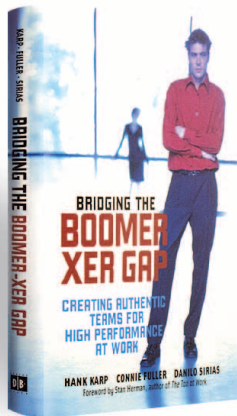


SOUNDVIEW Executive Book Summaries®

FILE: HANDS-ON MANAGEMENT



Hank Karp, Connie Fuller and
Danilo Sirias

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BRIDGING THE BOOMER-XER GAP

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Today's workplaces are dominated by two generational groups: Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. The Boomers now hold top management and policy-making positions, while the younger Xers have just recently entered the world of work.

Unfortunately, both groups view each other with suspicion. Boomers tend to believe the stereotype that Xers are slackers, loners and self-absorbed. Xers think Boomers are incapable of adapting to technological and social change. Both stereotypes are false, and those who manage Boomers and Xers must learn how to dispel the myths. What is true is that each group sees the world through a different lens.

In this summary you will learn how to help Boomers and Xers in your organization overcome their stereotypical thinking and bridge the actual differences that do exist.

What You'll Learn In This Summary

✓ **Building Authentic Teams:** Authentic teams let Xers and Boomers work together by allowing them to see, appreciate and accept their differences. Once they do, intergenerational teams will work together effectively while retaining their individuality. You will learn how to take your team through difficult but predictable stages as it becomes a high-performance team.

✓ **Supporting Authentic Teams:** You will learn what a team leader needs to do to let an authentic team do its best work. Authentic team leaders know when to make decisions and when to let the team take responsibility.

✓ **Authentic Problem Solving:** You will learn exactly how a team should go about determining what it wants to accomplish and how it will implement objectives designed to get it to the goal.

✓ **Managing Conflict:** You will learn why intergenerational conflict exists and how you can defuse it.

BRIDGING THE BOOMER-XER GAP

by Hank Karp, Connie Fuller and Danilo Sirias

— THE COMPLETE SUMMARY

Baby Boomers and Generation Xers at Work

“The old-timers won’t change” and “the kids won’t work” are fighting words. The attitudes behind the words represent a serious threat to workplace effectiveness. If we want to retain our position as global business leaders, we need to capitalize on every asset we have. Our greatest asset, and potentially our greatest Achilles’ heel, is the American worker.

Two age groups currently dominate the world of work: Baby Boomers born between 1945 and 1962, and Gen Xers, born between 1963 and 1982. Both groups eye each other with suspicion. Boomers believe Xers are slackers with little work ethic, while Xers believe Boomers just don’t get technology.

Boomers have difficulty taking a stand on issues, often attempting to bridge the generational differences between their parents and their children. To Xers, those behaviors seem to reflect ambiguity and lead to a perception that Boomers simply never take a stand on anything. Xers have responded by taking strong stands on even minor issues, behavior which certainly isn’t ambiguous.

A New Version of the Protestant Work Ethic

As Boomers reach higher levels of authority, the values of their parents become dominant. Boomers grumble about younger workers’ work ethic much as their parents grumbled about long hair and short skirts. As Boomers climb the corporate ladder, they are beginning to demonstrate the belief that “work is its own reward,” and that the motto “live to work” describes their attitude. The Xers’ motto can best be described as “work to live.”

Another significant difference between the two groups lies in their perception of the appropriate place loyalty plays in the workplace. Boomers grew up with the belief that if you took care of your employer, he would take care of you. Xers have seen that, in practice, loyalty may not be a two-way street, as they observed the jobs of their parents downsized, right-sized, process reengineered, and eliminated. In fact, one recent study showed that only 25 percent of employees today consider themselves truly committed and plan to stay two or more years. One third don’t plan to stay even that long, and a full 39 percent plan to stay, but only because they

A Different Kind of Loyalty

Gen Xers have strong feelings of loyalty to family and friends. They were the first generation of children to come home after school to an empty house because both Mom and Dad were at work. Xers have vowed to make it different for their own children. They take time off to get children to the doctor. Xers know there is another job just around the corner and that no job should come before family and friends. Xers are very loyal, but not to their company. That relationship is one of service rendered for dollars paid. For Xers, putting family first means being there. Period.

