



Exploring the Impact of Different Generations on the Parliamentary Profession

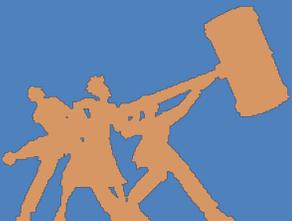
Post 2015 NAP Educational Foundation Think Tank Observations

The NAP Educational Foundation hosted its first Think Tank in San Antonio, Texas February 23-25, 2015. This three-day event entitled: **Exploring the Impact of Generational Change on the Parliamentary Profession** gave a team of 19 parliamentarians who are life members of the NAP Educational Foundation as well as the NAP Executive Director the opportunity to meet face to face and deal with some of the implications of generational attitudes and preferences as it affects NAP and the work of parliamentarians.

What emerged from this three-day event was no less than magical, as noted parliamentarians identified areas of NAP's experience that needs "re-booting," and "re-imagining." The 20 members of this respected team tackled ideas in the areas of intergenerational gaps, strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats, and recommendations for NAPEF and NAP. The following White Paper will illuminate some of the chief discoveries, compelling ideas, and solutions that emerged from the Think Tank.

All of the trustees of the NAP Educational Foundation were pleased to be present for this event and trust that the results of these deliberations will assist NAP as it seeks to fulfill its vision to provide parliamentary leadership to the world.

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Pre-Think Tank Observations

Prior to the Think Tank, participants were asked to complete a SWOT analysis of NAP, NAPEF, and the parliamentary profession. They were also requested to consider the following questions: “How can parliamentary procedure be relevant and effective in a multigenerational context? What role can parliamentary organizations play to meet this challenge?”

The Generational Divide



While one would assume that a room full of parliamentarians might see things through a single lens, in fact there were many different perspectives expressed about the differences between generations. Victor L. Heller, PhD and Paul A. Parks, DMin, LPC, both experts in the analysis of generational differences, identified four generations: Traditionalist, Baby Boomers, Generation X and Millennials. They led the participants through a number of exercises that were focused on helping everyone see

that generational differences were significant and have had and potentially will have a significant effect on the parliamentary profession.

Intergenerational Gaps

The group was asked to identify primary intergenerational gaps between the generations. Here they are grouped into two cadres for convenience sake. These are Traditionalists/Baby Boomers and Generation X/Millennials. The following stood out:

- Regard for others near and far who are different in culture, race, language, behavior
- Family above work
- More accepting of open relationships
- Different orientation to career
- Technologically savvy
- Global thinkers v. local actors
- More highly educated with different orientation to it
- Immediate response and gratification a requirement
- Want more than they think they probably will have
- Moving rather than reading a book
- Distrust authority

Traditionalists – driven by war, depression – things were out of order; they made things work

Boomers – more opportunities for life choice; more choice of where to live; highly mobile; raised by a generation who made great changes, and they were raised to make changes; communicators; were raised by folks who had disposable income and chose to dispose of it into their children

Generation X – decision shoppers (if they didn’t get it from mom, they went to dad or grandma – they shopped for a better decision); first generation that won’t be better off than their parents; change from “defined pension plan” to a “defined contribution plan;” very little loyalty to companies because they experienced corporations having little loyalty to them;

Millennials – returning to traditional values; first generation highly scheduled; more balanced; don’t want to overwork – want work/life balance; greater acceptance of diversity; social media; highly tolerant; technology natives;

Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT Analysis)

On the second day, the group concentrated on a SWOT analysis of both NAP and the NAP Educational Foundation. This analysis was discussed in light of generational differences discussed on day one. The chart below presents the most significant items in each category.

