



Gamification Code:

MESSAGE



Generations on Trial

Gen Z vs Boomers

If you really, really have to work with one of these generations, which one would you choose?



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FICPI Conference

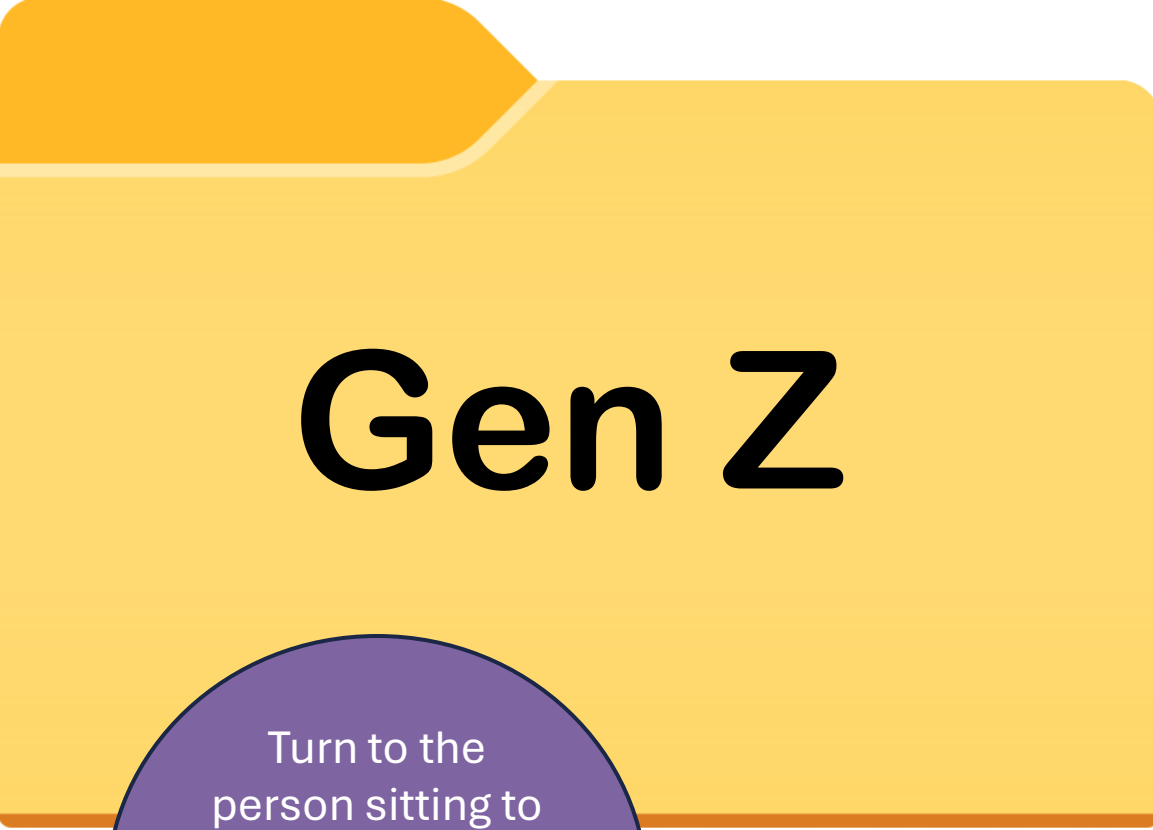
Generations on Trial

Global Perspectives in the Workplace

Susan Crawford
Founder and Director
Vicissitude



If you absolutely had to choose...

A large yellow folder icon with a tab on the top left, representing Gen Z.

Gen Z

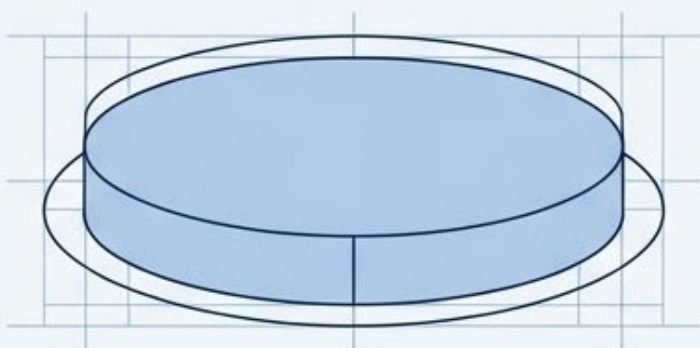
Turn to the
person sitting to
next to you.
*Who would you
prefer to work
with?*

A large gray folder icon with a tab on the top left, representing Boomers.

