

Connecticut's Friends of Libraries: Welcoming the Next Generation(s)

Friends of Connecticut Libraries Workshop

March 6, 2010

Middletown Library Service Center

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Introduction

- The Question of the Day - So your group needs more supporters and volunteers? – What's going on out there and what can you do about it?
- Who's Tim Cole?
 - Independent consultant working with nonprofits on planning, development, and organizational issues
 - Background in academia, arts community, and nonprofit community economic development field.
 - Not an expert on libraries, but knowledgeable about changing social trends and challenges confronting small community based organizations
 - 27 years living and working in Hartford
 - Terminal Optimist

The Agenda

- Quick Interactive Warm-up Exercise – Who's Here and Why?
- Presentation: Generational Change – What are we talking about?
- Homework Assignment
 - Applying ideas discussed to your group's unique circumstances

Who's Here and Why?

- Quick run around the room – Short and Sweet!
 - What communities & libraries are here?
 - Urban? Suburban? Small town?
 - What's your group's role? 25 words or less.
 - What's happening with your library?
 - Things changing? Needing to change?
 - What's happening with your group?
 - Growing? Shrinking? Turnover?
 - Things changing? Needing to change?

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

□ Preliminaries

- Caveat – What follows are gross generalizations about the broad middle of our society. Buyer beware.
- Major credit goes to Peter C. Brinckerhoff, author of *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit.*

□ Crash course on the 5 generations →

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Greatest Generation”
 - Born 1901 – 1924
 - 20 million alive in 2005
 - Currently 85 y.o. or older
 - Values: Financial security, patriotism, respect for institutions, selflessness.
 - Formative Experiences: Great Depression, WWII.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

□ “Silent Generation”

- Born 1925 – 1945
- 30 million alive in 2005
- Currently 64 – 84 y.o. Lifestyles range from fully engaged (working, volunteering, etc.) to “deep retirement” (limited activities, may have health & financial issues).
- Values: Loyalty, self-sacrifice, stoicism, faith in institutions and traditions, patriotic.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Silent Generation” – cont’d
 - Formative Experiences – The Cold War, suburbanization, social mobility, economic and industrial expansion, automobiles, advent of TV.
 - Engagement Motivated by – Tradition, loyalty to key issue or group, joint work ethic.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

□ “Baby Boom Generation”

- Born 1946 – 1962
- 80 million alive in 2005
- Currently 47 – 63 y.o. Fully engaged. Carrying the lion’s share of social, economic, and political responsibility. Looking ahead. Light at the end of the tunnel. Early retirements. Second “encore” careers. Some health & financial worries.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Baby Boom Generation” – cont’d
 - Values: Entitlement, optimism, skepticism about institutions / authority, competition, focus on career / personal development, youthfulness, “cool”.
 - Formative Experiences: TV: “Leave it to Beaver”, Kennedy Assassination, Civil Rights Movement, Viet Nam, Woodstock... More, more, more... More opportunities, more mobile, more stuff, more education, more experiences...

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Baby Boom Generation” – cont’d
 - Engagement Motivated by – Sense of personal significance to the group, opportunity to make a difference, change the world, “relevance,” be where the action is...

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

□ “Generation X”

- Born 1963 – 1980
- 45 million alive in 2005
- 29 – 46 y.o. – Early – mid-career; family responsibilities; beginning to emerge into positions of leadership; high levels of debt
- *Question – More impacted by economic downturn? More vulnerable to layoffs, credit crunch, etc. at an inconvenient time of life?*

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Generation X” – cont’d.
 - Values – Independence, self-reliance, desire for stability, informality, fun. Little organizational or institutional loyalty or commitment.
 - Formative Experiences – Fall of Berlin Wall, Persian Gulf War, consumerism, new technologies – cable, computers, office automation. “Seinfeld.” Living in the shadow of the Baby Boom.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Generation X” – cont’d.
 - Engagement Motivated by – Wanting to be seen as valued by the organization, appreciated for independent thinking & individual contribution, maintaining life – work balance.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Generation Next” – aka “Gen Y” or the “Millennials”
 - Born 1981 – 2002
 - 75 million in 2005 – the “Echo Boom”
 - 7 – 28 y.o. – Just getting started. Older cohort – young adults – already making its presence felt socially, economically, politically.

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- “Generation Next” – cont’d.
 - Values – Work-life balance, confidence, social commitment, being “wired” and up-to-date, networking & collaboration, multi-tasking, realistic, tolerates / embraces diversity.
 - Formative Experiences – 9/11, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, energy and environmental concerns, embedded in rapidly changing high tech culture, growing up with Boomer parents & role-models

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

□ “Generation Next” – cont’d.