NAPEF		NAP	
<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>	<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Strong financial resources Money is well managed Independent organization	NAP members unaware of foundation No opportunity for contributor input No ownership as members	Excellent educational program Competent professional staff NP Magazine Great annual events	Loyalty Few younger members Lack of funds to meet expenses of volunteers Lack of trust among members Membership dwindling Lack of continuity
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>	<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
Opportunity to expand donor base Feedback to NAP Units Help the units who help you Sponsor trade show booths	NAP Leadership changes every biennium Fluctuations in the stock market Aging membership population Fundraising done by NAP as part of the dues notices	Marketing and branding Professional advancement opportunities Thousands of conventions not served by PRP General Public unaware of PRP's	We've always done it that way Conflicting interest groups Small amount of non-dues revenue Declining of urge to join

Next the Think Tank participants turned their attention to an analysis of how NAP and NAPEF relate to the four generations and how the opportunities identified above are lived out in these organizations.

Which generation does NAP/NAPEF engage the most?

Traditionalists—Generally they have money and for the most part are generous. They are retired with time to participate in organizational life. They possess loyalty to the organizations in which they are invested and want to belong. They are joiners. As grandparents they communicate more easily with younger generations than with Baby Boomers. They are the letter-writing generation. As a group, they hold traditional values regarding work and commitment. They prefer materials in printed form. They are the most frequent purchasers of NAP materials.



Baby Boomers—Boomers join and lead our organization. They value stability and yet want to see new things introduced. They are the e-mail generation. They see the value of using parliamentary procedure as a business. They use technology and prefer online exams, digital products and webinars.

Which generation does NAP/NAPEF engage to the least?

Generation X—Little disposable income yet generally don't qualify for NAP/NAPEF scholarships. This generation is starting to want to join more, but NAP/NAPEF system are generally not set up with them in mind. They are busy with their families and struggle to find time for extra organizations.

Millennials—Family concerns come first. Their kids are involved in many activities. They struggle to find time for much else. They have the least knowledge of NAP and find the older membership not particularly welcoming. If we don't provide them parliamentary information in the form of an app, they aren't interested.

Parliamentary procedure's relevance to and effectiveness for:

Traditionalists: (70 & up)

Rule of Law
Homeowner/Condo Associations
Printed Materials
Founders of Groups
Bound by "we've always done it that way"
Structure, timelines and ego gratifications
More relevant when working with organizations made up of traditionalists
Social aspects of meetings; they are joiners
Past Presidents
Involved in governmental bodies
Enjoy the intellectual study and teaching of parliamentary procedure

Parliamentary procedures can be a source of full or part-time income.
Leaders of all kinds of organizations
Impatient with some of the formalities in *RONR*
Working officers who are more likely to contact parliamentary organizations
Serious about attending seminars of relevance
More interested in Toastmasters than in Parliamentary Organizations

Baby Boomers: (50-69)

Generation X: (34 to 49)

More likely to go online for parliamentary reference and information
Somewhat antiquated process of group decision making
Prefer more informal processes; informal discussion first
They are put off by formal language
Don't have a lot of disposable time for the study of parliamentary law
Want quick answers on the spot; not a lot of explanation
Very alert to abuse of power – *RONR* can help
Inquiries coming from newer electronic platforms rather than email and websites
Significant involvement with compliance and standards in professions; must follow the rules
Equality/fairness and assuring everyone is heard
Interested in Parlpro if not applied to a fault; will not appreciate nit pickers
Under horrendous time pressure – could be relevant
Can be a source of additional income and can become a profession

Millennials: (15-33)

They liked parliamentary procedure in school clubs and in competition
Provides an avenue to income generation
Knowledge of Parlpro gives an instant source of recognition
Want information and are eager to talk to parliamentarians as resources
Helpful on their resume
Could use NAP as a resource center
Love to debate
In NAP you join as equals/one person – one vote
They want to be productive
A desire for mentorship
They like branding
Relevance and effectiveness in management training
Parlpro as a game (ParlQuest)
Can be a source of additional income and can become a profession

Recommendations for the Future

The purpose of this Think Tank has been to glimpse the future, to seek to find ways that NAP and its educational foundation can continue to stimulate interest in the parliamentary profession. As a result of the discussions and analyses undertaken, the following questions have been given notational answers. In the case of NAPEF, the recommendations of the Think Tank have been prioritized. In the case of NAP, they have not.

