

# BRIDGING GENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION GAPS IN THE NONPROFIT WORKPLACE

## About Me :

I'm Kate Viana, a NANOE-certified nonprofit consultant with a global communications background. Over 12 years in the nonprofit sector, I've evolved from a volunteer to a consultant, working in diverse locations like Ukraine, Turkey, and Peru. Armed with an MA in Integrated Global Communication and a BA in International Studies from Berry College, my passion lies in healing cultural toxicity within organizations.



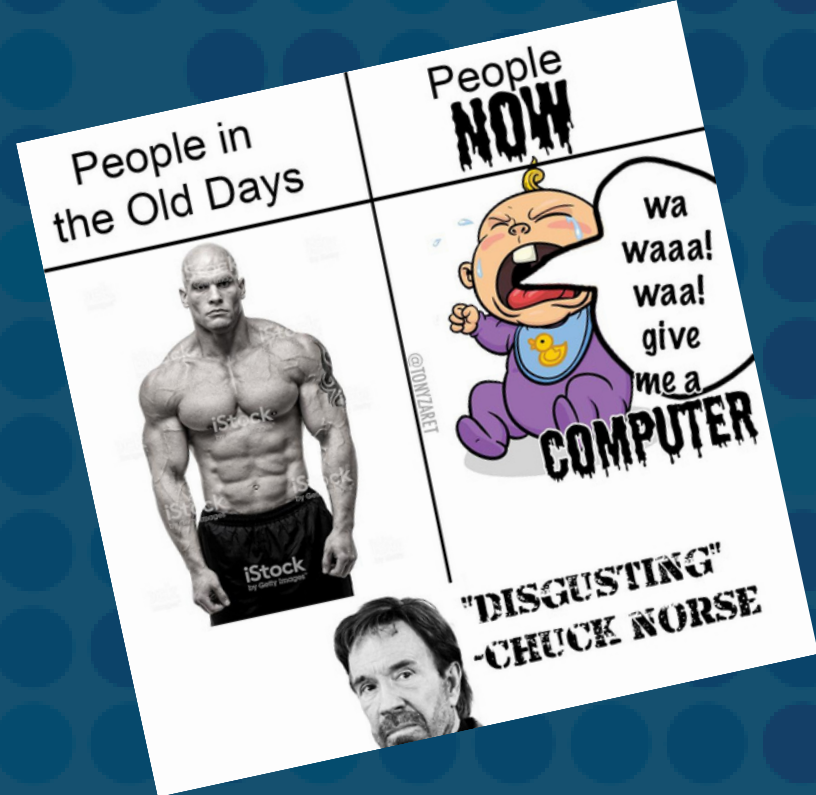
# LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Examine the trends in each generation's communication style, preferences, and perceptions.
- Uncover the most common sources of friction in multigenerational communication - and how you can decisively address them.
- Learn how to leverage the unique communication strengths of each generation to advance the mission and bring in more donors and supporters.
- Find out the key to bringing disparate communication styles together - no matter how wide the age gap.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

