

Unlocking trust issues between Baby Boomers and Gen X/Y

- BABY BOOMERS THINK GEN Y ARE FAKE
- GEN X/Y COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF BOOMERS

THE key to the difficulties between the Baby Boomer generation and Gen X and Y all comes down to trust.

And Gen X and Y are "shaping up to be the antithesis of their parents; they hold different values to the baby boomers at the equivalent stage of the life cycle," says KPMG demographer Bernard Salt.

A study released yesterday by recruitment agency Expr3ss! defined Generation Y - those who are now in their 20s - as typically outgoing and open with good social networks and high levels of friendship.

In fact, their levels of friendship and tendency to seek help were 20 per cent higher than average.

But Boomers - those born in the 15 years after the end of World War II and often the parents of Gen Y members - had levels of friendship and help-seeking tendencies at 15 per cent less than average.

The study also found that Boomers are on average 55 per cent more trusting than they are likely to be seeking friendships or help.

But Gen Y members are the opposite, in that they are more likely to be seeking help and friendships than they are trusting. And in this case the study found that when this trust level is translated into their expectations of each other, there is likely to be a greater level of discord between the two generations, leading to difficult working experiences.

"A fatal dislocation in relationships and communications exists between the younger and older worker," said Express's Dr Glyn Brokensha.

"This dislocation means that each will respond in their own preferred style, which is exactly the opposite of what the other expects and needs.

"Boomer managers mistakenly assume that the strong friendship and help-seeking behaviours of younger employees are evidence of high trust, whereas exactly the reverse is true."

Dr Brokensha said that Boomer managers failed to work at building trust in their relationships with their younger workers because they believed it already existed when in fact it didn't.

Compounding this was that younger workers' tendencies to friendship-seeking and help-seeking behaviour obscured their need to express their lack of trust.

"Boomer managers and X/Y employees enter a deadly interlock where each assumes that what they see in the other is evidence of that which does not actually exist," said Dr Brokensha.

"Boomers assume that X/Ys have levels of trust even higher than their own, because of their friendship-seeking and help-seeking natures,"

"And X/Ys assume that Boomers are untrusting and, worse, untrustworthy because they lack those very same friendship and help-seeking characteristics," he said.