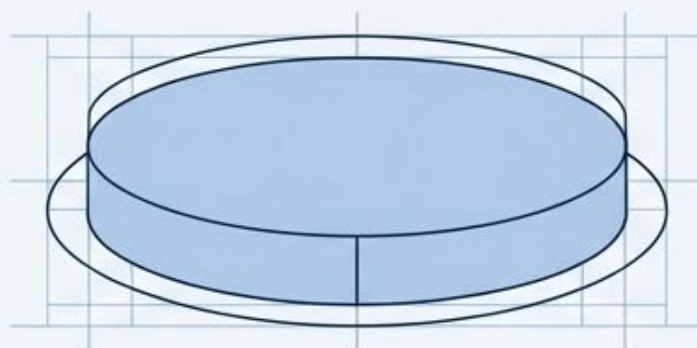
Boomers

60 seconds. Choose one. Justify it.

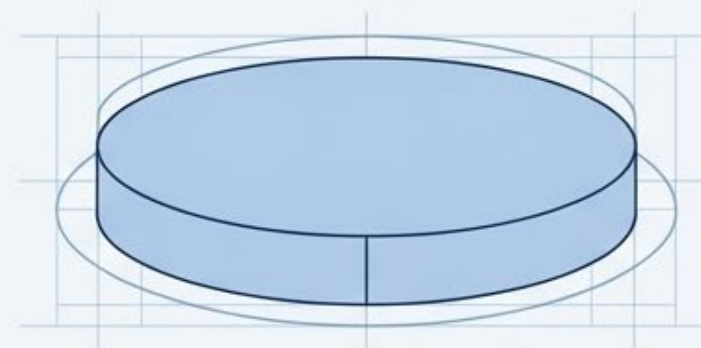
The Verdict



The Gen Z
Choice



The Boomer
Choice



The 'Avoided
Answering' Choice

Our Stories about these Generations...

