



Expand your business development team; Co-opt the talents of every generation!

By Anne Scarlett, printed in *RainToday* and *PSMJ's Rainmaker*

As business development professionals, we constantly beat the drum: *'Everyone is a marketer!'* We hope that each staff member will then magically step up and contribute to the firm's overall sales and growth. Oh, and this is on top of their existing responsibilities, that, incidentally, they are measured upon.

One surefire way to increase results from your 'expanded marketing team' is to measure everyone formally— during performance reviews— on their business development contributions. In addition, though, it's up to business development leaders to help staff find their way in terms of contributing to firm growth. How can we help them help to us?

- 1. Have clarity on your needs.** Create a master list of specific marketing and business development tasks, so that you can readily assign real projects to individuals at any given moment.
- 2. Match specific projects/tasks with skill sets.** Conduct individual interviews with each staff member to get a feel for their interests and their hidden talents. (Did you know...your mid-level manager takes journalistic-style photos as a hobby, and would be perfect to document the firm's interactive design process? Your junior engineer has a passion for videography, and would be a great resource to establish parameters for video podcasts? Your human resources director's creative outlet is to write poetry, and would very much enjoy creating descriptions for project award submissions and web content?)
- 3. Consider the generational preferences of each individual.** There's something to be said for stereotypes of the three generations that are currently in the workforce: Baby Boomers (1946-64); Generation X (1965-76); Generation Y, aka Millennial (1977-present). Without clarity on generational tendencies, you may try to force a square peg into a round hole. Let's face it; in this lean economy, there's no room for that sort of mistake!

This article focuses on **#3**. Generational frameworks play a role in determining highest and best use of staff talent from business development and marketing perspectives. There is research galore around the subject of motivating and managing a multi-generational workforce. I do not proclaim to be an expert; however, I have interpreted the data to determine what would work best in the AEC marketing and business development environment.

NOTE: None of these are steadfast frameworks, but they are most certainly guidelines. For example, even though I personally fall squarely into the 'Gen X' category, a couple of my personal preferences are boomer-esque.

Keep in mind, it's not that some generations work harder than others. Instead, it's that our needs, priorities and preferences differ greatly.

XERS SPECIFICALLY NEED:

- **Recognition in response to their individual personal preferences** (similar to Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages concept).

- **Collaboration, teamwork, dialogue.**

YERS SPECIFICALLY NEED:

- **Change and challenge.** They will have an average of five careers (not just jobs) in their lifetime, and may stay only as long as 2-3 years unless you are able to allow them movement within the organization (or with partner firms).
- **Ability to voice issues without fear.** (It's unpleasant for some of us to digest the venting of others, but it does help them to get it out in the open. The good news is that these same people are willing to make/execute/plan for change...not just sit around and complain.)

COMMON NEEDS FOR BOTH GEN X AND GEN Y:

- **Explanations as to the 'why'** behind a project or a direction.
- **Inclusion on the company's bigger picture**, regardless of whether it affects them directly.
- **Aura of 'fun', not 'grind'**, when it comes to both the work environment and the work itself.
- **Flexibility** (where and when the work gets done) to accommodate family needs, extra curricular activities, wellness, etc, in order to accommodate their very full, robust, well-rounded lives. (Believe me, the happier their overall lives, the better employees they make!)

FINALLY, LESS OF A MYSTERY TO MOST, THE BOOMERS SPECIFICALLY NEED:

- **Position, power and prestige.** Respect, with titles that reflect authority and responsibility.
- **Ability to stay connected with peer groups;** enjoy working on projects with others whom they can relate.
- **Longer-term commitment**, with security in terms of salary, perks/benefits.

What are the common threads throughout these generations? And how can you, as a Business Development Director, not only leverage— but also satisfy— these various preferences? Well, the Boomers are the most straightforward in terms of motivation. But as for those mysterious X and Yers try these things:

1. **Provide options.** Contributing to business development should not be an option—however, they should actively participate in determining how and what they contribute.
2. **Share the plan of action.** Take the extra time to explain why. Those that really want to know will tune in; those that don't, won't. A few years ago, one of my consulting projects included mentoring a marketing coordinator. Because I am myself am a 'why' person, I automatically shared the logic behind virtually every action within the firm's sales and marketing efforts. I had no idea that this mentee would so willingly gobble up these details, nor did I expect her to dramatically increase her performance and contributions. But she did. To this day, she still reiterates how that level of openness made her work— and our bigger efforts— so much more meaningful and real.
3. **Scope out networking opportunities that might be considered fun.** Visibility counts as a lighter— but still valid— version of networking. Why not encourage (and provide time for) special visibility events that will allow staff to have their fun, while also raising awareness of your firm? (For example, Chicago has an impressive number of opportunities for AE firms to compete in fundraiser design competitions. Great causes; great team-building).
4. **Be open-minded and flexible toward all contributions.** I worked with someone who was an exceptional researcher,

but alas, she did not enjoy research projects. It was her least favorite activity, though she excelled far above the rest of us in that regard. Here is where you may have to compromise, figuring out a way to transfer her research techniques to another person, while also giving her the chance to explore other potential contributions.

5. Never force 'fun'. Even though you may have the best intentions, staff will see right through 'campy', faux fun attempts, and will be turned off.

6. Include some spontaneity and surprise within the firm's activities. If you hold regular department meetings, for example, tell surprisingly blunt marketing stories; show cartoons that depict botched sales attempts; hold contests for next-best-mailer concept; etc.

7. Shout-out about successes, and attempts-at-success (great efforts) too! Do it liberally, and with sincerity, for both professional and personal achievements.

8. Show your respect for their lives beyond the firm. Let them leave early or start late now and then...as a celebratory gesture for a new project win, a holiday, or no particular reason whatsoever!

Within reason, err on the side of 'optional'. Let them show you what they're made of, based upon the options they choose. If they choose to learn more about the firm's marketing strategy, good sign. If they choose to get involved in the pre-selected 'fun stuff', then they will be visible ambassadors without even realizing it. If they choose to train towards a new skill set in which they can then contribute to marketing/sales, then that's better than nothing. Again, contributing to the marketing and sales efforts should not be an option. However, the method in which they do so can be a collaborative, mutually-beneficial decision that will keep all staff— aka all generations— engaged.