How should the information from this Think Tank change how NAPEF approaches its contributors? *(Prioritized by Attendees)*

1. Provide monthly or quarterly reports to units and associations about the Foundation and its services—explain the purpose of the Foundation.
2. Grant funds to NAP to initiate a PR campaign.
3. Promote EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer) for regular contributions—promote contributing to the Foundation regularly.
4. Educate board and committee members and NAP leaders about what the Foundation does.
5. Send out anniversary reminders of continued giving.

How should the information from this Think Tank change how NAP approaches its members? *(Not in Priority Order)*

1. Repeat messages, send them in numerous ways.
2. Use other forms of communication for information—not just the website.
3. Spend money on improving the website—make it more user-friendly.
4. Hold officer elections electronically before convention so every member gets to vote for their leaders.
5. Develop partnerships.
6. Direct donation information should be kept on the dues form.
7. Challenge of servicing MALS—method?
8. Emphasize continued education with members through certificates, etc. based on the Body of Knowledge.
9. Do more to cultivate Gen X members.
10. Encourage attendance at NAP conventions and training conferences.
11. Cultivate all members, encourage study, attendance
12. Encourage staggered term on committees and for officer positions.
13. Encourage units to form; encourage association and district participation
14. Focus on associations
15. Provide more training and resources to assist units and associations and meet the needs also of the MALS
16. Growth in units needs assistance, nurture the current units
17. Use educational resources for unit programs—need to do better job of training teachers
18. Pay dues for upcoming student members

Conclusions

Understanding the generational divide and being able to adapt to the future with such a large number of our constituency in the latter years of their lives will be the quintessential challenge for both NAP and NAPEF. When the talents, skills and preferences of coming generations are tied to the purposes of these organizations, the parliamentary profession can yet flourish. This will require leaders and members to abandon conventional thinking.

The ability to move gracefully into the future and build support systems that have sustainable value will depend on the ability of individuals to understand the new "motivators" of upcoming generations. These common threads may be challenging to folks over 50, but are well understood by younger leaders:

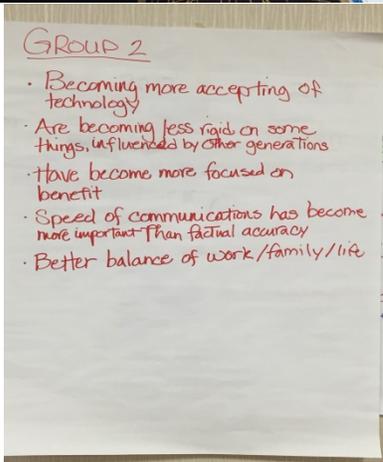
- **Belonging** is better than cash
- **Purpose** trumps prestige
- **Impact** is better than promotion
- **Meaning and relevance** are more important than perceived value and hierarchy

Understanding these paradigm shifts (and many others), opens an entirely new door of possibilities, and more importantly, responsibilities for next-generation NAP Leaders.

Postscript: The Re-Definition of Technology

As we think about the generational divide and why it's important, we cannot ignore the technological advancements that make this difficult. Technology is defined as the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, and when we think about all that has changed in the last five years in technology, we cannot ignore the fact that its advancement transcends the leap from typewriters to computers, or from "snail mail" vs. "email."

With the emergence of web-based social tools like Facebook and countless others, we have to understand that how we perceive the world around us has also changed. We have to be willing to re-define technology, to better fit interpersonal change as well as exterior change. How we think as a people is impacted just as much if not MORE than the physical attributes of technological advancement.



Thanks are expressed to the following participants:

Nancy Sylvester, Sandy Olson, John Rempel, Ann Rempel, Alison Wallis, Peggy Young, Leonard Young, Carl Silverman, Mary Messerschmidt, Linda Lawson, Jim Lawson, Mary Randolph, Gwen Brown, Ron Stinson, Ella Carlson, Carol Habgood, Leah Raye Mabry, Ann Guiberson, Gayla Stone, Cyndy Launchbaugh