

Boom into Volunteering

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It's important to harness and retain Baby Boomers as volunteers.

What's a Generation Anyway?

A generation is defined as a group of people who were born and lived at about the same time. A generation experiences common media messages, school system values, and parenting styles. Sociologists have discovered that these similar life experiences have an impact on individuals' perspectives of daily living. So some characteristics can be attributed to the generation into which an individual was born. Discussions about generational differences can be useful in understanding behaviors; they are not meant to stereotype or label.

The Four Generations

	Matures	Boomers	Xers	Millennials
Born	1922 to 1945	1946 to 1964	1965 to 1981	1982 to 2000
Major conflict	World War II	Vietnam War	Gulf War	War on Terrorism
Moral compass	Right and wrong	Good and evil	Paradox	Shades of gray
Time on the job	Get it done; dedicated	Workaholics	Doesn't matter as long as the job is done right	Ambitious; at end of the day, on to the next task.
Work/Life Balance	Work is noble; loyal to the job	Workaholics	Balance is important	Lifestyle vs. promotion
Rewards, Incentives	Subtle, private	Attention and money	Time off	Tangible recognition for every step of the way.
Service	Duty, honor, country	Advocacy	Apathetic	Done for a reward or incentive

Baby Boomers

"The boomers are a highly educated, highly motivated group who could drive solutions to some of our most intractable social problems."

– David Eisner, Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service

– continued –

Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are 77 million Americans strong, the largest generation in history. These individuals are transitioning from primary careers and family-building responsibilities to other opportunities. Because Baby Boomers are healthy, well-educated, and highly skilled, they are reshaping what it means to grow older and retire. An ambitious generation that possesses a strong work ethic, Boomers are looking for opportunities to put their life skills and knowledge to work.

A Social Resource

Due to their sheer numbers, Boomers have the opportunity to impact social issues. Giving their time and talents to address needs in their communities,

Boomers can make an important difference.

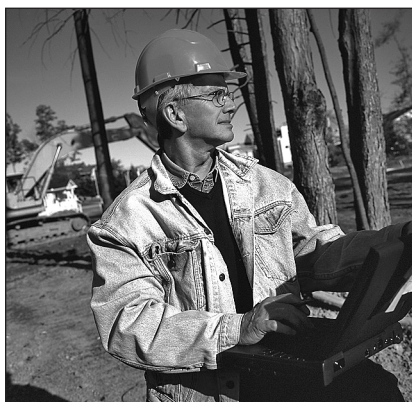
This generation presents the opportunity for a tremendous growth in volunteerism.

It's important to harness and

retain Baby Boomers as volunteers. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, "Baby Boomers have higher volunteer turnover or attrition rates than older generations." It's important to learn about their needs and how to successfully engage this generation.

Tips for Creating Boomer-friendly Opportunities

1. Be flexible. Boomers are busy. Offer a variety of times and lengths of volunteer activities.
2. Provide choices. Boomers have many talents and interests. Offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities.
3. Provide challenges. Boomers expect their service to make a difference. Suggest opportunities that will use their knowledge and skills to produce meaningful results.



4. Be organized, clear, and concise. Boomers have spent years in professional environments.
5. Use targeted recruitment strategies. Use recruitment materials via peers and the Web that focus on flexibility, choice, and challenge. Materials must look and sound professional.
6. Use proven management practices. Boomers want fulfilling experiences. Match assignments to interest, conduct relevant training, and create professional development opportunities.

Conclusion

Sociologists have concluded that each generation is unique. There are differences in value systems, work ethic, and views on leisure and community service. Understanding and recognizing these differences will increase the effectiveness of groups and organizations in recruiting and retaining Baby Boomer volunteers.

So, get busy. Try to understand and appreciate the Baby Boomers. Help them "Boom into Volunteering" in your organization!

Resources for Groups and Organizations

Alliance for Nonprofit Management
www.allianceonline.org/boomers.page

Corporation for National and Community Service
www.nationalservice.org/

VolunteerMatch www.volunteermatch.org

Volunteer West Virginia www.volunteerwv.org

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