

How to be generationally relevant?

Abstract:

Generational differences have existed throughout the history. The rapid cultural change during the modern era has increased the generational gap. Whether we involve ourselves in educating the youth, or in a leadership role, a quality outcome depends on how well we understand them.

The youth of today is the future of the nation. Hence, the significance to bridge the generation gap and to be generationally relevant becomes paramount.

The students of the present generation are intellectual, well-informed, always connected and have access to a wide range of downloadable information. They have grown up with technology as opposed to the older generation, which is usually resistant to change. Situations like these start creating a rift between a student and a teacher. It is very important for a teacher to understand the importance of being generationally relevant, so as to bridge the gap and connect with the students.

Their outlook, worldview and perspective are fundamentally different and until the teachers try to understand them, they will wind up being confused and in conflict. Teachers not being generationally relevant makes them unapproachable and the students tend to become secretive. The lesser the age difference between a student and a teacher, the better they connect. Why does age play such an important role in a teacher being relevant? The reason why age matters is, students find a lot of mutual interests and can have an open discussion. Being able to voice out their thoughts without being judged is very important to the students. The teachers need to bridge the gap so as to resolve the conflict, work better and assist the students to optimise their capabilities.

The never ending advancements in technology will play a major role in students being tech savvy. It is one of the important factors that make the students hip and the teachers irrelevant. The teachers of today need to understand that the students tread alongside technology. They can be called the wired generation.

Here are some interesting facts of the present generation –

- They find love through Facebook and are dumped via texts and wall posts.
- They watch TV with two or more electronic devices.
- A very small percentage defines success as having lots of money.
- They have earned and used virtual currency.
- The entrepreneurial culture is increasing.
- They stay in touch on social networks.

It is evident that this generation is using technology in a way that is smarter, more involved and beneficial in keeping them updated all the time. The students can source any information they need, from the internet. All the facts stated above may not hold true with regard to the school students, but they will have all of the traits when they grow up.

Teachers also believe that the students today are different from those in the past. There is a huge difference in the mindset and value system of the students then and now. The students of today have had a say in how things go since they were five. They express themselves and expect to be heard. They demand authenticity. They do not believe in anything without adequate proof. They want to do things that matter. It is very important for them to find meaning in what they do. Words that describe their world are immediacy and convenience. Where the teachers may call it impatience, students think of it as speed. The students have access to knowledge on their fingertips. This luxury makes the presence of teachers in their life pointless. Therefore, the need for a teacher to be generationally relevant is escalating.

If knowledge is the key to enlightenment, then perception and imagination are windows to engagement and relevance. A lot can be analysed about the present generation, but if we cannot translate that into meaning or substance, we will continue to miss opportunities to build lasting relationships.

The teachers already know that the students of today are different from those in the past. The approach towards them also has to be different. The traditional approach cannot be used. The initial step of being relevant is the decision of being relevant. The teachers should first understand the habits, hobbies and mindset of the students. The teaching methodologies have to be altered accordingly. Effective teaching tools and

classroom engagement techniques should be used. Sometimes not engaging classes can also prove to be an efficient tool.

Altering some of the methods, for a teacher, may mean moving out of their comfort zone. But connecting to a student will require the teacher to leave their comfort zone and explore the world of students. Being updated with the current gadgets, not being stringent with regard to rules and regulations, having a conversation with the students about topics that they enjoy and also conducting certain knowledge enhancing games in the class are some of the simple tools that can be used.

A teacher's communication style may be regarded as structured, today's students need freedom. A teacher may stress on learning, the students like to experience. The quality and the communication style of a teacher should be credible. The students do not expect the teachers to embrace their lifestyle. They only seek understanding and respect. The more spontaneous and interactive the teachers are in the classroom, the less intimidated, and more open the students will be. What the teachers communicate has to fall within their area of interest. The style, as well as the content of the message must be relevant to a generation, who are visually educated and entertained. There is no point in giving music to a friend on a CD if he or she only uses iPods. Similarly, the teachers must research in the most appropriate format for the students they are reaching.

Once the teachers have a grasp of the characteristics, communication styles, and social attitudes of the students, they will be well equipped to effectively impact this generation in a positive way.

The students of today are hopeful. They have a bounty of ideas on how to improve the world. A teacher should be able to help the students to optimise their capabilities. If we are compelled to label this generation, we should call them HOPE.

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Sources: <http://understand-todays-generation.blogspot.in/>
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