

Generation X Giving

Generation X is a term used to describe generations in the US born between the approximate years of 1965 to 1981. A lot of churches are active in seeking to fill their worship centers with this 20-something and 30-something group. Doing so is no easy task and if you have some level of success then the next step is getting them to give to your missions, vision or cause.

The Gen X group has some interesting traits and I hope the following will help you tap into this incredible resource.

First of all, Gen Xers love collaboration, group work and will almost always want to negotiate everything. This comes from their constant asking the “why” questions and leaving other generational groups worried with the “what, where and when.” Face to face meetings is their preference and long planning sessions seem a waste of time. Tell me what you want, answer my why question and let me get on with the task, because time is my most valuable resource. When it comes to philanthropy the Gen Xers have some issues. It’s not unwillingness; it is simply the fact that they possess about 2 times as much debt as their previous generation of Baby Boomers of the same age. Another study by David Stillman, coauthor of *When Generations Collide*, says that Gen Xers may be giving less, simply because they have not been asked. He goes on to state that the No. 1 reason people give is because they’re asked. So we might conclude, my asking skills to this generation are lousy or I just don’t get their thought process or am I forgetting to ask my Gen Xers to give. Generation X has its fair share of millionaires and recent studies show that they are giving nearly twice as much to charity on average compared to older generations. So what do we need to do to connect with the Gen Xers of our churches so that they become the next generations of exceptional givers.

1. Trust them.
2. Invite them to participate, don’t push, but pull.
3. Provide access to information and resources. Remember this is the generation of the why question. They have inquiring minds.
4. Understand, they may have different ideas on how to give. If time is considered their most valuable resource, then we need to tap into their timeline before we can tap into their giving practices
5. They like to volunteer. Remember, community involvement is a key part of their “belonging” spirit. Take deliberate steps to create programs and opportunities aimed at their interest and values.
6. You must articulate the mission and purpose of your ministry to Gen Xers so they can incorporate the organization goals into their own life strategies.

7. They love action, not talk and Gen Xers are attracted to work and programs that directly reward personal initiative.

8. Take time to listen, stop the lecture, Gen Xers want to interact, share, become part of the story, bring their talent or gift to the table, to be seen and heard.

9. Recognize and appreciate. Reward the results of their efforts, involvement, giving in a timely, specific way. They love the “personal note or email” that is specific to them and their participation.

10. Make the work, or the ministry fun. Fostering a spirit of fun in the organization will improve their morale and increase their productivity which increases involvement, buy in and excites giving.

With proper guidance your Generation X congregation can become the empowered, faith-filled, dynamic stewards that we need to see the church survive ~ and thrive.

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