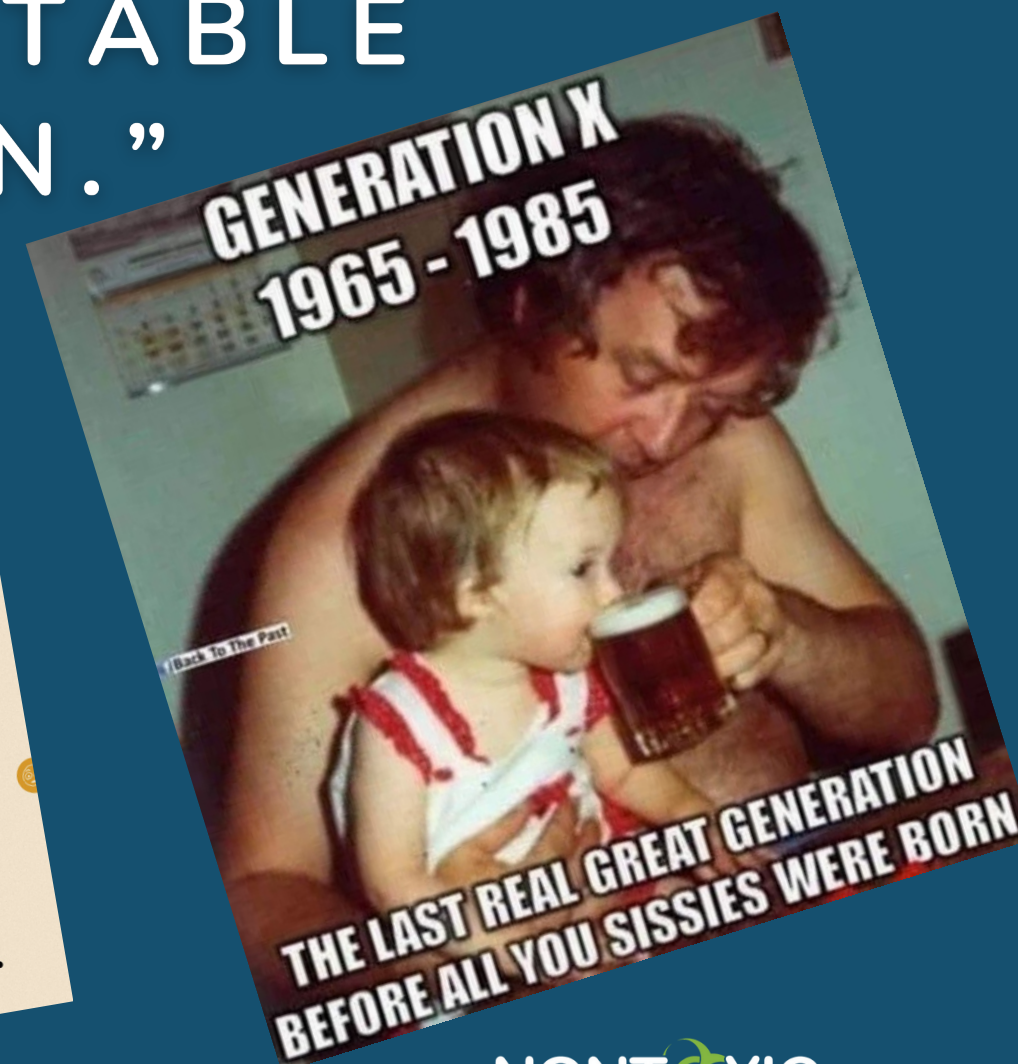
[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS



“AGEISM IS THE LAST ACCEPTABLE FORM OF DISCRIMINATION.”

-MICHAEL NORTH



Get in touch: 404.790.2933

info@nontoxicnonprofits.com

NONTXIC NONPROFITS



Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTXIC  
NONPROFITS**

# WHAT IS AGEISM?

Ageism refers to the negative attitudes and stereotypes that people hold toward others based solely on their age or age group.

Almost 25% of employees aged 45 and older have been subjected to negative comments about their age from supervisors or coworkers.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS**

# GENERATIONS AT WORK IN TODAY'S NONPROFITS:

Silent Gen	3%
Boomers	22%
Gen X	28%
Millennials	33%
Gen Z	14%

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC**  
NONPROFITS



MEET THE  
GENERATIONS

# POLL: WHICH ARE YOU?

A: SILENT

B: BOOMER

C: GEN X

D: MILLENNIAL

E: GEN Z

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONT~~OXIC~~  
NONPROFITS



According to a 2021 study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 28.2% of Millennials and 30.7% of Baby Boomers volunteer each year.

Recent research shows between 66% and 70% of Gen Z have volunteered in some capacity.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS**

# OVERVIEW - THE SILENT GENERATION:

- MLK, Jr., John Lennon, Bruce Lee, Billie Jean King
- The Great Depression, World War II
- Memos, Telephone calls, Letters
- 2% in total
- Motivated by respect, recognition, and long-term value

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS

# COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leadership:
  - Command and control style influenced by strong military associations
- Communication:
  - They prefer one on one, formal, and direct.
  - They value the chain of command and authority figures.
  - They prioritize action and results over lengthy discussions.

# OVERVIEW - THE BABY BOOMER GENERATION:

- Cher, Steven Spielberg, Donald Trump, Diana Spencer
- Shaped by the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, Watergate
- Telephone calls, emails, fax machine
- 22%
- Motivated by company loyalty, teamwork, duty

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS

# COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leadership:
  - Accept poor management and positional leadership. Competitive and value face time.
- Communication:
  - They favor clear, concise communication with a focus on achieving goals. Small talk and emotional expression are often seen as distractions.
  - They value formal channels like email over informal ones like messaging.
  - They are more comfortable with traditional decision-making processes than involved in-group discussions and seeking consensus.

# OVERVIEW - GENERATION X:

- Eminem, Kobe Bryant, Sinéad O'Connor, Steffi Graf
- Shaped by the AIDS pandemic, the Fall of the Berlin Wall, the dot-com boom
- Email/text; used cell phone early. Caller ID/Voice Recorder
- 28%
- Motivated by diversity, work-life balance, personal professional interest

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS**

# COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leadership:
  - Prefer leadership styles that are comparatively more autocratic, directive, task-oriented, and transactional.
- Communication:
  - They dislike flowery language or excessive meetings.
  - They prefer clear expectations and autonomy to complete tasks without micromanagement. They focus on tangible results and deliverables.
  - They value teamwork but may question authority or hierarchical structures. They prefer open communication and transparency.
  - They prioritize time outside of work and expect flexibility in their schedules.