Generation X members look at work as a necessary evil. Work itself is not a reward. If work can be fun, it can be tolerated. And the very thing that makes work “fun” for Xers is problematic for Boomers. Xers love technology, speed, and continuous change. They want to multitask. They play video games to relax.

are “trapped” with no other options.

This lack of commitment is hard for Boomer managers to accept. Faced with unprecedented high turnover rates, managers find themselves continuously recruiting and training new employees. Given issues of loyalty and commitment alone, organizational survival is at risk. Commitment plays a major role in an employee’s willingness and ability to be fast and flexible on the job. Ultimately, it is people who make or break the organization. Without a willing work force pulling together to fulfill the organization’s mission, dysfunction is the logical outcome. If Boomers and Gen Xers continue to

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Baby Boomers and Generation Xers at Work

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move in separate directions regarding commitment, corporate dysfunction will get worse.

The Evolution of the Baby Boomer

The formative years for the Boomers range from 1955 to 1975. The older Boomers were shaped by the Vietnam war in ways their fathers weren't by WWII. They lost their innocence — and their respect for authority. They questioned the wisdom of decision-makers, adopting the phrase "Never trust anyone over 30."

The youngest Boomers had a different coming of age experience. The draft ended before they were old enough to be eligible, and by the time it was seriously under consideration again during Operation Desert Storm, they were too old.

Gen Xers know nothing of the experiences and lessons of their parents' generation. They have grown up to be independent and self-sufficient. Equal rights became something they took for granted as they entered the work force, taking advantage of the benefits won by Boomers.

Xers believe as a group that men and women have equal employment opportunities and should share in household and child-raising efforts. These attitudes impact the Boomer managers for whom these young people now find themselves working. If the baby gets sick, Mom or Dad will stay home to care for her. Unlike Boomers, where women often stayed home to care for the sick child because she made less and was primarily responsible for family-related problems, the responsibility falls on both.

For Boomers a second income was often a luxury. For Xers, that's not the case. Many work for the benefits (such as health insurance), finding that their take-home pay goes principally for child care. Boomer managers rarely understand this reality. Nor do they understand that a father might be the one to stay home. The Xer who calls in to say he will be at home with a sick child is simply taking his turn with the kids. But to his Boomer boss, this guy just became a slacker and is thrown into the deep end of the Gen X stereotype pool. ■

For a look at how one company mismanaged a generation Xer, go to: <http://my.summary.com>

Studies Outline Xer and Boomer Characteristics

Today's workplace relies on teamwork to succeed. Yet if the participants in those teams don't buy in, business

Research Yields Three Conclusions

If you want to bring Boomers and Xers together in the workplace, you must take to heart the conclusions reached by the researchers:

✓ Boomers are team-oriented and willing to subordinate personal goals to those of the group, while Xers are both team-oriented and honoring of personal goals. Simply forcing Xers to conform to group values won't make for good teams.

✓ Boomers are here to stay, and hold the majority of policy-making roles, and will remain on the job for a long time to come given the lower numbers in the Xer generation work force.

✓ Tolerance must be exercised at work, and each generation must recognize what it is the other has to offer. Boomers bring to the table experience, a sense of group values, and a long-term perspective. Xers bring a focus on the present, a high-tech proficiency, and a balanced view of work and life.

Once you recognize these realities, you can begin to develop managerial strategies and organizational structures that will support Boomer and Xer values while integrating members of both groups into effective teams.

may be creating self-defeating organizational structures. They may be building teams for people who don't like teams. Given preconceptions about Xer and Boomer behavior and values, it would be easy to conclude that Boomers value teams while Xers value individualism.

Two recent groundbreaking studies shed light on just how each group feels about teams.