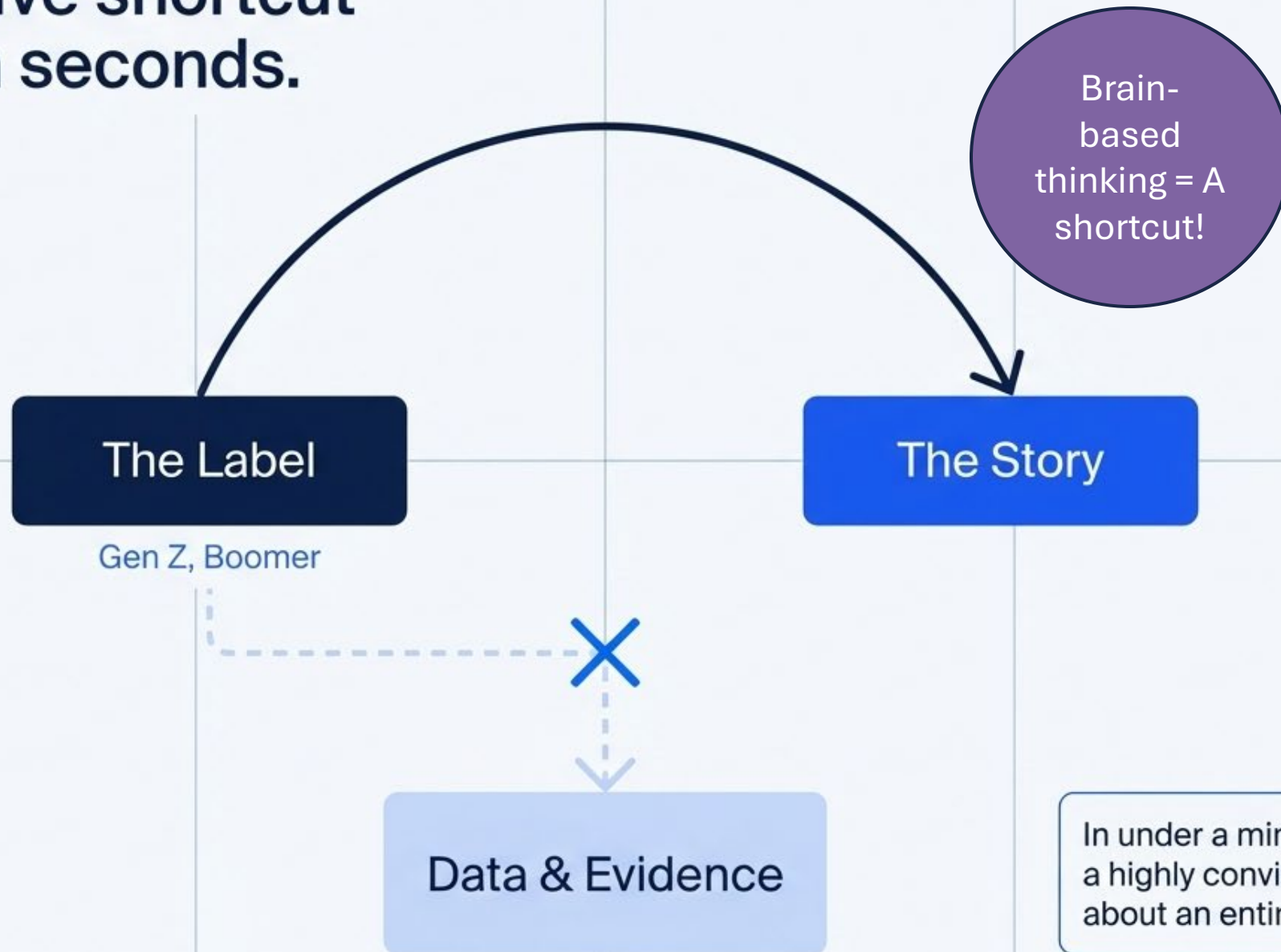
Gen Z

- Purpose driven
- Tech savvy
- Boundary setting
- Demanding
- Work to live

Boomers

- Hardworking
- Loyal
