



Tino's Corner

Seek to Understand

by Tino Mantella, President & CEO TLG

This month's theme is not the easiest for me. First, I don't like labels and between my team here at TLG and my Millennial son it's clear that Millennials, in general, don't like to be labeled either. And, before I go further allow me to make a blanket statement – every person is unique and each of us have developed as a creature of our environment. Family structure, region of the world, income status, friends, teachers, mentors, and many other factors contribute to what we become. There are Boomers that I know that fit the stereotype of Millennials and vice-versa.

Speaking of labels; I am a Boomer and several months back I first heard the term “Ok Boomer”, but it wasn't intended for me, or was it?

A decade ago, I seldom if ever wondered if a person I worked with was a Traditionalist (born before '46') a Boomer ('46' to '64'), a Gen X ('65' to '76'), a Millennial ('77' to '97'), and now the Z's. Before the Millennial generation a staffer could be sitting in front of me and I wouldn't have had a clue about their tribe. I knew as much about their generation classification as I did about their sign. Were they a Leo or a Gemini? Were they an X or a Boomer?

Let me pause here to talk about me so I can, perhaps compare and contrast. I grew up in the 60s. My dad was a WWII vet who fought in the China, Burma, India campaign. He was assigned to a chemical warfare division and followed Merrill's Marauders into the fight (<https://www.bing.com/search?q=murel+muraders&form=EDGTCT&qs=PF&cvid=b00743de09d2411eb78938ae8d25d9a1&refig=fe58b8d65a554f69b8e24d335d7f5f52&cc=US&setlang=en-US&plvar=0>). He never talked much about his war experience. Dad dropped out of high school and joined the army. When he returned from the war, he married mom and set out to make a living and support his family to be. Mom and Dad both worked throughout my young life. Dad held two or three jobs at a time. Mom was the mom of the century working and supporting the family. Dad eventually bought and built and sold a business. My parents had a strong belief in faith and country. The kids learned about a strong work ethic.

I grew up during a time when we thought there would be the atomic destruction of the world. We learned to hide under our desks (not sure what good that would have done) or put our head, with arms behind it, at our lockers, during the air raid drills. The Cuban Missile crises, we thought, was the end. Then there was Vietnam, assassinations, Woodstock, a man on the

moon, and protests against government. What we didn't have was internet, cell phones, everyone is a winner philosophy, or much of anything to do with technology.

When I entered the workforce, it was a command and control environment. What the boss says goes. Sticking it out in a job, even if you didn't love it, was commonplace. Sacrificing a balanced life was normal. On the flip side, many of my generation pushed for social change, for a peaceful world, for equal status for women, and for more balance.

The upcoming generations are taking on the norms as we did in many ways in my generation. Companies having a bottom line in social purpose is a significant change. Having a balance of friends, family, fun, social-impact, and work is great, even though I must admit that some (and I am not going to label this on Millennials) have put their work responsibilities lower than I would like to see.

Hope Sonam, on my team, is going to reference Simon Sinek in her message. She shared a Sinek interview. Without stealing her thunder, it was important for me to hear and think about what's different about the generation that grew up in the 90's versus the other generations. Intellectually, I understood the differences before I listened to Sinek. I am at my personal best as a leader when I seek to understand as opposed to be understood. As I said early on in this message, every person is different and seeking to understand what is motivational/important to each individual is essential. Yet you can garner much by understanding generational differences. So, Sinek's talk about the Millennial generation and the uniqueness in parenting, technology, and patience or lack-there-of, was a good reminder for me. Finally, Sinek mentioned the corporate responsibility to understand the generation and build them up versus break them down as both the right thing to do and also the essential thing to do in order to retain a productive team.

I will end by suggesting that every person seek to understand the other and each generation take the time to learn about why we are like we are.