

## Ties to Tattoos—the title says it all

**F**OR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, the workforce is made up of four distinct generations: tie-wearing Traditionalists (1922–1943); loyal Baby Boomers (1944–1960); independent Xers (1961–1980); and tattooed, texting Millennials (1981–2000).

**Sherri Elliott-Yearly**, author of *Ties to Tattoos: Turning Generational Differences into a*

*Competitive Advantage* argues that understanding every generation’s goals, behaviors, and motivations is key to a business’ success.

“Traditionalists...grew up during the enormous upheavals of depression and war.... They value consistency and uniformity. Their spending is conservative,” writes Sherri in her book.

“Baby Boomers comprise a majority of today’s workers. This is the largest generation in human history, with approximately 76 million Boomers in the United States. They are overachievers, idealists, inspired, and often narcissistic.

“Generation Xers...are possibly the least understood. They value portable careers and are loyal to themselves and not organizations. They are looking for a leader and mentor, not necessarily their boss, and they are very techno-literate.

“Millennials, also known as ‘Generation WHY,’ or as I like to call them, ‘Trophy Babies,’ are multitaskers...and team-oriented. This is the generation that has been



rewarded for showing up for soccer practice, nevermind winning. If you manage a group of this generation, get ready to provide constant daily feedback.”

Sherri is the CEO of Optimance Workforce Strategies, LLC ([optimance.com](http://optimance.com)), a leading human-resources consulting firm in Plano. She is also the founder of Gen InsYght ([geninsyght.com](http://geninsyght.com)). She and her husband Mason are both Plano business owners. (Mason owns his own dental practice, [planosmiles.com](http://planosmiles.com)).

In *Ties to Tattoos*, Sherri asserts that the “old one-size-fits-all recruiting, rewarding, and managing strategies no longer work.” She says, “Where Boomers are optimistic, Xers are reactive. Where Traditionalists preach patience, Xers preach fun. Where Boomers want personal gratification, Millennials want morality. Where Millennials strive for civic duty, Xers strive for self-reliance.”

In order for CEOs and managers to connect with their employees, they need to know what their employees want and what motivates them. The author suggests cultivating an “inclusive” work environment by holding regular staff meetings to lay out the realities of the company and to encourage feedback. Sherri proffers, “Involving everyone doesn’t mean acting on everyone’s opinions. Younger generations respect authority, but they just want to be heard.”

One may argue that categorizing people into generational stereotypes is divisive, but Sherri attests that understanding these differences gives companies a competitive advantage. When every voice is heard, companies boost employee job satisfaction, and ultimately, they profit.

Follow @sherrieliott on Twitter or follow the author’s blog at [sherrieliottyearly.com](http://sherrieliottyearly.com). For more on the book, visit [ties totattoos.com](http://ties totattoos.com). — BRIT MOTT

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