The Gen-X Factor: Career Navigation Strategies for the (so-called) “Lost Generation”

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• “Baby bust” after the Post WWII baby boom.
• Born between 1965 and 1981 (definitions vary)
• Starting to turn 50 this year (!)
• At 55 million, smaller cohort than Boomers (76 million) or Millennials (66 million)
• Generational period is shorter than others for unclear reasons
• Defining moments: end of Cold War, fall of Berlin wall, introduction of personal computer, emergence of AIDS, Challenger explosion
THE GOOD

• Entrepreneurial
• Higher educational attainment, more diversity than previous generations
• Independent
• Self-reliant
• Flexible/adaptable to change
• Not “digital natives” but adapted well to technology

THE NOT SO GOOD

• “The Lost Generation”
• “The MTV Generation”
• Latchkey Kids (high parental divorce rate made us helicopter parents)
• America’s “Middle Child”
• Cynical
• Distrust of authority
• Disenfranchised
• Overlooked by the media
• Defined by “turmoil and “uncertainty” (The Atlantic)
“Your company’s rising and future leaders” (Time)

“Stuck in the middle” – Boomers retiring later, Millennials in hot pursuit (will be 40% of workforce by 2020)

Loyal, hardworking, independent, assume work speaks for itself.

High proportion of Xers sandwiched between dependent kids and parents over 65 (use of FMLA/time away from work).

Hit hard in recession; worried about retirement and planning to work longer before retiring.

Relative scarcity can make us desirable to employers but can also keep us isolated.

Value honesty, creativity, flexibility, responsibility, view boss as expert and believe place at the table must be earned (Forbes)
Where might Gen Xers be in the museum field?

- Middle management
- Not sure how to move up to directorship
- New directors needing support
- Looking to fill in skill gaps
- Need management training/mentorship
- May feel “stuck”
- May be limited geographically because of family, spouse/partner’s job, mortgage/finances
- Work/life balance issues may affect whether we can “lean in” (childcare, eldercare, etc.)
- May not want to pursue the typical upward trajectory but unsure about other options

What are our next steps?
WHY EXPLORE GEN X HERE AT NEMA?
TO NETWORK

TO HELP STRATEGIZE A CAREER ROAD MAP

FOR FUN
Now... exchange cards with the person next to you.

Wear your button and identify fellow Gen Xers at the conference.
TAKE A SEAT AT ANY ONE OF THE TABLES.

WE WILL ROTATE EVERY 20 MINUTES.
AT EACH TABLE

TAKE AN INDEX CARD

JOT DOWN A NEW IDEA OR STRATEGY YOU ENCOUNTERED

LEAVE THE CARD AT EACH TABLE WHEN YOU SWITCH

WE WILL COMPILE AND DISTRIBUTE TO EVERYONE

GRAB YOUR PENCIL!
A Few Notes:

Don’t get too personal (save questions about personal situations for later), but if the conversation does veer in that direction...

Respect confidentiality of your peers – conversations about careers can be sensitive.

Write whatever you wish on your cards. A few things we’d particularly love to hear about:

- Your needs related to career growth
- Ideas about how to meet those needs, either informally or through NEMA
- How do we best continue this conversation? Don’t forget to leave your contact info on the card(s) you fill out so we can keep in touch.