The first study used 189 Baby Boomers and 209 generation Xers from six public and private organizations. The study measured how the participants viewed teams and teamwork using the Team and Organizational Behavior Inventory. The researchers expected to find that Boomers valued teamwork more than did Xers. That was not the case. In fact, the results showed that Xers actually were significantly more team-oriented than Baby Boomers!

The second study was designed to test the question "Are Gen Xers more individualistic than Baby Boomers, despite their stronger team orientation?" This study used the Individualism-Collectivism Scales to determine how individualistic survey participants were. It measured competitiveness, solitary work preference, self-reliance, supremacy of group interest, and supremacy of group goals. The results show that Xers scored significantly

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Studies Outline Xer and Boomer Characteristics

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higher in individualism. This was most apparent in the following responses:

1. A group is most productive when its members do what they want to do, rather than what the group wants them to do.

2. A group is most efficient when its members do what they think is best, rather than doing what the group wants them to do.

3. A group is more productive when its members follow their own interests and concerns.

The two studies yield a single statement that can easily change the direction of team building, management, and human resource development for the next two decades. That conclusion is:

Generation X is significantly more individualistic AND significantly more team-oriented than the Baby Boomer generation. ■

A Different View of Teams

To bridge the boomer-Xer gap, you need to develop a different kind of team. The current model holds that effective teams are based on common ground and similar interests. The new model, called the “authentic individual-based model,” holds that the most important element in team building is how each contributing member is uniquely different from all other members. Although both models aspire to the same end — highly effective teams whose members work well together — they differ in how that end is achieved.

The Traditional Team

The traditional model for team building is based on the following assumptions:

1. Human behavior is subject to certain “laws” of group dynamics and specific directions.

2. These laws and directions are normative, being better than others. For example, democracy is better than autocracy.

3. Because norms exist, it is possible to define categories of behavior and determine whether individuals exhibit these behaviors.

4. Those that do not conform to the norms are not maximizing their full potential and can be trained to do so.

5. A group must adopt certain preferred behaviors such as openness, trust and cooperation before they can function effectively as a team.

Thus, the traditional approach emphasizes common

Traditional vs. Authentic Team Characteristics

- 1. Traditional:** Interdependence is the key value.
Authentic: Individual autonomy is the key value.
- 2. Traditional:** Experimenting with new process behaviors is preferred.
Authentic: Increasing awareness of existing behaviors is preferred.
- 3. Traditional:** Good work is a result of good working relationships.
Authentic: Good working relationships are the result of doing good work together.
- 4. Traditional:** Appropriate behavior is determined by conformance to team norms.
Authentic: Appropriate behavior is determined by individual choice within each situation.
- 5. Traditional:** Responsibility and rewards are best viewed in terms of team effort.
Authentic: Responsibility and rewards are best viewed in terms of individual effort.
- 6. Traditional:** Values conflict resolution.
Authentic: Values conflict management.
- 7. Traditional:** Attempts to empower others.
Authentic: Recognizes only self-empowerment.
- 8. Traditional:** Values being “open.”
Authentic: Values being “upfront.”
- 9. Traditional:** The effective team leader/coach puts the welfare of the group before his or her own.
Authentic: The effective team leader/coach looks to his or her own welfare first.

values and objectives. Group cohesion is an important value, and maintaining supportive interpersonal relationships is often as important as accomplishing team objectives. This model has been successful because it fits well with the views held by members of the Boomer generation and their parents.

The Authentic Team

Authentic teams have their origins in Gestalt psychology. Gestalt emerged in the early 1960s as a strong counter to traditional psychotherapy and the idea that someone is either mentally ill or mentally healthy. It is instead based on the personal growth model.

Organizational experts began in the 1970s to see applications of the personal growth model to organizations. The term “authentic teams” grew out of this movement.

The authentic team supports the right of each individ-

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A Different View of Teams

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ual member to hold separate values and to base commitment to team objectives on those values. Each person's uniqueness is valued.