# OVERVIEW - MILLENNIALS:

- Taylor Swift, Cristiano Ronaldo, Beyonce, Mark Zuckerberg
- Shaped by 9/11, Great Recession, the internet, COVID-19
- Text, social media, smartphones (iPhone), apps
- 33%
- Motivated by the quality of their manager, responsibility, unique work experiences

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC**  
NONPROFITS



# COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leadership:
  - Prefer leadership styles that are democratic, participative, relationship-oriented, and transformational.
- Communication:
  - They prioritize clear communication but favor a less formal approach than previous generations.
  - They tend to utilize various communication tools more than previous generations.
  - They are collaborative and feedback-driven
  - They value context and purpose.
  - Preference for the Sandwich feedback approach

# OVERVIEW - GENERATION Z:

- Greta Thunberg, Billie Eilish, Lil Nas X, Khaby Lame
- Shaped by the Great Recession, access to technology at a young age
- Smartphone apps, social media, video, use images and symbols.
- Motivated by diversity, individuality, personalization, digital creativity

# COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP STYLE

- Leadership:
  - Prefer coaching style leadership. Expect positive feedback. Enjoy being on location. They view the Internet as an authority.
- Communication:
  - They value efficiency and getting straight to the point, favoring brevity and action over excessive small talk.
  - They are digital natives. Utilizing communication tools is second hoime to them.
  - They prefer information presented visually through infographics, videos, and other creative formats.
  - They seek diverse and inclusive work environments, valuing authenticity and transparency in communication.
  - They prioritize work that aligns with their values and offers opportunities for growth, seeking autonomy and flexibility.

Questions?



# SOURCES OF FRICTION - STEREOTYPES

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)



**SOURCES OF  
FRICTION -  
FEAR/DISTRUST**

Get in touch: 404.790.2933 [info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)



**SOURCES OF  
FRICTION:  
LACK OF RESPECT**

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

# POLL: How do you deal with these issues at your nonprofit?

1. Foster dialogue to address issues openly and transparently.
2. Utilize professional mediation or conflict resolution training.
3. Promote team cohesion through team-building activities.
4. Other (Please specify in the comments.)



4

STEPS TO IMPROVED  
INTERGENERATIONAL  
COMMUNICATION

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS

*“When the leadership in an organization see and focus on the differences, they widen the gap. When the leadership see the possibilities for success at the intersection of talents, the gap disappears.”*

Kate Nasser

## Step 1 - Respect

- Define what it means to team members.
- Focus on character, not characteristics; address behaviors, not individuals.
- Emphasize talent irrespective of age.

## Step 2: Interdependence & Shared Purpose

- Use reverse mentoring.
- Ask good questions.
- Listen to learn.
- Round table as much as possible.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC**  
**NONPROFITS**

## Step 3 - Staff-Codified Communication Policy

- How, why, and when do we communicate?
- What tools are used?
- What topics should always be saved for face to face?

## Step 4 - Mission Centrism

- What's your team's why?
- Make a habit of asking, "Does this advance the mission?" when communicating.
- Psychological meaningfulness

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC**  
**NONPROFITS**

Questions?

**POLL: In one word, what do  
you think is the secret to  
healthy intergenerational  
communication?**

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS**

- Just 28% of employers provide training programs addressing generational differences and age discrimination.
- 23% offer reverse or mutual mentorship initiatives.
- 23% provide internships for those starting their careers.
- 23% offer internships for individuals rejoining the workforce.
- 21% support tuition reimbursement for ongoing education.
- Only 19% have multigenerational employee resource groups.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

**NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS**



THE SECRET TO HARMONIOUS  
INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION  
IS CULTURE.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933

[info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Ageism in the nonprofit workplace is just as harmful as racism and sexism.
- Consciously cultivating healthy culture and communication increases and enhances staff satisfaction, retention, and professional development.
- Healthy intergenerational communication starts at the top because leadership sets (and nurtures) the culture.
- Nonprofits with healthy multigenerational communication benefit from the talents and experiences of ALL staff, not just the most experienced or outspoken.

Get in touch: 404.790.2933    [info@nontoxicnonprofits.com](mailto:info@nontoxicnonprofits.com)

NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS

**NONTOXIC  
NONPROFITS**