- Comfortable with hierarchy
- Resistant to change
- Live to work

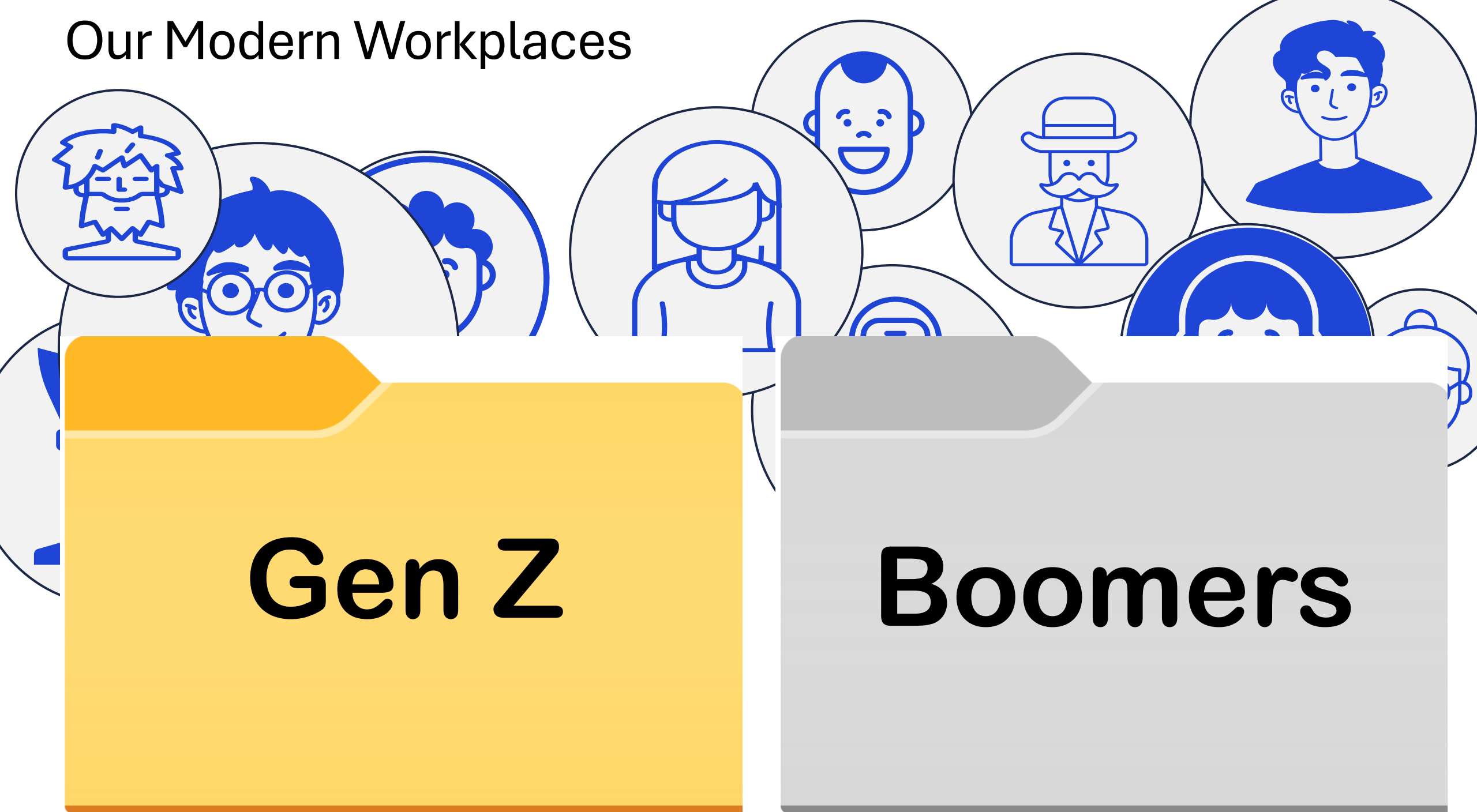
The cognitive shortcut happens in seconds.