From a starting point of differentiation, the team then explores ways it can work together effectively. Authentic teams encourage participation at levels that are comfortable for members. On an authentic team, there may never be equal levels of participation among members at any one point in time. Over time each member will participate in his or her own way at a level that supports a desire to continue to be part of the team.

Conflict is seen as natural and constructive, and is managed rather than resolved.

A Different Team-Building Paradigm

To build an authentic team, every member is encouraged to become more appreciative of how each team member differs from the others. Once individual team members are clearly differentiated, team construction occurs through developing connections between members. The team will more likely be effective than one that is homogenous, provided that everyone on the team is equally clear about and committed to attaining the team objective.

One distinct advantage is that authentic team members can work in isolation, in small group configurations, or as a total team, depending on the task at hand. Members can also enter and leave the team without disrupting it.

Two American sports illustrate the difference between the traditional and the authentic model. The National Football League (NFL) is a prototype of the traditional model. Players are almost anonymous; eleven men dress alike, wearing masks. Each player knows his role. Sacrifice for the good of the team is highly valued, and almost every score is the result of players collaborating in a precise and orchestrated fashion. Football mirrors the corporate ethics of the 1950s; centralization, division of labor, doing what you are told. The biggest supporters of the NFL are Baby Boomers.

The National Basketball Association (NBA), on the other hand, operates as an authentic team. While basketball is a team sport, the NBA recognizes and celebrates individual contributions. There is a spirit of rebelliousness in the NBA that doesn't exist in the NFL. In basketball, individual performance is what the fame is all about. Doing whatever it takes to win is the approach. The NBA is far more in line with the values of Generation X. ■

Building Authentic Teams

A new organizational structure must emerge that allows different generations to work together efficiently. Work teams are the means by which the workplace of the twentieth century will evolve into the workplace of the twenty-first century, and authentic teams are most likely to do so successfully.

In 1965, B.W. Tuckman identified four fundamental phases of team building: forming, storming, norming and performing. This framework can be applied to building authentic teams as follows:

Forming. A work team is a collection of individuals who have come together for some shared purpose. Yet each member may not know why he was asked to join, or how it will benefit him. At this stage in the creation of an authentic team, it's crucial to let members know what's in it for the individual. A team made up of Boomers and Xers will work better if members clearly understand the personal benefits of being on the team.

Storming. It is the make-or-break stage of team success. The development of individual team members consumes considerable energy at this phase. Interpersonal conflict will be at its highest. Many members will be happy to see the team go at this stage. Yet it is during this phase that the group becomes a team. Rewards

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How One Team Made it Through Storming

At one work site, a strong and decisive leader had supervised the group. The new team members had a history of not getting along and of letting the supervisor mediate disputes. After the creation of the new team structure, the supervisor continued to believe he should resolve any problems. Fortunately, someone from the human resource department was assigned to support the development of the team. The advice over and over again was that the supervisor could resolve the conflicts, but then the team couldn't expect to grow. They were told the choice was theirs to make.

Tough decisions continued to be made by the supervisor, and conflict predictably increased. Finally, the members agreed to try to work through a conflict themselves. They struggled, and tension increased. Then a breakthrough came, agreement was reached, and the team took a significant leap toward high performance. Team members learned two important lessons. First, they were able to manage conflict on their own, and second, they learned that managing conflict made them stronger and better able to handle conflict the next time it occurred.

Building Authentic Teams

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won't come until this phase has passed. Team members must be encouraged to be aware of and responsible for the behavior they use with one another and the consequences of that behavior. They must also learn that conflicts must be solved by the group, not the leader.

Continue to hold team meetings on a regular schedule. Let team members get to know each other as individuals. Each member must realize that he or she is a unique contributor to the team's success and that personal success is part of overall team success.

Norming. You will know that your team has reached this phase when:

- **Discussions focus on issues, not personalities and opposing points of view are respected rather than rejected;**

- **Team members seek solutions rather than just talking about what is wrong.**

The norming stage is where true synergy begins. The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Generational differences become team strengths. At this stage, it isn't unusual for a Boomer or an Xer to venture into a previously avoided task.

