

I have always been interested in how group dynamics operate in the work environment and I am acutely aware of how a good, cohesive team can make all the difference to a happy and productive workforce and how a friction-filled department is the kiss of death. Consequently, I rashly volunteered to give a talk at Congress on working with a multi-generational workforce, so I have been doing some research and wow – no wonder there are misunderstandings!

Our laboratory teams are somewhat like an extended family and, like our families, they invariably span a couple of generations and are similarly prone to the occasional inter-generational irritations and frustrations. The average laboratory will usually comprise some in the early phase of their career, some well-established and some nearer the end with experience of a whole working life carried with them. So far so good, but it is not that simple; it is barely possible to open a newspaper (sorry, a dead giveaway of my generational position) without hearing about “snowflakes”, millennials or Generation Z.

Generations are not simply a measurement of human lifespan, they are the collective characteristics of a group of people born around the same time, around the same place, who have been shaped by similar influences or experiences; they share similar values, attitudes and communications and it is so illuminating. Our so-called Generation Y

A NEW GENERATION



IBMS Deputy Chief Executive Sarah May looks to the future with optimism.

(millennials) and Generation Z bring so much that is positive but are also very different from Generation X and the baby boomers before them.

Hierarchical rigidity and formality is being replaced by greater informality, flexibility and tolerance. The impact of recession and national debt has shaped a generation that is entrepreneurial, has high expectations, is big on individuality and is more global in their thinking than any previous generation. Millennials will respect authority ONLY when that respect has been earned – something that can be an issue for boomers and Generation X. And, whereas the boomer workforce may have been happy to work extra shifts or sessions, millennials expect a better work:life balance than previous generations – after all, they will have to work for a lot longer before they will be able to retire.

I am looking forward to Generation Z building the future; they are collaborative and like working in teams, they are multi-taskers that are used to a world with constant noise and stimulation. The big challenge to our trainers and managers is that these people need to be challenged, they want to grow and they want to make a difference. These are the people who are now entering our laboratories and seeking registration to become the people who will eventually care for us when we change from professional to patient. I think that we will be just fine.

Sarah May
Deputy Chief Executive



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