

DID YOU KNOW?

GENERGRAPHICS

After World War II, the study of demographics was touted as the marketing gold standard. People were grouped by age, gender and income [i.e., ages 25 to 54, the prime purchasing years] and lumped together.

"That's a popular demo for retail outlets," comments marketer Phil Goodman, "but there are three different generations in there." And because they don't think alike, marketing efforts are wasted.

In response, Goodman determined that it's the generation someone belongs to that matters in reaching them. He discovered that the earliest influences on a generation set the distinct worldview.

Further, those early influences will shape decisions by members of that generation for the rest of their lives, and will remain constant at 18 or 80.

Goodman named his approach "Genergraphics," and today he is called upon by Fox Television Network, *USA TODAY*, *The Wall Street Journal* and The Ford Motor Company, among others, to expound on it.

The aim is to help you figure out how to please as many people as possible without turning anybody off.

Here's the sad fact: "There's no one approach that wins across several generations," says Goodman. To put together a meeting program that satisfies as many of your attendees as possible, your first job is to study up on each generation to see what they like and what they don't. You've heard the names: The Forgotten Generation [born between 1935 to 1945]; the Boomers [1945 to 1964]; Generation X [1964 to 1976], and Echo Boom [aged Baby Boomers' pampered darlings].

Goodman suggests reading books on the subject, like Cheryl Russell's *100 Predictions for the Baby Boom*, and also visiting his web site, genergraphics.com.

Then you'll want to learn what percentage of your meeting group belongs to each generation. Goodman suggests a questionnaire that asks: What would you like to see? What would you like to do? The response options would be designed to be generation-specific.

Once you know the percentages of each generation, what do you do with them? Steve Lowe, director of sales at Harrah's and Harveys Lake Tahoe, is a believer in the power of Genergraphics. He saw first-hand how Genergraphics moved audience response predictability from 30%, based on demographics, to 70% in a test of random visitors at the two properties last year.

Lowe asserts that you can make most events fit any of the generations by careful choice of venue, by the decor, the food choices, but most of all, through music. "Music touches a lot of ages," Lowe comments.

"You can have an event on a boat—normally a passive event that would appeal to The Forgotten Generation—but add in the right dance music; the younger attendees will really like it and some Boomers will follow.

It works well when a meeting professional has this information. "It's more than buying the shrimp for the

welcome reception," Lowe explains. "Too often, I have a planner who asks: 'What's your room rate? How much is the reception going to cost if we have the shrimp, or not? Can we have our breakfast at 7 instead of 8 a.m.?' In other words, it's just about logistics." Well, not if you're aiming pick up that additional 40%. **SM**



Smart meetings

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