



EMERALD POINTS

INTERGENERATIONAL HARMONY

Unleashing the Strategic Power of
Generational Synergy

ARPAN S. YAGNIK



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Unleashing the Strategic Power of
Generational Synergy

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I dedicate this book to Daya, Nick, Sebastian, Alena, John, and Imad. They provided the initial sunshine, water, and nutrients for the idea of Intergenerational Harmony to germinate.

I dedicate this to my nieces and nephews: Saumya, Shreya, Hetvi, Rutvi, Urja, Hridit, Nisarg, Pranshu, Sharanya, Amay, Aashriya, Aarohi, Hitaay, Surya, Kahan, and Aanya. They are the future generation of my family, Bharat, and Earth.

I dedicate this book to the young tribal children of Anand Niketan Eklavya Residential School in Kaprada, India, whose rejuvenating presence and unhinged laughter strengthened my faith in this work. They are the future of Bharat and Earth.

And finally, I dedicate this book to the generations that have arrived and gone and the generations that are yet to arrive to go.

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FOREWORD

This project is a comet in my life. It appeared out of nowhere and has illuminated my life for the past two and a half years. I hope that now as it moves out of my hands, it illuminates many more lives and generations. It started with the sensitization that every organization I was affiliated with was trying to include youngsters and everyone was struggling. Why was everyone struggling, I had no idea. But once I firmly knew that this was a problem, I decided that something needs to be done about this.

The first opportunity presented itself when I found myself working with a very small group of incredible individuals to plan a global gathering for Initiatives of Change. All the members of the global movement were invited to participate in it. I proposed Intergenerational Harmony as one of the three options for a theme that the event could be anchored around. Everyone gravitated somehow toward Intergenerational Harmony. The work began and many more came forward to lend their helping hand. The culmination of the work came in the form of a three-day event with a vast array of participants from all time zones. The thematic aim of the three days was to increase Intergenerational Harmony by reducing generational biases.

This three-day experiment in increasing Intergenerational Harmony was insightfully successful. I got a firsthand idea of what it is to organize such purposeful events and what level of positive and negative outcomes can be derived from it. I was enriched and energized, but most importantly, I realized that organizing events that focused on Intergenerational Harmony, even on a smaller scale, is tremendously important for organizations and enterprises of all sorts. The need for this was greater than I had imagined initially.

After this experience, as I grew more convinced with the need to bridge the gap between generations, I started thinking of ways to do so. But there did not exist a framework or a guidance tool to do so. Being an academic, I thought of one of the most obvious things to do. Think and write. And that's how the journey began. EARTH was conceptualized and is offered in this book to all

those who want to organize small or big events in their family or religion or enterprise or classroom to enhance Intergenerational Harmony.

I now put this book in your hands with the hope that it illuminates aptly to help Intergenerational Harmony materialize and enhance around and in you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the patience of all those with whom I have shared the idea of transforming my idea into a book. I am forever grateful for the encouragement and guidance supplied by respected and revered Prof Sheth. His words were, “Arpan this is important. Get it out as soon as possible.” I also acknowledge Madison who got this project onto a runway. I acknowledge the interest and enthusiasm that Daniel Ridge had in this project from the get-go. His confidence in the merit of the project meant a lot to me when I had little to go. I acknowledge the entire editorial team who has worked on this project. I acknowledge all the people in my life who do not belong to my generation for enriching me and my understanding about multigenerationality through your presence in my life.

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MULTIGENERATIONALITY IS HERE TO STAY

As a species, humans are experiencing multigenerational existence for the first time. Five different generations of humans with distinct psychosocial and sociocultural characteristics are living and competing for resources and agency at the same time. Implicitly, every generation is contending for dominance. Each generation has its own competitive advantages and disadvantages over others. Disparities in the abilities and agency of different generations in addition to inadequately available guidance in navigating the multigenerational existence have steered humanity to the cusp of a dangerous generational conflict.

Generational conflicts that arise due to the mismanagement of Multigenerationality manifest in myriad of ways from global to local levels. I will discuss some selected instances of generational conflicts such as the generational opposition against the 54 nuclear plants in Japan, generational opposition in China against pollution, the story behind the National Sorry Day in Australia, generational opposition in exploiting mother nature in the United States, and more later in the book. The impacts of generational conflicts are seen broadly in five macrosectors. But more importantly I will also offer strategies to enhance EARTH.

