

# CRACKING THE CODE TO MULTIGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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# INTRODUCTION

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## EVOLUTION IS NOT YOUR CHOICE...

Today, the only constant is change. Our workforces are quickly evolving into multi-generational layers, each with their own communication preferences...

A social move towards healthier lifestyles means people are living longer and the resultant retirement policies meaning many people face working to the pension age of 68.

Business leaders now face a unique challenge - establishing and supporting harmonious communication across a wide range of generations.

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WE'RE NOW FACING A WORKPLACE WHERE IN THEORY, MANY EMPLOYERS COULD HAVE EMPLOYEES RANGING FROM 18 TO 80 IN THE WORKPLACE. THIS HAS HUGE IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYERS IN TERMS OF MANAGING THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF MILLENNIALS, GENERATION X AND THE BABY BOOMERS.

KAREN HIGGINBOTTOM, FORBES

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## THE BENEFITS OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE...

The landscape of your workplace might be changing, but workplace diversity (in all its forms) is not a bad thing...

Here at Eyeful, we see the benefits daily. Like many organisations, our senior leadership team comprises of Simon and Rob, two Generation X's, who bring with them a wealth of business experience and presentation acumen.

Our mid-management team is dominated by Millennials who impart their own experiences and viewpoints to the direction of the business.

It works both ways. Millennials are able to pass on digital skills to their older Boomer and Generation X colleagues. There is a notable role reversal of traditional training with obvious benefits.

While diversity in the workplace is clearly a good thing, it does bring its own set of unique challenges, especially when it comes to communication.

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THE DIVERSITY OF AGE, OPINION AND PERSPECTIVE IN OUR MANAGEMENT MEETINGS, ENSURES MY OUTLOOK REMAINS WELL ROUNDED AND, AS A GROUP, WE MAKE BETTER BUSINESS DECISIONS. I ALSO BENEFIT FROM A YOUNGER MINDSET, WHILE THE MILLENNIALS IN THE MANAGEMENT TEAM ARE LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF THE OLDER GENERATION SAT AROUND THE TABLE.

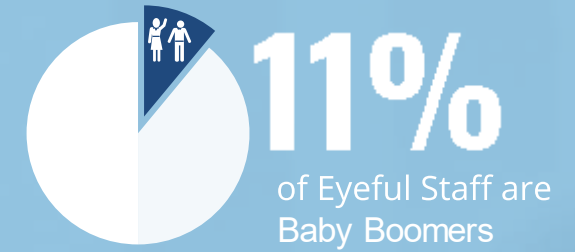
SIMON MORTON, CEO, EYEFUL PRESENTATIONS

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# THE BABY BOOMERS: 1946-1964

## THE LANDLINE GENERATION



### THE MULTIGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION CONUNDRUM...

Ensuring your message is heard by colleagues and prospects alike has never been the easiest of things – but in today’s business landscape, part of the issue could lie in the generational differences.

Postwar born Baby Boomers possess strong interpersonal communication skills because, for a large part of their early lives, technology was limited to 3 ways of communicating – face-to-face, phone or the written word. These predominantly personal ways of communicating lead to strong leadership and people management skills.

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GENERALLY SPEAKING, BABY BOOMERS TEND TO PREFER FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION OR PHONE CONVERSATIONS OVER EMAIL, SINCE THEY ADAPTED TO ONLINE COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY LATER IN THEIR LIFETIME.

MEDIUM.COM

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# GENERATION X: 1965-1979

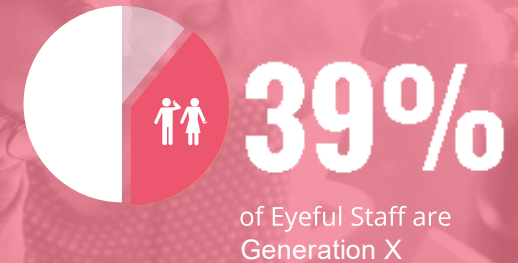
## THE INTERNET PIONEERS

Like the Baby Boomers before them, this generation grew up in a relatively slow paced tech world.