We receive approximately 11 million bits every moment!

Our Modern Workplaces



Gen Z

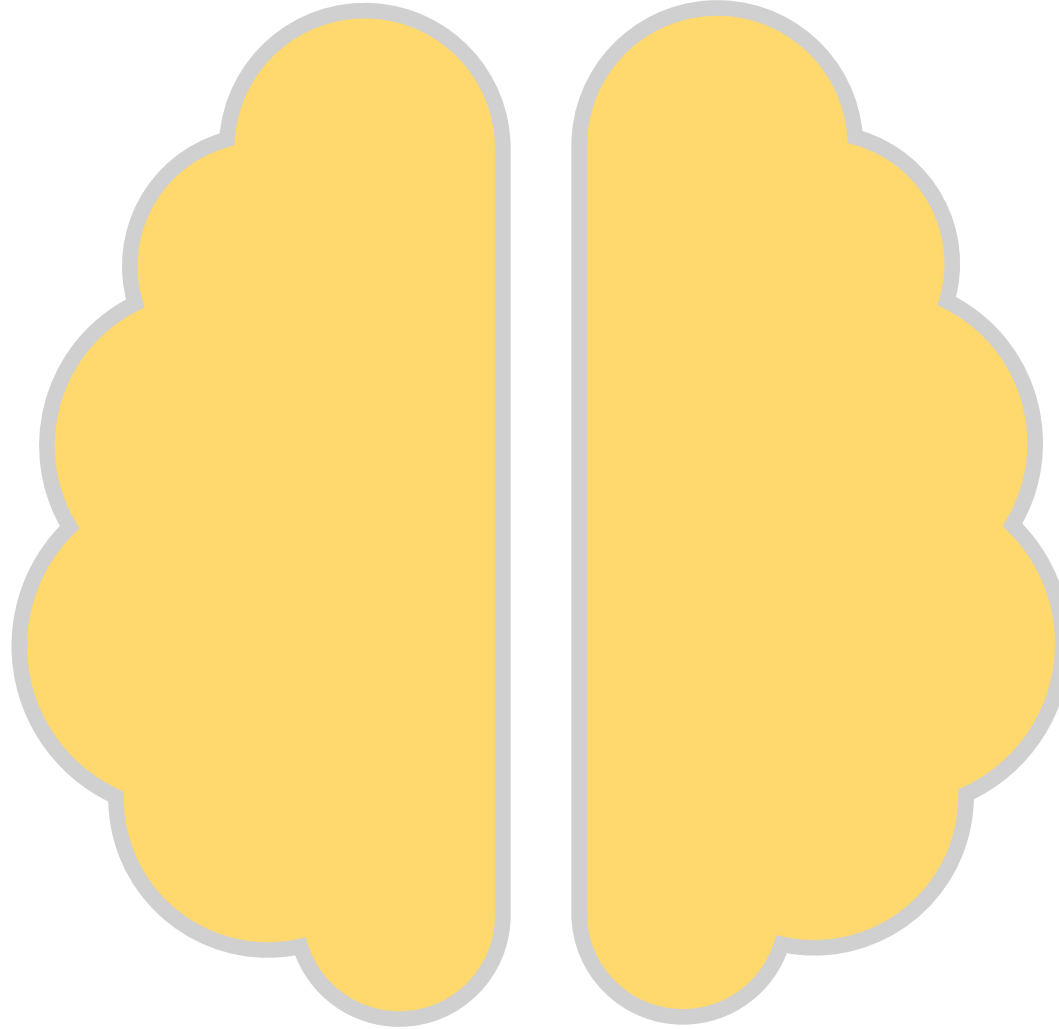
Boomers

The Neuroscience: System 1 vs. System 2 Thinking

System 1 Thinking

is characterised by:

- decision-making that requires relatively low conscious effort
- an automated mode of thinking – a “gut feeling”
- pattern matching based on experiences



System 2 Thinking

is characterised by:

- conscious effort and processing decisions carefully
- a slower and more cognitively demanding - “rational” mind
- a combination of logical judgement and mental search for additional information

Source: Kahneman (2011); Stanovich & West (2000)



Generational labels compress
human complexity into
something easier to carry...

Generational Theory



COHORT

People who come of age during the same period experience some of the same major events.



IMPRINT

Those shared experiences can leave an imprint that influences how we see the world.



TENDENCY

Patterns may emerge across groups.



TENDENCY



DESTINY

We are more than the period we were born into.

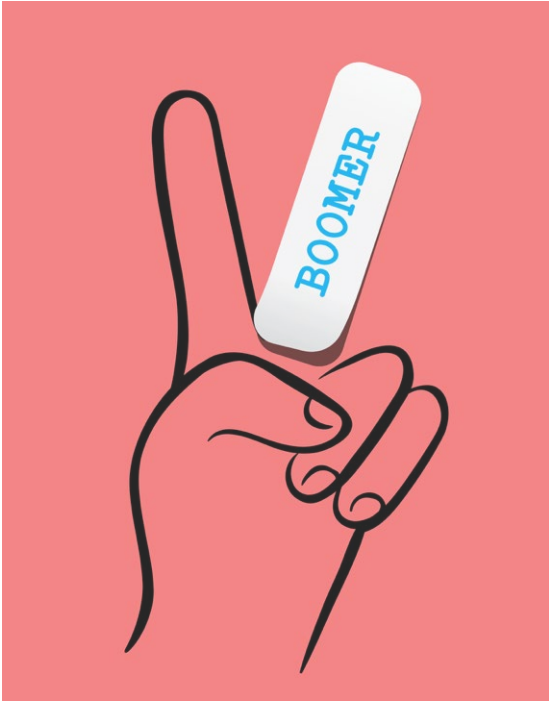
*Shared experiences can leave an **imprint**,
but an imprint isn't an **instruction manual**.*

Generation can be **one** useful lens.



It is rarely the **whole** explanation.

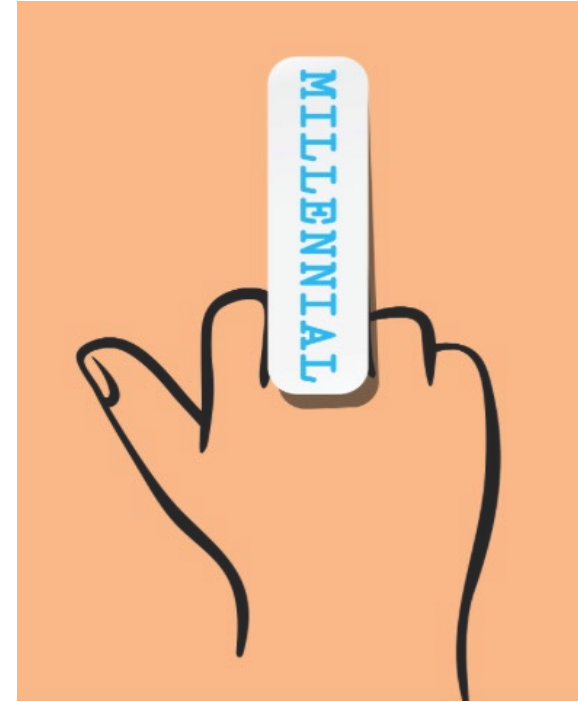
The Workplace Generations...Your 'Handy' Reference Guide



- Post-war optimism meets Vietnam, nuclear anxiety and the Space Race.
- The first TV generation, and perhaps the last to trust institutions.
- Driven by hard work, progress and the promise of a better future.