Humanity and its institutions have not even fully emerged from the prevailing class conflict. The addition of generational conflict is bound to add more burden on the already overburdened ecosystem. The new generational conflict is giving birth to unimagined challenges and struggles that are burning bridges rapidly, which would have otherwise hastened humanity's march to progress. Inept interest and lack of intelligent insights about issues that arise in the era of multigenerational existence are unfavorable to human civilization's growth and wellbeing. All human enterprises and institutions are bleeding due to inability of handling multigenerational existence. In this chapter, let us

understand Multigenerationality and some of the foundational ways to understand generations and its categories.

MULTIGENERATIONALITY

The concept of Multigenerationality is explained and defined based on the concept of Convergence.¹ Multigenerationality is defined as the coming together of multiple generations (demographic or mindset based) with distinctly unique generational identities in the 21st century society. Great grandfathers and great grandmothers, for a vast majority of humanity, have existed only in stories and conversations. With medical advances and improved lifestyles, being able to coexist with great grandparents is a reality for many today. Multigenerationality is a phenomenon where members of different generations are living on the same planet sharing the same natural resources at the same time.

Multigenerationality is a relatively new phenomenon where individuals are either working and/or living with other individuals that belong to two or more generations. To properly understand Multigenerationality, it is important to look at the two fundamental ways in which generations that make up Multigenerationality in the 21st century can be comprehended. There are two types of Multigenerationality.

DEMOGRAPHIC OR AGE BASED

When demographically broken down, the populations living now can be broadly categorized into five generations. These generations are determined based on their respective years of birth. The Pew Research Center and Purdue University² provide excellent guidance and insight into these five generations. The five generations are labeled as The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. In demographic multigenerational convergence members of two or more generations come together in one household or working space. For example, when in a household family members from Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z are living together. Each of the generational category will be elaborated in detail below.

THE SILENT GENERATION

Individuals that are born between 1925–1945 qualify to be a part of the Silent Generation. They are also referred to as the traditionalists. Members of this generation, like all the other generations, have a distinct personal and cultural identity. The great depression and the World War II were the two major events that occurred during the formative years of this generation. Both these catastrophic events have left a deep imprint on the Silent Generation's motivations, communication style, and worldview. Members of the Silent Generation are typically considered as loyal, dependable, and straightforward.

Members of the Silent Generation are farthest removed from some of the more recent forms of technological advances. They are the generation that would still send an annual newsletter through postal mail giving a sneak peek into their life and activities over the past year. They are naturally inclined to utilize means of communication that have a personal touch as opposed to some perceivably impersonal and group formats of communicating. They are typically of the worldview where age is a sign of seniority. They don't mind individualism but are much more amenable to obedience and collective thinking. They still observe and hold reverence for hierarchy and believe in working hard to advance in the hierarchical structures.

World War II was the most influential historic event in the lives of the Silent Generation. The Great Depression shaped the ethics and code of conduct and much of the world view for this generation making them big believers of saving as a core life ethic. Savings are important for this generation. Saving for a rainy day is something this generation has tried hard to impart to the members of other generations. Indulging in excess and vagary in spending is looked down upon by this generation. Frugality and fiscal conservatism are preferred because of what they experienced and learned from. Both frugality and fiscal conservatism are considered as a successful strategy to survive the uncertain and unknown tomorrow. Decisions of today are made giving prominence to tomorrow and the day after by this generation.

BABY BOOMERS

The population born from 1946 to 1964 is categorized as the Baby Boomers. They occupy the highest number of seats in the US House and the US Senate at the moment, playing a key role, in devising policies and the meta structure for code of conduct and ethics for Americans to abide and live by.³ Although Baby

Boomers are consistently exiting the workforce, according to an estimate 10,000/day, 65% of the respondents from a sample of Baby Boomers expressed their desire to continue to be a part of the workforce past the age of 65.⁴ And in 2018, 29% Boomers were still a part of the workforce and/or were actively applying for jobs.

Major events that shaped the motivations and worldview of this generation are the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, Cold War, Cuban Missile Crisis, Man on Moon, JFK assassination, and the Watergate Scandal. Baby Boomers are also contributing substantially to the growing rate of gray divorces among the 50 years or older American population, where the rates of divorce have doubled from what they were in 1990.⁵ They believe that success cannot be easily achieved without making sacrifices. And one needs to pay her or his or their dues for achieving success and popularity. Baby boomers are good team players and are in general optimistic and competitive individuals.