This was all to change when communication exploded with the arrival of the internet during Generation X's adulthood.

They were the first generation to become truly e-connected. With personal disconnection now an option, this generation flourished with email comms but has typically shied away from the live face-to-face contact of old.

This means they are sometimes viewed as less team orientated.



**BOOMERS DON'T UNDERSTAND THE INTERNET AND MILLENNIALS WERE RAISED ON IT. GENERATION X CREATED IT. WE STRIPPED OFF AND DOVE INTO THE GLITTERING WATERS OF THIS BRAND-NEW THING, AND MADE IT WHAT IT IS TODAY. WE HAD A DOT-COM BOOM (AND A COUPLE OF BUSTS), WE TOOK THOSE PROGRESSIVE LATE-BOOMERS BILL GATES AND STEVE JOBS UNDER OUR WING AND SHOWED THEM WHAT WE COULD DO WITH THEIR STUFF.**

DAVID BARNETT, THE INDEPENDENT





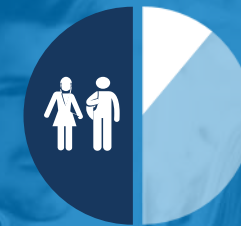
# MILLENNIALS: 1980-2000

## THE TXT GENERATION

When it comes to communication, they are the 'txt generation', and by that, we don't mean SMS. This generation believes in social sharing and group instant messaging via apps such as WhatsApp - even for work communication.

Ultimately, each of us need to appreciate the different generations in our working world. We are all a product of the ways in which we were taught.

Millennials need to appreciate the fact that the Baby Boomers and older Generation X's were taught that it was acceptable to stand and talk at people in presentations. When this form of business communication was prevalent, audiences were in tune with politely listening and taking the information on-board.



**50%**  
of Eyeful Staff are  
Millennials



**THIS IS A GENERATION THAT WRITES ALMOST NONSTOP - BUT MOST COMMUNICATION IS THROUGH TEXTING. WE'RE NOT LIKELY TO SEE FUTURE WORKPLACES WITH LONGFORM WRITING. THE TREND IS TOWARD PRESENTATIONS AND SLIDES, AND WE DON'T SEE ANY SIGN OF THAT SLOWING DOWN.**

MIRO KAZAKOFF, MIT SLOAN LECTURER



Equally, if those Millennials in the audience switch off, the Baby Boomer or Generation X presenter needs to forgive them. The Millennial audiences of today are not used to sitting for long-periods of time and being talked at. They want to be engaged and involved in communication – otherwise, they swiftly move onto the next thing.

This situation isn't anyone's fault, it's simply the world in which we now work...



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MILLENNIALS SENDS TEXT MESSAGES, TWEETS AND INSTANT MESSAGES TO COMMUNICATE, WHILE BABY BOOMERS AND OLDER GEN XERS TEND TO PREFER PHONE CALLS AND EMAILS. THROW IN THAT YOUNGER WORKERS TEND TO USE ABBREVIATIONS, INFORMAL LANGUAGE AND COLLOQUIALISMS, AND YOU'VE GOT A RECIPE FOR SERIOUS COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS.

SHANNON GAUSEPOHL IN BUSINESS NEWS DAILY

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## ARE PRESENTATIONS PART OF THE PROBLEM, OR THE SECRET SOLUTION?

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Depending on how you deliver them, they could be either.

Traditional “Death By PowerPoint” presentations were set up to deliver information in a way that Baby Boomers prefer to take onboard. They are delivered live to an audience whose role is to sit quietly, take the odd note and listen attentively, as the presenter clicks through a linear presentation from slide 1 through to the end (of time).

