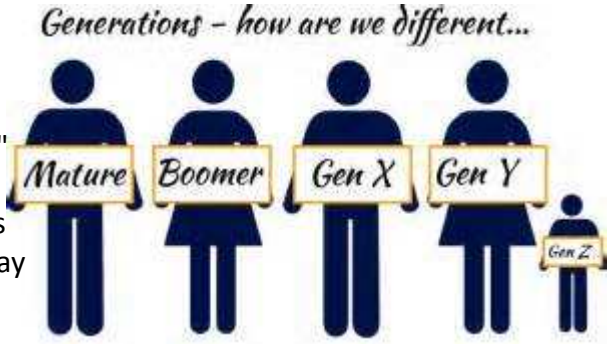
Looking down at your latest statistics or the "percent completed“ chart that was just updated on your computer, you scramble to make sure that all of the required safety training is getting done before the end of the year. Eight people missed September's Fall Protection training ... you've got 12 new hires starting next week ... November's Bloodborne Pathogens instructor just call in sick on you.

It's going to be hectic down the stretch, but it will be over soon. And then, you can take a deep breath and relax for a bit. But then you remember, you can't relax. The whole vicious cycle starts over again. What are you doing to avoid the pitfalls of previous years? How are you going to improve the effectiveness of your training? These are all questions to ask yourself as you attempt to improve your safety training programs.

TRAINING FOR A NEW GENERATION OF WORKER

With the workplace demands of high-job turnover, expanding regulatory compliance requirements and a constant push to be more efficient in all aspects of your business, it only makes sense to use every advantage you can. As many of the traditionalists and baby-boomers are stepping out of the work force, the new recruits are moving in. If you're shaking your head at the thought of all of these "undisciplined, know-it-all kids" flooding the work force, you instead should be nodding your head at the creative possibilities you now have in the realm of safety training.



Let's set a few things straight: Every generation looks at the proceeding ones with a little skepticism.

Traditionalists think Boomers should "do as they're told." Boomers think Xers should put in longer hours and gradually work their way up the ladder. Now along comes Generation Y and guess what? They have a whole new way of thinking.

One might characterize the new generation of employees under the age of 30--"Gen Y"--as talented nomads. They are inclined to move through three, four or maybe even five jobs in their first 10 years, performing well but never hesitating to consider other possibilities. Traditional employer enticements such as a pension or retirement plan mean very little to those who are comfortable setting up their own investment accounts. As a safety professional, you are challenged with providing all the safety training they need in a timely manner. Since computers and Internet connections have become a staple in even the smallest of businesses, leveraging this technology for training Gen Y remains one of the best options available.

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SECOND NATURE

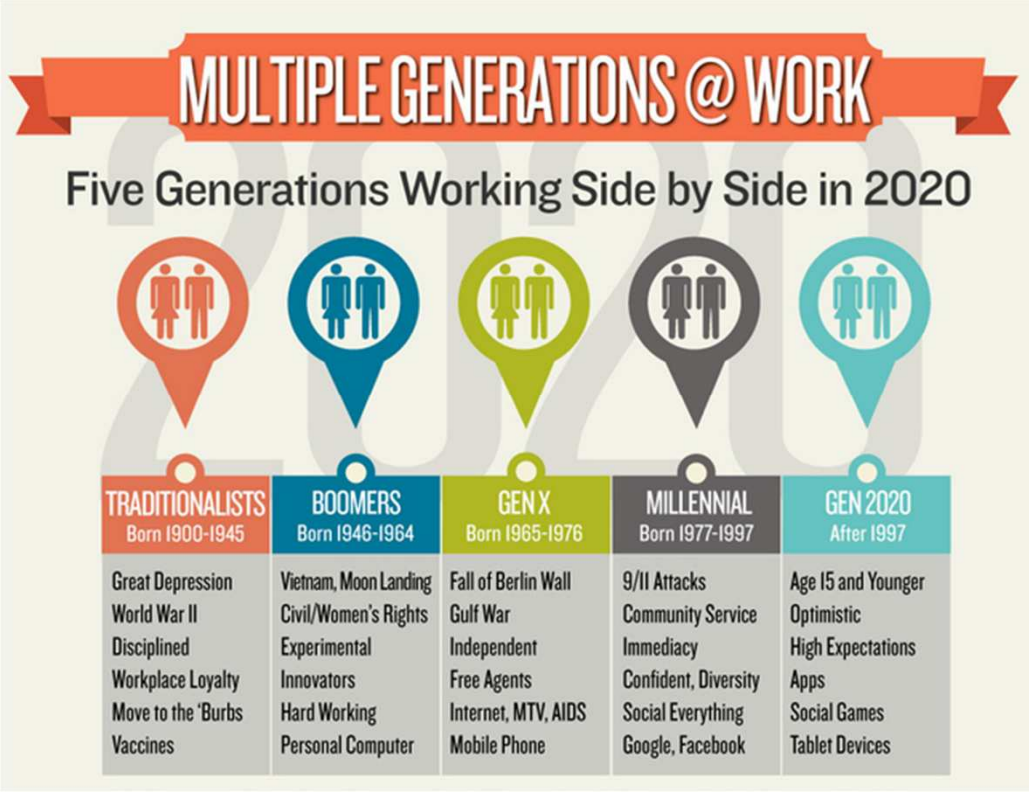
You could say with some justification that Gen Yers view computers and the Internet as extensions of their own bodies. The under-30 crowd uses them to balance their checkbooks, buy their favorite books or CDs and even play games with people from all around the world. In fact, according to Pew Internet & American Life Project, May-June 2004, 78 percent of people ages 18-29 use the Internet. Use this to your advantage.

Who better to help organize and implement an online training program than the individuals who have been exposed to technology throughout their personal and professional lives? Not only are they apt to embrace a technology-based training program, they also are inclined to keep pushing that training program toward continual improvement.

TRAINING CHALLENGES HAVEN'T CHANGED

Today's workplaces are practically as diverse as snowflakes. However, from auto manufacturers to poultry processors, each has a basic obligation to provide core safety and health training to their employees. Some of the typical hurdles include:

* Ensuring that each employee stays current with the training plan. Never mind the vacations, sick days and the occasional "Oh, I forgot we were having that meeting" excuses. It is challenging to "reach back" and account for all of those who missed the training sessions that were held. New employees and department transfers seem to come out of nowhere and they need training ASAP. …



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