for Success

Most of CAP's senior leaders[8] are Boomers or from the Silent generation. Since these generations value duty, involvement and sacrifice, they are likely to retain their leadership roles for the next 20 years or so, using CAP as their retirement vehicle to "give back to the community."

Hard working and optimistic, these generations of senior leaders can structure CAP's future well if they embrace the next generations' increasingly predominate roles in our organization.

Here are some recommendations:

a. Maintain a push towards technology to meet the interests of the rising numbers of Homeland, Millennial and X generations of members. Virtual communities, online support groups and individualized online training will need to become the norm.

b. Provide clear opportunities where the members can feel valued and see tangible outcomes of their involvement in CAP. Valuing our members means that we honor their life experiences by having them bring these experiences to our organization. CAP should not exempt members from our education or training.

c. Clearly define the relationship between the work of the younger generations and the overall mission of CAP. Show such connections often.

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[7] "Gen Y Myths Debunked," by Sarah Pierce in Entrepreneur.com online, 1 June 2007.
[8] Defined as Wing Commanders or higher.

d. Millennials need an environment with greater supervision and increased number of team projects.

e. Provide opportunities for the younger generations to feel participative in the governing of their organization. For example, CAP should develop ways for the Gen X members to have more of a voice in establishing CAP's goals, who their leaders are and how their dues are spent.

f. Involve the parents more, both in communication about their children and opportunities for parents to continue their strong bonds.

g. Tout CAP's long-standing history as an organization of patriotism, respect and rules. Rules will need to make common sense and not so regimented.

This paper has demonstrated that CAP is a diverse organization of members spanning a number of generations. By understanding the generational trends identified, CAP should ensure its communication, participation opportunities and leadership development bear these trends in mind.

It is my hope that this paper causes you to discuss these concepts with others, to debate the issues at hand, and to be proactive in reaching out to all of CAP's generations.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAINING AND RETENTION IN A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION
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The purpose of the study was to provide information that would lead to a better understanding of retention and thereby improve the retention rate of Civil Air Patrol cadets. The research problem of the study was to identify the selected training factors that impact on retention within the CAP cadet program. Three questionnaires were developed to ascertain the training and retention attitudes of current cadets, former cadets, and the adult leaders who train the cadets.

Data were analyzed with SPSS 12.0 using the following statistical procedures: Descriptive, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, t-test, and Chi-Square.

There was a significant difference between the retention of cadets living in rural areas versus cadets living in urban or suburban areas. Analysis showed that cadets living in rural areas were more likely to remain in CAP.

There was a significant difference in age between the current and former cadets; however, this can be explained in that many of the former cadets who responded to the survey had aged beyond the cadet age limitation.

There was a significant difference between the current and former cadets in terms of the reasons they joined CAP. More former cadets than expected joined because of friends, whereas less currents cadets joined for that reason.

There was a significant difference among current and former cadets with their satisfaction with flying training. Many more former cadets were less satisfied with flying training than the current cadets. This research study indicated that the number one reason for joining CAP was flying training. The research also indicated that the two primary reasons for leaving CAP were ineffective leadership and insufficient training.
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Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the findings of this study:

1. An opportunity exists for CAP to improve retention by examining the residence status of their cadets. CAP has never analyzed cadet retention based on residence. Because the finding indicates a significant retention difference between rural and urban cadets, CAP can focus its efforts, study the differences, and increase retention.

2. Because flying training has been identified by both former and current cadets as the number one reason for joining the organization, CAP can improve their retention by improving their flying training. As indicated by the surveys, first and foremost, this improvement should begin with increasing the amount of time devoted to cadets flying.

3. Because insufficient training and ineffective leadership are the two top reasons for members leaving CAP, the organization can increase its retention by addressing and improving these two areas. According to the research, former and current cadets are satisfied with the caliber and quality of the existing training. The members simply want more training in all areas. More training will also improve the effectiveness of the leaders.

4. Training is an important ingredient for retention. Adult volunteers listed it as the most important factor in keeping members in the organization. The adult members strongly stated that more training was needed in many areas of CAP. These areas include both the cadet and the adult CAP endeavors.

Recommendations

1. CAP should conduct a thorough analysis of all training, including cadets and adult members. An increased amount of quality training will improve the education and training of CAP's members and thereby enhance the organization's mission accomplishments. Additionally, more training will lead to more effective leadership, which is a necessary ingredient to higher retention.

2. In addition to providing more training for CAP's leadership, CAP should analyze the behavior and actions of its leaders from the squadron to the region levels. An organization is only as good as its leaders, and CAP leaders must be effective and beyond reproach.

3. CAP should analyze a geographical breakdown of all of its units, paying particular attention to the number of cadets per unit and where those units are located. A study of the urban, suburban, and rural squadrons can pay huge dividends toward higher retention.

4. In addition to the broad training analysis (recommendation #1), CAP should conduct a specific investigation with the intent of improving the amount and availability of flying training. Because flying training is the number one reason a person joins CAP, the organization should make every effort to ensure that flying training is sufficiently available to anyone who desires it.

5. A smaller, more specific follow-up study should be conducted in two years aimed at the current cadets. This research should focus on training with particular emphasis on changes made to the training plan.

6. Because of the importance of keeping in contact with former cadets, I recommend further research through questionnaires be mailed directly to the former cadets' address. This mailing should be accompanied by a letter notifying the cadet of the significance of their opinion. Although CAP has a good-sized database of former addresses, a direct mailing would better demonstrate the importance of the information needed.

7. This study should be repeated in four years. Efforts should be made to include the same cadets from the original and follow-up research projects, as well as new members. Every effort should be made to survey even more CAP members.