Communication has evolved. The ‘phone call’ app on smartphones is now one of the least used forms of communication on the device. If the majority of business audiences don’t even enjoy speaking on the phone, it’s really no wonder that the term “Death By PowerPoint” has become ubiquitous. Unfortunately, many business presentations are dry, poorly constructed bullet point presentations that are not engaging – no matter what generation you are.

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DATA VISUALIZATION IS THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE. STUDENTS ALSO RANKED DATA VISUALIZATION NEAR THE TOP OF SKILLS UPON WHICH THEY’D LIKE TO IMPROVE. WRITING AND SPEAKING ARE IMPORTANT, BUT VISUAL COMMUNICATION - CONVEYING IDEAS IN PICTURES, NOT MERELY WORDS - IS ALSO ESSENTIAL.

KARA BASKIN, MIT

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**Audiences have evolved and its high time presentations and communication strategies, in general, followed suit.**

A quiet revolution in the world of presentations is emerging. Video is becoming more and more prominent as corporates recognise the impact it has across all forms of business communication.

Throw social media images and clips, infographics and live streams into the mix and you have a variety of ways to get your message to your diverse audience.

# HOWEVER, IT ALL STARTS WITH YOUR AUDIENCE, NOT YOUR OUTPUT

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All forms of communication (presentation or otherwise) should start by considering what key messages will convince your intended audience into following your desired action.

Be warned - crafting a message and a story that can resonate across a range of generations is tough.

Once you have clearly defined your compelling message, only then should you consider how to communicate it to your audience.

In the majority of cases, the gravitas of the message seems to determine its delivery method, but this is illogical.

By focussing on your audience, you will realise a simple truth - your media output(s) of choice should be solely determined by what will resonate most effectively with them.

Let us clarify. We are not suggesting you try to analyse every single member of a large audience. The idea is simpler than this.



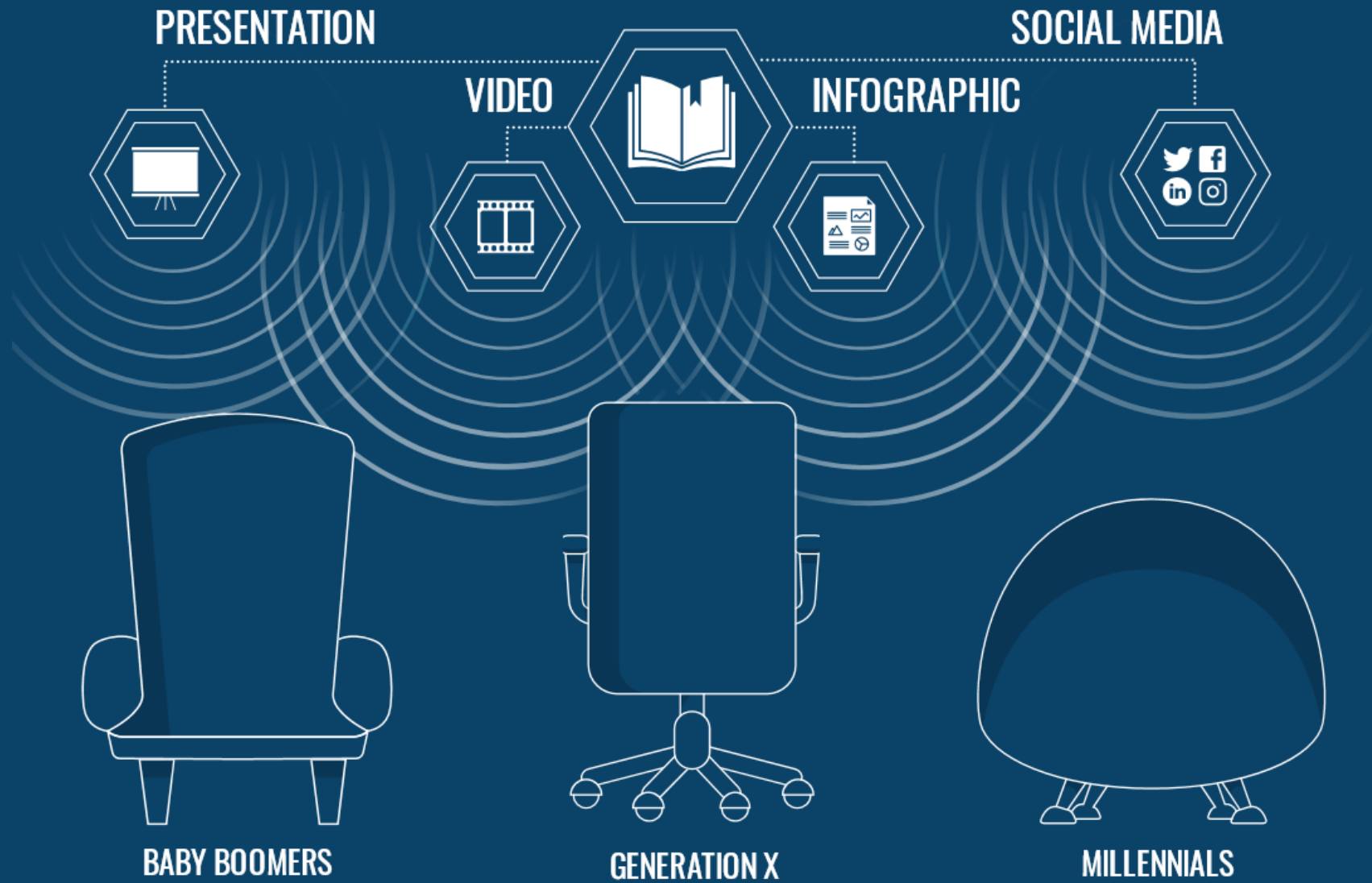
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**DON'T FALL INTO THE TRAP OF MAKING YOUR PRESENTATION CONTENT SO GENERIC THAT NO ONE IS OFFENDED OR FEELS LEFT OUT. THIS IS LIKE MAKING AN ACTION MOVIE BUT CUTTING OUT THE EXCITING BITS TO ENSURE IT GETS A PG CERTIFICATE. IN SHORT, IT'S A TERRIBLE IDEA.**

