

Think Tank: Bridging the generation gaps – Generation Y

Speakers:

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Erica: Hi, everyone. You are listening to The Think Tank podcast. This is episode three in our series on bridging the generation gaps. And this episode is focused on millennials, people born between the years of 1981 and 2000.

Erica: My name is Erica, I'm a licensed professional counselor and life coach. And I am joined by Angee, Communications Director and Lynn, licensed Clinical Social Worker.

Angee: We thought it would be a good idea to go to the source. And this interview, we talked to two different people. One of them being my son who is a millennial.

Speaker 1: So, it's an interesting crossroads gen Y and gen Z because it's sort of two similar generations honestly. Because I've always thought that gen Z is more of the super modern like the fastest smartphones, the fastest computers, the most modern up-to-date Tech. Whereas gen Y is sort of not necessarily outdated but more into all kinds of technology including vintage modern, super modern stuff like that. I guess what really defines us is diversity and technology, I guess, is what you would say. We have a wide understanding of all technologies at wide coverage. I don't know if it's like the total all-encompassing aspect but it's certainly a gigantic portion of it because I mean, technology has obviously changed the world and shaped how we do things.

I mean, think of how far we've come from like say the 40s to the 60s to the 80s, to the 2000 to now 2020. I mean, you've got so many different varying changes happening every decade really. Exponential growth of technology like every couple of years it boosts forward. And the problem with that is some older generations can have issues adapting to that and

adjusting to that. And I feel like my generation and gen Z are quicker to adapt to modern technologies and it's easier for them to learn it, easier for them to focus on it. And it's interesting to see new tech come out and evolve and learn to adapt to it.

Speaker 2: I am a millennial or generation Y and I truly believe that social media defines my generation. We came up in a time where we were playing around on my space, using coding just to make our pages look pretty and nice. Not even knowing that we were embarking on six figure careers that is insane. But yeah, so I just truly feel that our generation is truly defined by social media and the digital world. We have the internet going, mobile devices just came by storm. And then of course, social media, I mean, you have social media analysts careers. Those types of careers didn't even exist before. So yeah, social media definitely defines this generation.

Angee: I found it interesting that both of the speakers there thought that technology such a big impact on this generation. And I think that's true. This is really where technology took a huge leap from not even having a smartphone or even a cell phone to having smartphones now all of a sudden. And that being something that you carry with you everywhere, it changed careers. Creating brand new careers that didn't even exist before having obviously, much larger salaries as well. I think that was a big change.

Lynn: It really struck me that both of the speakers from that generation talked about technology in such an easy way. Like they don't need to learn the new thing that comes out. It's kind of like for them, it's like just taking the next step. Whereas for some of the earlier generations, especially baby boomers, each of these changes can represent a very big adaptation.

Angee: Like in high school, my son, he had technology classes and that was just part of the curriculum to learn the latest operating systems and things like that. And I remember in my generation, I had to take that as a college course, something you had to pay for. So it was interesting how it was also impacting the education and really weaving it into a part of what children learn and how they can move towards a career in technology.

Erica: Sitting over here, kind of trying to do the math about millennials and how old they were when the internet really became a thing and email, and then eventually social media and millennials. I mean, really that's a huge generation. It spans almost 20 years. So, it seems like you probably have a lot of diversity just within that generation. But let's say the oldest millennials who were born in 1981, the internet comes out in 1995, 1996 so, they're in high school when that becomes a thing. And then your

youngest millennials, the internet is already pre-existing when they are born. And so, the youngest ones are what like seven, when social media platforms are really exploding onto the scene. And so yeah, it just becomes a part of their day-to-day lives.

Angee: That's a good point.

Erica: I'm going to totally date myself here but I learned. So, I had to take a typing class in middle school. It was required and I learned how to type on a typewriter.

Lynn: Oh wow me to.

Erica: I'm very good at typing but it was on a typewriter.

Angee: Oh man. I was lucky and my dad was a computer programmer like even he programmed on old modems back in the day where the whole computer filled up the whole room and they fed it little data cards. So, he had all computers from the history of computer land and so I had a computer at home growing up and he taught me things on it. And I did Typing Tutor, which was a great program and learned from a young age, how to type. Typewriter though - that's impressive.

