

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1574 What if You're Part of the World's Forgotten Generation?

A couple of years ago, a poll made its way in social media, asking readers to vote for the most forgotten generation: Gen Z, Millennials, Baby Boomers, or The Silent Generation, the one preceding the boomers. Did you notice something missing in that request? If you were born between 1965 and 1980, you likely did. Where was Gen X? I'm Jerry Roberts, and today, we'll find out where Gen X is, and why nobody thinks much about them. That's next on The Extra Point.

In an age where Gen Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers dominate the cultural conversation, there is one generation that often feels left in the shadows — Generation X.

Born between 1965 and 1980, members as old as 59 and as young as 44, this middle child of American generations has long been the forgotten faces of the workplace and other parts of the cultural landscape.

Gen X is the smallest of the four generations, with only 65 million members, much smaller than the rest.

Xers entered a workplace with Boomers definitely in control, and expecting to slide into positions of authority with relative ease. Then the world flipped with everything going digital at a blinding pace, then seeing Millennials and Gen Z enter the conversation and force Gen X to the background. Covid happened and the workplace changed. When the dust cleared from that, the overwhelming emphasis has been upon Gen Z.

With fewer representatives in the workforce, this generation has had less direct influence on the media, technology, and other elements that shape our world.

Does it look grim for this category? If you think so, let me offer some countering info. Gen X, small as they are in number, pack an outsized impact. More than half of Fortune 500 CEOs come from that generation. I don't have numbers on business owners, but I wouldn't

be surprised if Xers own a significant chunk of that space as well.

It makes good sense when you think about it. Boomers are giving up seats of power daily, and Millennials, ages running from a high of 43 to as young as 28, aren't yet in a position to take on senior leadership roles across the board. There certainly are some, but not in the numbers that would dominate.

That will come as Gen X leaders assume those positions and then one day step aside to allow for a smooth succession. So, what does this mean for Xers?

I recently counseled a Guam woman, nearly 50 and living in California, about the door that is swinging wide open with opportunity for people her age and especially with her talent and experience — but that she has to decide to step through.

Organizations everywhere are searching for people who possess a blend of vision, drive, experience, compassion, problem-solving skills, along with maturity to not just lead teams and departments, but entire enterprises.

A lot of people in Gen X can check off many, if not all of those boxes. However, like anything else, timing is critical. So is the hunger you need to take on bigger jobs.

When I train a group of managers as I did yesterday, I raise the succession issue. I talk about organizations being stressed to find enough front line workers to keep the doors open, but at the same time they have to think about who will fill larger roles as veteran leaders move out of their positions.

HR managers have to be pay attention to both categories. That being said, I've had HR leaders tell me that while they have to focus on the front line to maintain adequate staffing for their operation, it's managerial succession that worries them more. (Con't.)

For those people who position themselves correctly, this spells opportunity.

Gen Xers are in their prime time. If you're in that group and you want to do more and be more, and you're ready to give more and mean more, the spotlight is lit and the stage is yours.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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