**SIMON MORTON, CEO, EYEFUL PRESENTATIONS**

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# IT STARTS WITH A STRONG STORY





# MULTI-GENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN ACTION

A recent communication project we ran for a large multinational corporation is a perfect example of this in action. They recognised the multiple generations in their audience and wanted Eyeful to plan an approach that would resonate with the whole audience...



## STEP 1: IT STARTED WITH A STRONG STORY...

The project started with a detailed research project into the external C-Suite target audience, who ranged from Millennials right through to Baby Boomers. With this in mind, Eyeful's Presentation Optimisation™ process was implemented to help craft a compelling presentation story that would resonate across all generations in this high-level audience.



## STEP 2: THIS BECAME AN EXCITING EVENT PRESENTATION...

This story was turned into a visually powerful PowerPoint presentation to be delivered at high-level formal corporate events. This approach connected with the Baby Boomers and any other personality type that appreciate live face-to-face formal communication.



## STEP 3: THE STORY WAS THEN COMMITTED TO FILM...

The presentation's powerful messaging and story were turned into high-quality motion graphics, with a voiceover, bringing the story to life as a short, snappy video. The video was then shared internally on the organisation's intranet site to showcase best practice in presentation delivery.



## STEP 4: RETOLD AS AN INFOGRAPHIC...

The story and graphics then formed the structure of a highly designed infographic. This was shared as part of a successful external email marketing campaign, garnering high click-through rates from the Generation X members of the audience. This approach meant they were able to view/read/absorb in their own time and in a format which resonated better with them.



## STEP 5: BROKEN INTO 30 SECOND SOUND BITES...

The key elements of the infographic were repurposed into short, highly focussed soundbites designed to be easily absorbed and understood in under 30 seconds. These soundbites were shared on all social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. They generated huge mobile interaction figures with the Millennial members of the C-Suite audience.



