

CULTIVATING GENERATION X LEADERS IN  
THE HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT:  
AN INTERGENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

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## First things first



**HAPPY RESPIRATORY CARE  
WEEK!!**

**Thank you for all that you do!**





To begin with: A Story



More to the Story

## Current Healthcare Workforce Realities

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- Healthcare reform challenges
- Aging workforce
- Majority of leadership positions currently held by Boomers \*
- Workforce shortages including leadership
- Next generation in line is smallest cohort \*
- Value differences between generations \*
- Plans need to begin NOW!

## Research question

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- **Research Question:** What role might current Boomer leaders play in attracting Gen X into leadership roles, identifying creative leadership development strategies to leverage Gen X strengths and revising leadership roles to meet the needs of the changing healthcare environment?

## Purpose of research

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- **Purpose :** to gain a clearer understanding of the leadership development requirements of the next generation in the healthcare environment for the purpose of transitioning roles from one generation to the other.

## Methodology

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- Interviewed current healthcare Boomer leaders
- Interviewed current healthcare Gen X leaders
- Led a Focus group of Gen X and Gen Y respiratory therapy students
- Reviewed current literature

## Defining moments for the Generations: how it translates in the workplace

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- Traditionalists 1930-1945
  - ❖ WWII, Depression → patriotic, loyal
- Boomers 1946-1964
  - ❖ Civil rights movement, activism → teamwork, optimistic
- Generation X or Xers 1965-1980
  - ❖ Divorce rate soars, latch key kids → individualistic
- Generation Y or Millennials 1981-2000
  - ❖ Technology → need to be stimulated, challenged

## Research Findings

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- The desire for flexibility is a common theme across all generations.
- Use of technology is a key issue for all generations.
- All generations are looking for respectful communication and relationships with their leaders.

## Research Findings

- Boomers believe that Gen X leaders need to develop skills in teamwork/collaboration.
- Boomers can't assume that their definition of/expectations for "professional" image and dress are shared by younger generations.
- Boomers are choosing to stay in the workforce longer now. (several reasons)

## Comparisons and a Connection

### Boomers

- Want it all
- Job security
- Challenged by technology
- Likes to work in teams
- Live to work! (to a point...)

□ Like to mentor

### Gen Xers

- Don't need to have it all
- Life security
- Tech savvy
- Individualistic
- Work to Live!

□ Want to be mentored  
(on their own terms)

## Research Surprises

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- The number one theme that came up in every interview and focus group was the topic of technology.
- Gen X want/expect frequent feedback from leaders.
- According to the book What's Next Gen X "Gen X is the most credentialed and best educated generation in our history".

## Research Interpretations

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- Everyone wants and needs more flexibility in their work schedules.
- Gen Xers want schedule flexibility so they can achieve better work/life balance.
- Boomers want to learn and adapt to technology, but there are obstacles. (several reasons)

## Research Interpretations

- Younger workers *expect* to have a collegial relationship with their leaders.
- Boomers want their expertise to be acknowledged and utilized by the younger generations.
- My research findings confirmed the current literature.

### What they said

“GEN Xers are impacted by their leaders and what they see in them [their leaders].”

Chief Nurse Officer at area hospital (Boomer)

“Boomers are sometimes selfish. They need to work at sharing their knowledge.” \*

“I wouldn’t be where I am today without my director saying, ‘Let me show you...’” \*

New Respiratory Therapy Department Director in Texas hospital (GenX)

## What they said

“Companies that will be the most successful will figure out ways to meet the needs of the younger generations.”

“If we think they have to be like us, we are dead.” \*

Chief Medical Officer, Vice President of  
Medical Affairs, area hospital (Boomer)

“Leaders of the next generations will need to be patient with us and listen.” \*

RT student at area college (Gen Y)

## What they said

“Identify stars, get them early.”

“We must spark their interest to step up [to leadership].” \*

Associate Administrator of Acute Patient  
Care Services at West Virginia hospital (Boomer)

“Generation lines get blurred when people find a way to work together.” \*

Director of Clinical Education, area RT Program (Boomer)

## Recommendations

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- Create and customize flexible benefits options for all ages.
- Be open to alternative/non-traditional work schedules.
- Be proactive about employee services.

## Recommendations

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- Get serious about succession planning and what it takes to prepare people for leadership.
- Provide opportunities for front-line staff to learn about management and “try it on” before taking the leap.
- Train employees at all levels about generational distinctions and how to work best together.

## Recommendations

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- Provide technology training and tools that includes new ways to communicate and mentoring support for Boomers.
- Develop and sustain meaningful mentoring programs that work.

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## The Dilemma

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Questions??

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Thank you for inviting me to speak at the  
CVTC 2011 Fall Respiratory Care  
Conference!