GENERATION X

The Generation X population, which is popularly known as Gen X, is the group of people that were born between 1965 and 1980. This generation currently makes up a majority of start-up founders. Some of the major events that have shaped this generation are the dot-com boom, the fall of Berlin Wall, and the HIV-AIDS epidemic. This is the generation, which started thinking more about their own personal and professional interests as far as workplace growth is concerned over the company's interest. Generation X individuals favor diversity along with work-life balance.

Generation X in some ways is the neglected generation. Pew Research Center labeled it as the neglected middle child of America. They are less in numbers because of the lower fertility rates seen in their parents as well as being given only 16-year range as opposed to 20-year range for every other generation. Something exceptional about the Generation X is that of all the generations, it is the only generation that was able to recover its lost wealth after the 2008–2009 housing crisis.⁶ All the other generations never fully recovered their lost wealth. The Gen X population was one of the first ones to fuel the efforts that brought us into the age of computers and Internet. This was possible due to their inherent flexibility and skepticism as well as the need to be independent.

MILLENNIALS

The population that qualifies to be identified as the Millennials was born between the years 1981 and 2000. This, achievement-oriented, population will make up 75% of the total global workforce by 2025.⁷ Millennials are characterized as civic and open minded. The Internet played a major role in shaping this population who were quick to adopt social technologies such as emails and text messaging. Millennials are quick to resign from corporation than their predecessors if their organization does not provide opportunities for growth and development or sufficient challenge.

Millennials seek flexibility in their schedule as well as in their work assignments. They are result driven. They also believe in work hard play harder. The tragic event of 9/11 has left a deep impression on the psyche of this generation, which has brought numerous ripple effects in the priorities of life as well as in the ways of conducting and living life. Millennials don't save much but do consider spending money extensively on travel and gathering experiences. They are also the generation that is most likely in large debts. Millennials are the backbone of many a large and major corporations globally.

GENERATION Z

Generation Z also known as Gen Z is made up of people that are born between 2001 and 2020. These individuals are digital natives. They grew up with technology, and technology has played an important role in the socialization and normative behavior development of this generation. One of the most discussed traits of this generation is their ability to focus and their duration of attention. The lack of both in Gen Z is ascribed to the uninhibited access and reckless use of smart phones and tablets. Gen Z population is a progressive generational category, which is made up of individuals that consider themselves as global citizens with progressive and entrepreneurial traits. Other than technology their life has also been shaped by the structural and systematic changes brought in the aftermath of 9/11.

Gen Z is a generation that does not like to talk on the phone. They love texting and emailing. But they are also the ones that stand up the most for climate change activism. They make excellent use of social media for advocacy and engagement with the issue. This is also a generation that is most in tune with cyber norms and behaviors. They are inseparable from their digital devices and Internet and their virtual worlds. They possess the expertise when

it comes to new technologies and prefer to work with millennials as opposed to members of any other generations. They like to have multiple interactions with their bosses, which can be construed as spoon feeding by members of other generations. Gen Zers, in comparison to the other generations, know more individuals that use gender neutral pronouns.⁸

PSYCHOGRAPHIC OR MINDSET BASED

Psychographic generational categorization is a bit challenging to grasp because of its counter-intuitive nature. This form of generational categorization is based on the Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. However, there is also another concept that plays a big role in determining the categorization. There is a phenomenon known as "Cultural freezer", which is mainly used for immigrants. Immigrants hold on to traditions and rituals of their own culture from when they left their country, but the people of the nation have moved beyond those rituals and customs and in many cases even entirely forgotten them. I will employ the same logic to come up with a similar concept and name it as "Mindset Freezer". Maslow identified five different needs starting from the physiological needs such as nutrition, water, air, shelter, clothing, sleep, communication, and reproduction. Safety needs such as personal security, good health, home, property, and employment follow the physiological needs. Once these two are met the needs for love and belonging through friendship, family, belonging to groups and communities, and intimacy follow. The need for self-esteem comes next where an individual needs respect and recognition of and from the society and community. The last one is the need for self-actualization where one desires the actualization of one's total potential and fulfills the needs to be involved in creative pursuits.