Performing. For authentic teams, this phase represents a new environment in which each person is willing and able to contribute his or her best to achieve team objectives. Perhaps the most remarkable attribute of team members at this phase is their ability to see each other as unique individuals without characterizing anyone by age, gender, race or religion. No Xer is determined to be of lesser value to the team by a Baby Boomer peer, and vice versa. There are disagreements and conflicts, but these are never personal. ■

For a case study on building authentic teams, go to:
<http://my.summary.com>

Supporting Authentic Teams

Building authentic teams is only the beginning. They must be supported by the organization to endure. Recognition and reward for team effort and success are critical. Rewards should reflect individual, team and organizational achievement. All three must be considered.

Two other factors play an important role in team management: the role of the coach or team leader, and managing the changing membership of an ongoing team.

The Coach: Every team needs a coach. Whoever the coach is, his or her main role will be to assess the team and its members' ability to handle decision-making on their own and encourage the gradual assumption of

more independence.

Train coaches first. Give them the tools needed to teach and develop the team. You must also offer coaches a clear idea of how they will spend their time once the team is working independently. Encourage them to work themselves out of a job.

Changing Team Membership: The team you put together today probably won't be made up of the same people next year. Companies change, work changes, people come and go. Team membership will change. Unfortunately, if that change means that every team has to start from scratch, most of the productivity benefits gained in the forming and storming stages will be lost.

The traditional team development process calls for the team to revisit its mission and guidelines each time a new member comes aboard. Fortunately, that isn't necessary for an authentic team. It already values diversity among its members, and integrating a new member is much easier. He or she can remain an individual and still become a member of the team. ■

The Authentic Approach To Problem Solving

If you want to create an authentic team, you'll need the right problem-solving tools to do the job. One of these is the "**prerequisite tree**," which is taken from the Theory of Constraints.

The Theory of Constraints

The Theory of Constraints is a management philosophy developed by Eli Goldratt in 1994. One of its basic principles is that there are only a few variables, or constraints, preventing a system from achieving its goals.

One of the most important premises is that a system's behavior is governed by an underlying conflict. All undesirable effects observed in the system are the result of the compromises adopted to manage the conflict. In other words, if problems exist in a team, it is because some conflict has not been resolved. In teams made up of Boomers and Xers, that conflict is often their differing views on the world of work.

The Prerequisite Tree

The "**prerequisite tree**" is a tactical problem-solving tool based on the Theory of Constraints. The prerequisite tree works especially well with intergenerational teams because addressing all *individual* resistance is viewed as an essential step to achieving *team* objectives.

To build a prerequisite tree, a team will first identify the obstacles that prevent a goal from being reached, then determine intermediate objectives to address each

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The Authentic Approach to Problem Solving (continued from page 6)

of those obstacles. It then builds a tree based on these intermediate objectives.

For example, at one company, an intergenerational team used a prerequisite tree to solve an excess inventory problem. The company provided replacement parts to customers worldwide. The problem was that some of its

excess inventory was obsolete, while at the same time, there was a shortage of the right inventory parts.

A team was assembled to solve the problem. One objective the team identified was **to reduce slow-moving, surplus and obsolete inventory**. Everyone on the team identified obstacles, and then intermediate objectives to overcome those obstacles.

For example, one obstacle was: “Relationships with

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Building a Prerequisite Tree

There are six steps to constructing a Prerequisite Tree. They are:

✓ **Define the team’s goal.** Team members need a clear understanding of what they are trying to accomplish. There must be agreement by everyone on the team that the goal is vital and that accomplishing it will benefit both the organization and members of the team.