- Engagement Motived by – Desire to make a difference together with their peers, opportunities for civic engagement and collaboration, recognition for their new ideas and expertise.

- *Note: The Pew Research Center published a revealing study of this group in January 2007.*

<http://people-press.org/report/300/>

Not surprising that Gen Next played a crucial role in President Obama’s primary and general election campaigns – state of the art use of technology and media + willingness to get out and do the work... Look out!

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

□ General Observations

- Caveat – What we just saw “are gross generalizations about the broad middle of our society. Buyer beware.”
- Individuals are not groups
- 2 other change drivers now in play –
 - Changes in technology & media ⇒ changes in storage & distribution of information ⇒ changes in library roles, designs & organization

Generational Change – What are we talking about?

- 2 other change drivers now in play – cont'd.
 - Economic downturn & long-term impacts
 - Changes in job markets –
 - “The economy that went down is not the economy that will surface again.”
 - The Greening of America
 - Changes in communities – some affected differently than others
 - Changes in funding available for libraries
 - Fundraising challenges for FOLs
- Questions? Comments?

What Is to Be Done?

- Now comes the hard part...
 - How does this information help you in your group, with your library, in your community, now?
 - Key Question No. 1 – Why do you want new people to join you?
 - Key Question No. 2 – Why would new people want to join you?
 - Key Question No. 3 – If new people wanted to join you, would they actually be / feel welcome?

What Is to Be Done?

- Assuming you can answer those three questions satisfactorily –
- Here's your homework assignment...

This may seem like a lot of busy-work, but consider that new people are likely to want to know that you have your house in order, know what you're doing, and aren't going to waste their time. Hopefully, in many cases this will seem like a check list, you can go right through ... just so long as you know the answers.

Suggestion:

Agree first thing on who is going to do this work and who they are accountable to.

- 1) Assess & analyze the current situation
- 2) Develop an action plan
- 3) Implement the plan

What Is to Be Done?

Assess & Analyze

- What is your group's mission or purpose?
 - Is there agreement on it?
 - Is it written down and does everyone know?
 - Is it aligned with the current needs of the library? Are you in synch with the Head Librarian and the leadership of the library's board?
- How are you organized?
 - Leadership – Who's in charge? Who are they accountable to? On paper? In reality?
 - Are you a 501(c)(3)?
 - If so, are you up to snuff with reporting, financial accounting, by-laws, etc.?
 - If not, do you have a clearly defined relationship with whoever handles your money?

What Is to Be Done?

- What do you currently do?
 - List your activities
 - Hands-on volunteer help in the library
 - Fundraising
 - Other...
 - Evaluate your activities
 - Why do you do them?
 - How much time and effort do they take?
 - Are they worth the trouble in terms of the results?
 - If not, is because they're not worth the trouble?
 - ...or because they need to be done better?
 - Are there other activities you would like to do or the library would like you to do?

What Is to Be Done?

- Who is in your group? What's the make-up?
 - How many?
 - Age range?
 - How long involved?
 - Demographics – age, race, gender, educational background, etc.
 - Representative of your community?
 - Representative of your library's users?
 - Who does what and why?

What Is to Be Done?

- New people? What for?
 - How many are you looking for?
 - What do you want from them?
 - Time commitment?
 - Financial support?
 - Particular skills or abilities?

What Is to Be Done?

- Develop an Action Plan
 - Put together a shopping list
 - Put together a recruiting plan
 - Get it down on paper
 - Assign responsibilities
 - Create a timetable
 - Marketing strategies
 - Word of Mouth
 - Library publications
 - Local media
 - Websites
 - Social media – Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.
 - Other community groups, congregations, etc.
 - Schools and training programs with community service requirements

What Is to Be Done?

- Implement Plan
 - Prioritize strategies most likely to work.
 - Be flexible and alert to unexpected opportunities. Such as people now early-retired, unemployed, underemployed and not-yet employed, who want to stay busy, do something meaningful, and avoid gaps in the resume.
 - Go where they go.
 - Sell well. It's not about you. It's about them.
 - Keep track of how it's going and report back.
 - The job is never done. Constant turnover is not a good thing. Renewal is.
 - Live and learn.

In closing...

- ❑ If what you're doing really matters, other people will see it and want to join in.
- ❑ The times they are a'changin' – again. What the work is and who will do it are a'changin' too.
- ❑ Count on it. If they are younger than you, and they come on board, they will do it with a will... But they won't do it the way you would. So get used to it.