Erica: We had a computer at home. I feel like we got it when I was in middle school. But really and you could play on Carmen San Diego it, and that was about it. And you could write, you could like write documents and then you printed them on the dot matrix printers. That came in those huge long sheets and then you had to like tear all the things off of them but that was it. I mean, you didn't connect with people with technology. You had a phone, you called people or like when I was- I mean in high school for me, pagers was like the big thing. If you had a pager and then you had like made codes to connect with people with pagers. But social media like that wasn't even on our radars.

Lynn: I actually remember my parents who were traditionalist so they were born of course, before the baby boomers. And I remember my father being really excited in his late 80s about learning how to use the computer at the library. So, interesting I mean, he was several generations removed and yet he was eager to learn.

Erica: Well, something else just to think about is that, I mean the first big scandal in the news was Monica Lewinsky. When you had the internet and everybody could read about it and hear about it. And so I've read somewhere that it changed the way we think about scandals because the information just traveled so quickly. And that was what 1998 maybe.

Angee: Well then of course there's 9/11, which none of us can forget. That really I think shaped this generation a lot. I mean, after that there was security ramped up tenfold at the airports and a different high security locations. It really changed travel and a lot of things with businesses and things like that. So, it made people a little bit more paranoid maybe, even a little bit more fearful that this reality that we have could easily be shattered.

Erica: And I think it's also important to call out that, millennials are probably not only shaped by experiences like 9/11, but also the recession in 2008, 2009, when a lot of them were graduating from college, couldn't find jobs and a lot of them have student debt, their parents weren't able to save up for college for them. And I think the loans and the cost of college and education going up so quickly, a lot of them feel like they can't afford homes and I think there's also a different financial picture for people who are millennials to.

Angee: What's interesting, I hear that the millennials are really that narcissistic mentality. That you know, me, myself and I is what it's all about. I don't necessarily see that as much. Others might see that. I kind of wonder what that's all about.

Erica: I wonder if some of that characterization of them being narcissists or self-involved and entitled doesn't come a little bit from technology and the changes in technology and the speed with which you could get whatever you want. You want to learn about penguins. You can just go online and look up penguins and get lots and lots of information about penguins. If there is just sort of this. Like you want something, you get it right away because of the changes in technology. And not having to foster patience or learn how to be bored and just sit and wait for something.

Lynn: Right. Or learn how to deal with being bored. Yeah. I'm just reading that millennials interact all day long. But basically through a screen and that all of this interaction really makes them very anxious and that's where formal came from. That they're always afraid that if they're not connected they're missing out.

Angee: And this I think is also the start of text messaging when text messaging came into play. And then you probably have less people making phone calls and communicating even verbally, much less communicating in person. The more social media became present, the more you could connect through text and images and video on your phone, the less people are getting out there and interacting, which could possibly impact that generation as well.

Lynn: I've also read that this generation sends and receives an average of 88 texts a day and so they're living under the constant influence of peers.

Angee: I can vouch for that as a parent who has a gen Y and a gen Z, and has seen both as their phone bills. We're talking thousands of text messages per month compared to my couple 100, maybe. So it's definitely an increase.

Speaker 3: Pros and cons interesting. Well, obviously before this whole pandemic thing, but before I started working where I'm at now, I did work in an office environment and in that environment, you've got a lot of individuals working in the office. And you've got people from gen X, from gen Y probably from before gen X, probably mostly gen X, Y and I guess you could say Z. But it's interesting because the pros obviously of working with different generations is you get to show them different aspects of tech, introduce them to stuff, teach them about stuff. Because on my job I do training sometimes for the position and some of them have difficulty learning about certain aspects of it. And it's really interesting too, to bring my point of view to it, to show them how these things work.

And then I don't really know the con it's kind of difficult for me to think about the negative side of it. But I guess just the fact that sometimes they don't latch on to certain things as quickly as we would. And it takes maybe a little bit longer to explain it than you would like. But I think that's also kind of a pro because I kind of like teaching and explaining things, I guess. Certainly there are things that they absolutely know better than I do. Plenty of stuff that they could teach me.