- The fall of the Berlin Wall, apartheid's end, globalisation and MTV.
- This was the latchkey generation, the first with personal computers and an increasingly diverse, disrupted world.



- Terrorism, the GFC, expanding diversity and opportunity.
- Raised on “you can be anything,”
- They questioned traditional ideas about work and success.
- Gen Y became Gen “Why?”



- Smartphones, social media, gaming and COVID-era learning.
- Shaped by #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, greater diversity and “fake news.”
- Digitally immersed, accustomed fact checking what they’re told

The key 'traits' of each generation?

Generation	Key Traits	Workplace Strength	Potential Friction
Traditionalists Before 1946	Suffer in silence, duty-bound, respect authority	Dependability, discipline, professionalism	May resist collaboration, value tenure over talent
Boomers 1946 - 1964	Loyal, competitive, hierarchical	Institutional memory, relationship-building	May resist tech or flexible work
Gen X 1965 - 1980	Independent, adaptable, skeptical	Pragmatic leadership, mentorship	Can be overlooked or "sandwiched"
Millennials 1981 - 1996	Collaborative, purpose-driven, tech-savvy	Innovation, inclusivity, cultural change	Seen as entitled or overly idealistic
Gen Z 1997 - 2012	Activist-minded, digitally fluent, values-led	Fresh thinking, early tech adoption	Perceived as fragile or overly boundary-driven

Generational labels
=
Useful shortcuts
or
dangerous
certainties?





Generational labels
compress human
complexity into
something easier to
carry...



But how helpful are
they when
responding to our
current workplace
tensions?

Three current workplace tensions

1. Evolution:

- *How do we preserve what matters while adapting to what comes next?*

2. Voice:

- *How do we respect expertise while making it safe to challenge?*

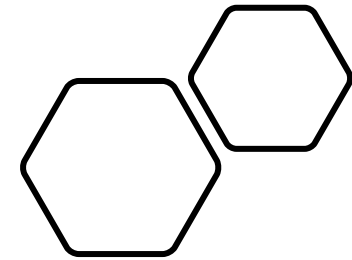
3. Success:

- *How do we sustain excellence as expectations of work change?*



Happy Mother's Day

**If you can't be a
good example, then just
be a terrible warning.**



The "success"
tension is
personal for me!

The Evidence

Exploring the Evidence

Introducing our multigenerational, cross-cultural panel.



Our Panel

Global perspectives from Intellectual Property leaders.



**Dr Ronelle
Geldenhuys**

Principal, Jones
Maxwell Smith &
Davis. ICT Patent
Attorney



Nidhi Anand

Partner, Chadha &
Chadha.
Biotechnology · Life
Sciences · Firm
Leadership.



Yoon Suk Shin

Managing Partner,
Lee International IP
& Law Group. Life
Sciences · Patent
Litigation.



**Dr Tarso
Mesquita
Machado**

Partner, Kasznar
Leonardos. Patents ·
Electronics · AI &
Automation.



Ingrid Sjöberg

Senior Associate,
AWA Sweden.
European Patent
Attorney · Applied
Physics.



So, what did we hear?

- Patterns exist.
- Generational experiences can matter.
- But context changes the story.
- Culture changes meaning.
- Life stage matters.
- Individuals exceed categories.

Leadership

The Global Leader's Path

Moving beyond the generational shortcut to skillful leadership.





So, what does this mean for us, as skillful global leaders?

1. CATCH THE SHORTCUT

What assumption am I making?

2. GET CURIOUS

What else might explain what I'm seeing?

3. MAKE IT EXPLICIT

Have we actually talked about what we each expect?