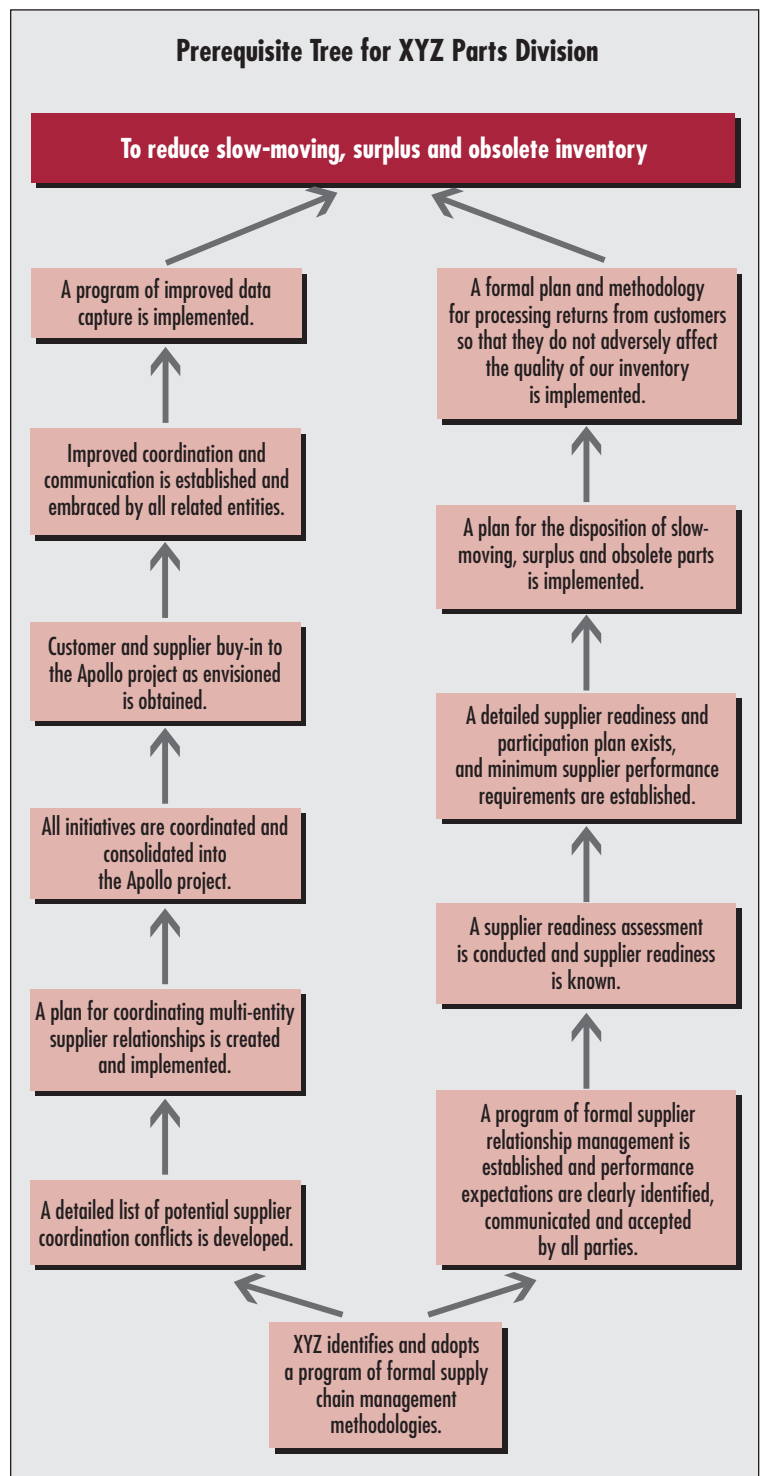
✓ **List obstacles to implementing the goal.** The team creates a list of obstacles to meeting the goal, and continues the list until no one can come up with any additional obstacles. Obstacles are categorized as either related to implementation, as reflecting policies or procedures that will have to change if the goal is to be met, or as personal obstacles faced by team members.

✓ **Determine intermediate objectives to overcome obstacles.** The team next comes up with solutions to each obstacle. These become the intermediate objectives. For example, if lack of expertise is an objection, training is the solution. Training becomes an intermediate objective.