It's just, I guess in my head, I'm so focused on what I know. Sometimes I don't take the time to understand what they know, especially when you consider the environment that I'm living in and the jobs that I have heavily tech focused. I don't know. I mean, I guess certainly there's plenty of stuff that they can teach me that I don't know, stuff that I myself would take a very long time to learn. And they would probably get frustrated. Why don't you know this faster? Why aren't you picking up on this faster? You know, how it goes.

A lot of people that I've seen really prefer to talk via email. And then some people just prefer instant messaging because it's so fast and you can get your point across immediately. And then onto the job or the actual job itself some people are extremely particular in every single thing they do when it comes to the job. Whereas some of the newer generations, me included, we like to do things a lot faster and sometimes we skip over to some of the details as a result, and we're not exactly

super thorough. So, I would say the older generation is probably more meticulous and more exact, more of a perfectionist is what you would call it but yeah, that's some of the differences I see between working style.

Speaker 2: I absolutely work and interact with others in different generations. I am a former teacher. So I've worked with people of all ages, older and younger than I am. I especially liked working with the older generation because I learned a lot from them. Even though sometimes the older crowd wasn't really into change they kind of had the idea of what has worked will always work and I don't need anything different but you have those who don't mind learning. So, it has its pros and cons. I learned a lot and I took some pretty funny advice when I was first starting in education. One of my lead teachers told me at the time you should really wear bright colored lipstick it will draw attention from your students. They will pay attention to you, they will hold on to every word. And it was true. So, I always wore a bright color, a bright red or pink, or what have you and students listen, they were drawn to it, they asked questions, they wanted to know where I bought the lipstick so it worked.

I also like working with a younger crowd as well because they have fresh ideas. I'm fairly young but then of course there are younger people than I am. So, of course they have fresher ideas and I love that because I am always looking to learn and grow and to be better at whatever it is that I'm doing.

Erica: Then I think technology continues to be a theme about the differences with generations and how we communicate and how we pick up on things. And I mean, I've talked to some people, we have family members who are older generation X and they are in IT. And they have expressed concerns that it's harder for them to keep up with the changes in technology, but it's critical to them being employed and continuing to stay at least in their current field.

Angee: Yeah. I mean, coming from a technology job in my past, I can definitely vouch for the fact that you have to constantly be educating yourself on the latest new technology that's come out. Because it's growing so fast, it's changing constantly. Especially if in programming it's like new languages are always coming out. So, you really have to be on top of your game there. I think it's interesting to see how it's impacted learning styles from what the two speakers just said. It sounds like not necessarily from a technology standpoint, that perhaps from what they were saying, that the older generation maybe had to take things a little bit slower because they had to learn in a slower way, maybe going through books

or reading and delving into things. Whereas in the younger generation, things are so readily available at their fingertips.

And they're so familiar with the new softwares and programs that they're quickly jumping into doing new things. But that's not always a benefit that can sometimes lead to skipping over some steps maybe and missing some crucial items that needed to be included in the process. So, it's interesting to hear that that was called out. There's definitely different levels of experience and education and people that really get involved in depth into technology. So, I don't think it's necessarily limited to the younger generations by any means but I do think predominantly the younger generation has grasped onto it much quicker, because it's something that they have grown up around from a very young age.

Lynn: I totally agree. It's kind of like being born speaking a particular language versus learning to speak that language.

Erica: Is that whole digital native versus digital tourists kind of thing. Right? If you're a native born speaker, you don't even have to think about it. But if you're visiting the country, then yeah, you have to think about every little thing you're saying. Is it the right word? Is it not the right word? Are you able to communicate the basics and get what you need?

Angee: And I found it interesting that from what my son was saying, that it's an opportunity to be able to share your knowledge that he has from that generation and share it with other generations. But then also learn from what they have to offer too.

Erica: So, that's a wrap on millennials. Join us for our next episode where we talk about generation Z.

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