1. Catch the shortcut

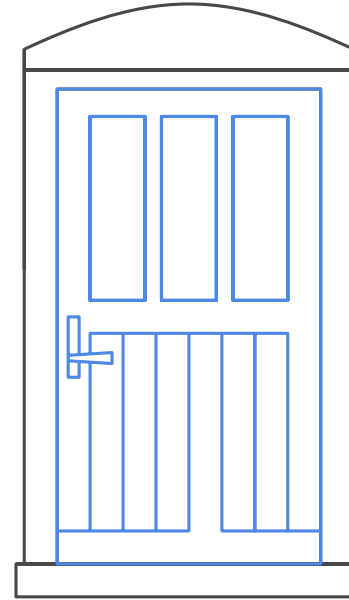
Where it matters, we can pull ourselves out of cognitive shortcuts by pausing to deliberately engage Type 2 Brain functioning by:

- asking one more question before concluding
- testing assumptions aloud
- separating observation from interpretation.



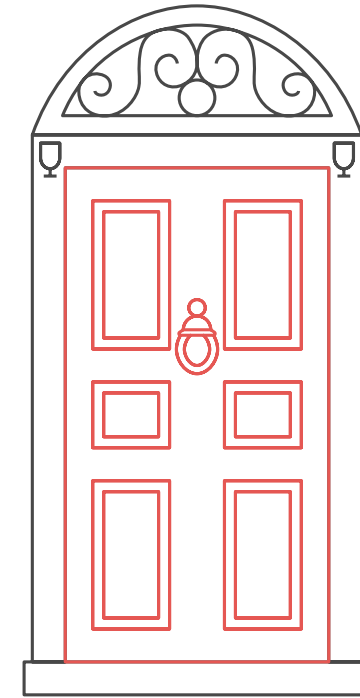
What is the reason behind a worker's behaviour?

Example: You might pause when tempted to make an assumption that a younger worker is not committed to the work because they want to leave at exactly 5pm...no matter what!



Wellbeing Strategy

The worker leaves at 5pm to maintain wellbeing, enhancing productivity.



Lack of Commitment

The worker leaves at 5pm due to a lack of dedication.

2. Get curious

Consider,
what else
might be
shaping this
behaviour?:

career stage?

confidence?

culture?

role clarity?

workload?

psychological safety?

status?

uncertainty?



Example: The worker who leaves at 5pm makes it a priority to be at home for a walk before dinner. They see this as an essential wellbeing strategy that helps them be more productive at work. Or they might have a young child that they want to be home in time for bedtime for...

3. Make it explicit



Leaders can:

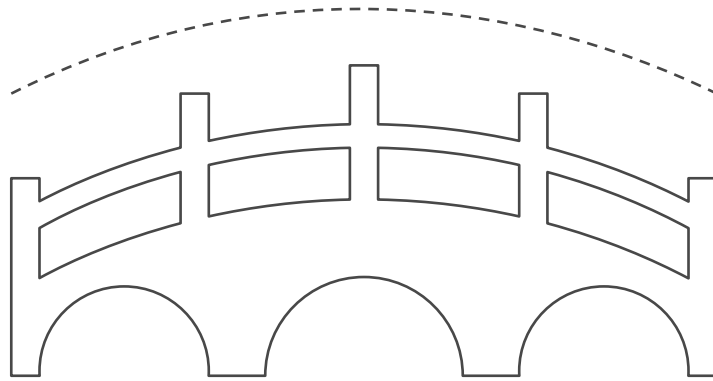
- Explicitly discuss workplace norms
- Invite different preferences into the open by asking questions:
“How do you prefer your feedback to be provided?”

Discuss Workplace Norms



Interpretive Gap

Unclear norms
cause
misunderstandings.



Clear Norms

Reduced
misunderstandings
foster collaboration.

Invite implicit expectations into the open to reduce the interpretive gap.

- Communication – "Don't email the partner directly" or "If it's urgent, call me."
- Hierarchy – "Stay until the senior person leaves" or "Don't ask a question you could work out yourself."
- Ownership – Defining what "ownership" and "finished work" actually mean.

Example: You might say, I understand that you like to go for an evening walk, which is why you leave at 5pm. That's great, but the reality of this work is there may be some days where a client matter requires urgent attention even though it is 5pm. How do you suggest we manage that?