✓ **Map the intermediate objectives implementation sequence.** At this juncture, the team has a list of intermediate objectives that, if accomplished, will eliminate all obstacles to achieving the team’s goal. Task four is to organize these into a linked plan.

✓ **Assign intermediate objectives to team members.** Assign each intermediate objective to a specific team member. He or she has responsibility for meeting the objective. The team must also identify resources needed to meet the objectives and set timetables for completing them.

✓ **Execute implementation plan.** The plan is a living document and can be altered as you go along. If done properly, it will be a reasonable estimation of how implementation will take place.



The Authentic Approach to Problem Solving

(continued from page 7)

many of our suppliers are informal and not well defined as to performance expectations.” The corresponding intermediate objective was: “A program of formal supplier relationship management is established and performance expectations are clearly identified, communicated and accepted by all parties.”

The finished tree is shown on page seven.

For another case study of a Prerequisite Tree, go to:
<http://my.summary.com>

Working With the Adversary Relationship

When the goal is to develop positive team attitudes and behaviors, collaboration is the long-term objective. Collaboration creates synergy. Synergy is what separates a team from a group. Synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Team members working together actually create energy.

Unfortunately, there are many adversary relationships in the workplace. Whether based on prejudices or on real differences about core issues, adversarial relationships stand in the way of developing team synergy. Generational conflict has the potential to become adversarial. A Boomer may think Xers don't value hard work, while the Xer thinks Boomers are stuck doing things the way they were done 30 years ago.

The best way to avoid adversarial relationships is to prevent them from forming. Take care not to play one group against the other. Focus on rewards rather than punishment, for example. And never compare one generation member to another. Don't, for example, react to an Xer messing up by comparing her unfavorably to the typical Boomer. Don't dehumanize anyone. Finally, make sure everyone has work to do that is meaningful.

What do you do if preventing an adversary relationship is impossible? Take the following steps to stop the conflict from getting worse:

1. Both groups must decide that they want to change the relationship.
2. Once they decide to change, bring in a facilitator.
3. Clarify positions after both sides acknowledge that they have a right to different views.
4. Redefine roles in light of current conditions. Each party lists its wants and concerns.
5. Develop a contract between the adversaries. This provides the parties with a clear list of what each can and cannot do or say to the other. ■

Retaining Generation Xers

In looking at salient factors most critical to retaining Generation X employees, six categories emerge. These are:

Work Environment: Xers are individualistic and appreciate casual attire. They also appreciate the ability to personalize workspace.

Work Content: Money isn't as much of a motivation as is interesting work. Xers will leave for a competitor if they think the work will be more fun, challenging and interesting. You must make work fun and allow Xers to make decisions.

Growth Opportunities: Xers expect to be promoted based on their performance, not on their seniority. They don't expect to “Pay one's dues,” if they've already proven that they can do the job. Xers also appreciate training opportunities.

Compensation and rewards: Xers want to be rewarded individually as well as for team accomplishments. They also appreciate nontraditional benefits that benefit their daily life. They want to be rewarded frequently and don't like waiting for a yearly bonus.

Organizational Culture: Xers want their organization's culture to reflect their values. They want to work for companies that don't demand long work hours and family sacrifice. They won't tolerate a threatening work environment.

Working Relationships with Manager and Co-Workers: While Xers place a high value on autonomy and independence, they also need supportive working relationships to balance the isolation. Mentoring, for example, which is both supportive and individual-oriented, works particularly well. On the other hand, Xers will resent — loudly — any attempts to micromanage their work. ■

For a look at Boomer and Xer characteristics, go to:
<http://my.summary.com>

Boomer Manager Loses Xer Over Game

When a small but very effective high-tech company began expanding, it hired a young Boomer to manage a workgroup made up mainly of Xers. On his first day on the job, the Boomer called his staff in and laid out some ground rules. He told the staff that he wanted them to remove any computer games they might have on their work computers. One of the Xers mumbled “Whatever,” and walked out of the room and the organization. He had another job within three days while it took the Boomer six months to find a replacement.