## STEP 6: DELIVER IT WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH

Putting personalised video in the hands of the intended audience - Eyeful Lens

Sadly, this project example is not typical of most communication projects; most start and finish at Step 2, with the story ending its days gathering dust on a server, never to see the light of day again.

This project provides an example of an organisation that takes pride in its presentations and wider communications, and duly reaped the rewards that this approach delivers...

Their C-Suite target audience was made up of every generation: Baby Boomer CEOs in charge of long-standing multinationals; Generation X senior management and some of the world's most successful and prominent Millennial business leaders.

Eyeful's all-encompassing, tailored communication strategy helped to deliver some outstanding results for our client, enabling them to achieve...



A powerful new message, story and approach in communicating with multigenerational audiences



Some of the highest email and social media results they had ever attained



A host of new high-level business clients and opportunities



An excellent best practice learning aid for future



# THE WARNING SIGNS TO BE AWARE OF...

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## PRESENTATIONS ARE STUCK IN THE PAST

Your formal communications are the type of presentations where you speak, others listen and barely respond. These one-way engagements are often supported with content heavy slides, more representative of lengthy formal writing than concise pieces of information.



## TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION REIGNS SUPREME

Your people's time is dominated by countless face-to-face meetings, or

teleconferences. Lengthy and overly detailed emails that focus on the minutia are also prevalent, with far too much time spent on preparing, delivering or listening to presentations.



## MILLENNIALS LACK RECALL

The Millennials in your team have garnered a possibly unwarranted reputation for struggling to understand, remember and act upon the key information shared in internal meetings and comms.



## BLACK-MARKET SLIDES

There is a dark part of your intranet where presenters request and share (often offbrand and off-message) slides with each other because they don't believe the slides they are provided with are good enough to achieve their desired result.

If these warning signs are prevalent in your business, this is a clear sign that your company's approach to communication is mainly focused towards the Baby Boomer generation.

There could be many reasons why this is happening. The company might be led by a Baby Boomer who sets the tone for the rest of the company to follow; younger staff may be afraid to push for change; or perhaps it's simply the way things have always been done.

Whatever the reason, following an out-of-touch communication approach runs the risk of not only confusing and losing touch with the Generation X and Millennials in your team, but as organisations everywhere look to evolve, you could be alienating yourself within your marketplace too.



## HEED THE WARNINGS AND EMBRACE CHANGE...

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The world in which we work has evolved. Updating communication approaches is no different to updating technology or any other business tool or strategy. Embrace it.

Eyeful's approach to multigenerational communication is the path business communication is taking. It's your choice to either ignore this trend, or follow it. You can either watch your workforce demographics evolve and see outdated communication concepts crumble – or you can embrace the diversity that a broad spectrum of colleagues and customers bring and evolve to meet this change.

Creating a multifaceted communication approach (such as the example we shared earlier) is the future of business communication.



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REMEMBER THAT WHEN TALKING ABOUT “MILLENNIAL” COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES, WE’RE REALLY TALKING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION OVERALL - AND WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU’LL NEED TO PREPARE FOR THOSE CHANGES.

LARRY ALTON, FORBES

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## **PRESENTATIONS ARE TOO IMPORTANT TO NOT BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY**

Eyeful was founded in 2004 to address a problem that befalls organisations of all sizes – poor communication at key moments.

It might be a must-win pitch, a high stakes shareholder engagement or strategically important internal conference... whatever the event, presentations play an intrinsic part in their success or failure.

### **Optimising these engagements is where Eyeful step in.**

Understanding the fragile mix of elements that ensure presentation success is why, after all these years, we're still at the forefront of making communication work for clients across the globe.

The growing collection of Eyeful Insights papers is another example of this thought leadership in action. To learn more about our work, visit:

**[www.eyefulpresentations.com](http://www.eyefulpresentations.com)**