In the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, at the base level after physiological needs is safety and security. The generations that have experienced immense lack of these needs in their formative years such as the silent generation during the great depression and WW II continue to still be frugal and saving for tomorrow. Psychologically they are still concerned about what is going to happen tomorrow. They are hyper-vigilant about securing their tomorrow. This is because they are trapped in the mindset freezer. Their actions are contradictory to their actual state of being and possession. A large majority of them today are independently wealthy, do not have to worry about their recurring bills, and have the liberty to engage in their creative pursuits. They don't do that. On the contrary, the younger

generations such as the millennials and the Gen Z, which is just coming into adulthood and most of who must worry about paying bills are more liberated and living life as if they were in the self-actualization zone. Millennials and Gen Z are living freely gathering experiences while not worrying much about the bills and not saving for the future when they should. This is contradictory but based on how self-actualized individual behavior is, individuals can be categorized into different generations. Based on psychosocial and sociocultural people can be categorized into different generations.

We have often heard of the classifications of generations based on these characteristics. First-generation immigrants and third-generation immigrants are one of the most prominent examples. First-generation immigrants live like the members of the Silent Generation. They are the generation of those individuals now who have everything and still live like they have nothing. They are also loyal and grateful to the extent that they will not speak against wrongdoing just because they were first given a chance decades ago to live and prosper. The second generation is of those who have a lot more resource wise but little courage to deviate from the values set by the first generation of immigrants. They are still subservient because they try to continue and uplift, crystalize, and contextualize the values of their origin to the new space. The third-generation immigrants who themselves don't really have much in terms of resources but they live at the highest level of Maslow's pyramid. They create their own norms and embody a shift away from the subservient culture. We also hear about generations in terms of education. It could very well be a Gen Z who could be a first-generation student. And we take extra care of these students because it is not easy for them to navigate an unfamiliar territory. Technology and automobiles and other such goods too, we find the use of generations frequently. In a later chapter, I share another way to understand generations and categorize people into different generations.

THE CRISIS OF MULTIGENERATIONALITY

Multigenerationality has vast impact on all aspects of society, culture, and norms. The vast impact can be clearly seen in five macro-sectors. In the next section, I briefly highlight the impact of Multigenerationality on each of the five macro-sectors to sensitize the reader to the nature of the beast.

CORPORATES

While having multiple generations in one team lends it unique strength, the lack of harmony between them will sap the team's strength and be the reason for waste of resources and talent. Corporations are suffering because of the inherent inability to manage and navigate Multigenerationality.

For the longest time in the history of workforce and corporations, it was the norm that more experienced individuals, which was directly correlated to age, hired individuals with less experience. In other words, older people with senior positions hired younger people. This norm has not only been challenged in the age of Multigenerationality but also greatly altered. In the age of Multigenerational Convergence,⁹ the ideas of where experience and expertise are housed have modified. In the era of disruptive innovation, founders such as Mark Zuckerberg who started Facebook at the age of 19 hired several employees that were of a different older generation and considering the age at which they started it is highly likely that the ones who they hired were older and more experience than them. With the increase in the disruptive, entrepreneurial and start-up culture, many innovators and founders are young in age and frequently hire employees that belong to different generations. The distance between generations obfuscates the understanding of the other individual ultimately leading to distrust toward them. Such distrust unfortunately has nothing to do with the ability and the qualifications of the person. It is due to the shroud of uncertainty that he or she or they bring by belonging to a different generation. Lack of trust and respect for one another in a corporate environment creates a toxic culture making collaboration and innovation hard to actualize.

A reason worth highlighting for the availability of members of multiple generations for the workforce is retirement age. Half a century or more ago the retirement age for an employee was not the same as it is today. With the rise in global life expectancy, the retirement age is also moving up. The threshold to receive state benefits such as pension and health care too have increased in some countries gradually and in some more steeply. In the next 20 years, the threshold is likely to be much closer to 70 years. What all this means is that older populations keep working while newer populations keep entering the workforce. People all over the globe and especially in countries like the United States are working and otherwise available for work at ages that previously would have been an anomaly. Many private corporations have provisions to retain their employees past their retirement ages.

The reader may remember a popular movie "The Intern" with Robert De Niro and Anne Hathaway as lead actors. This movie was about a retired Vice