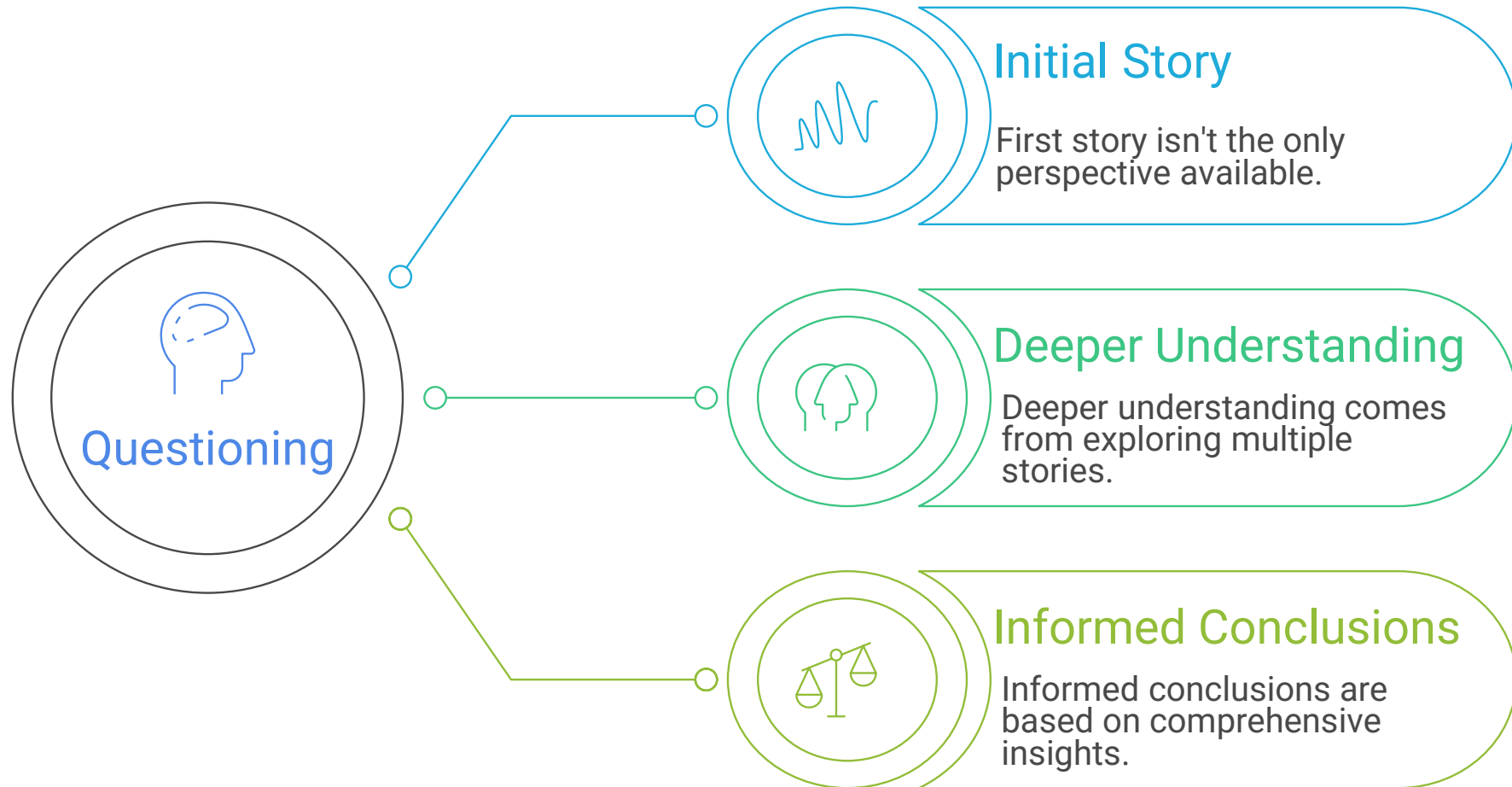


To complete our session today- turn to your Elbow Buddy once more to discuss...

- *What did you hear today that will translate into a behavioural shift for you?*

Ask One More Question...

Before you reach your next conclusion, pause and ask.



Thank You

- To my wonderful panel
- To you the audience



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Enjoy the conference!

Susan Crawford
Director

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vi·cis·si·tude: (*noun*)
*Change or variation in
circumstances or fortune;
mutability in life or nature.*





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STRENGTHENING THE PRACTICE OF THE INDEPENDENT IP ATTORNEY

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