

# GENERATIONAL OR LIFE STAGE INFLUENCES?

*Putting it all together to Change Behaviors*



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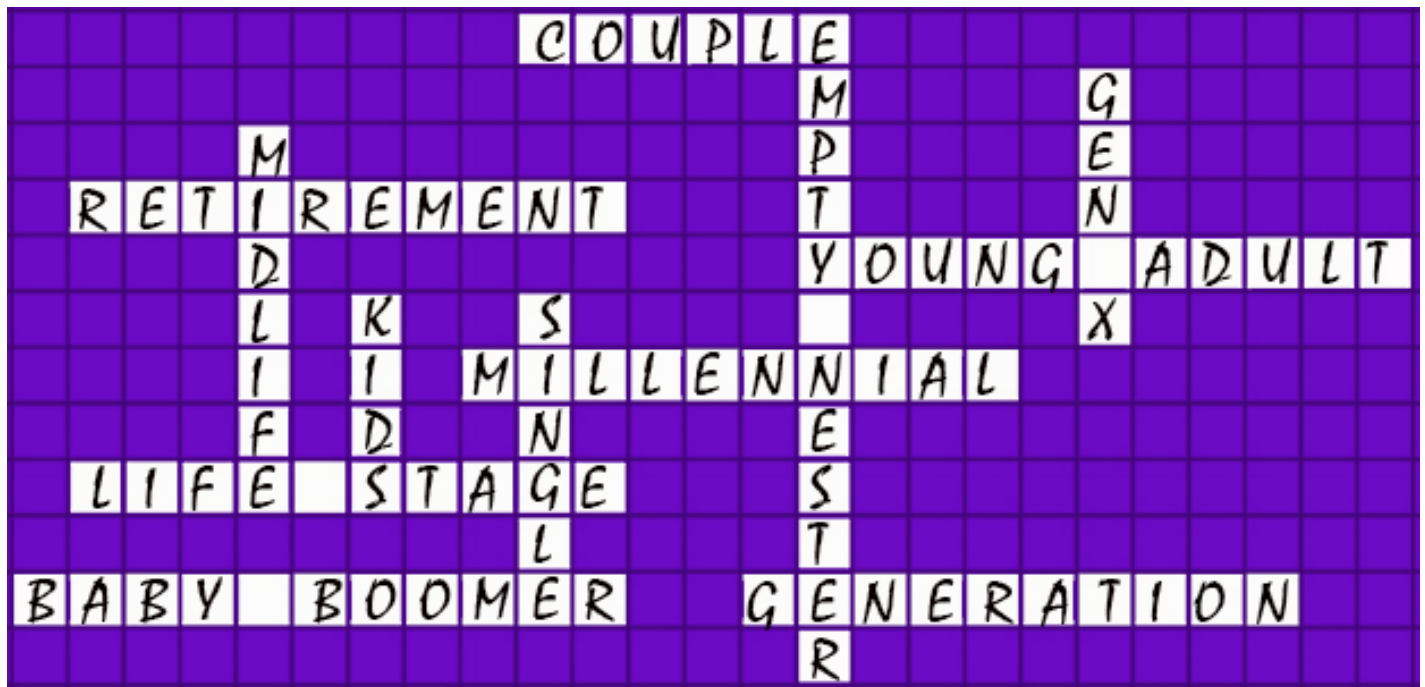
**gen·er·a·tion**, /jenə' rāSH(ə)n/, **n.**, a group of individuals born and living contemporaneously. Their shared experiences influence their attitudes, tastes and communication styles.



**life stage**, /līf , stāj/, **n.**, a series of stages an individual passes through during its lifetime.



# Drives and Motivations



**Millennials are already America's largest generation.** Much has been written about this generation, and how they will dominate every aspect of American life over the next 30 or 40 years. A quick Google search on "millennial generation" results in an astounding 28 million hits.

This avalanche of data might lead you to believe generational influences are the key to understanding what drives and motivates people. However, simply knowing someone is a Millennial is quite literally just the tip of the iceberg. When you're only looking at surface features, you're missing 90% of the story. If you want to provide an incentive reward to influence a person's behavior, you need to look below the surface.

Life stage is critical in determining an award strategy to influence behaviors. For our purposes, life stages are defined as the quantifiable characteristics of a population beyond simply their age. Life stages take into account a person's marital status, if they have children, the age of their children and their living conditions. Do they own a home or rent? Are they city or suburban dwellers? Is their home in a rural community? The life stage of a person has a far greater impact on their choice of awards than their generation.

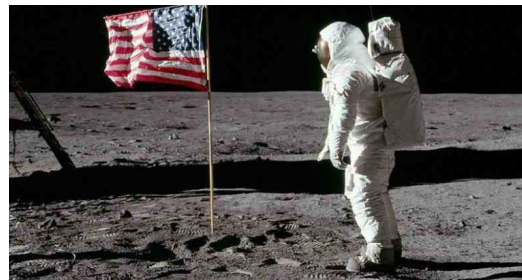
# Generational Influences

**A generation is all of the people born and living about the same time** and regarded as a group collectively. Sociologists typically define the start and stop dates for a generation in 18 or 20 year time frames, yet there is always debate over the exact years of any specific generation. Generally, sociologists studying generational influences group most people alive today as:

- The Silent Generation      1925 – 1945
- Baby Boomers              1946 – 1963
- Generation X                1964 – 1981
- Millennials (Gen Y)        1982 – 1996
- Generation Z                1997 - Present

Generations have common experiences and memories that define their times. Ask someone to tell about the earliest national news story they remember which most affected them, and you'll get an idea of their generation.

- Baby Boomers normally cite either John Kennedy's assassination or seeing Neil Armstrong walk on the moon.



- Gen Xers most often say the Challenger space shuttle disaster, the fall of the Berlin Wall or the first Iraqi War touched them deeply.



- Millennials will tell you exactly where they were when they first heard about the 9/11 attacks.





These are collective memories that define the time a generation occupies, but other influences can also impact people within a generation. Technologies affect how those in a generation communicate.

- The Silent Generation grew up listening to “Little Orphan Annie” and “The Shadow” on radio.



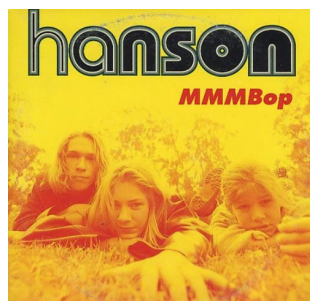
- Most Baby Boomers can tell you about “Howdy Doody time” or “The Mouseketeers”.



- Gen Xers learned their letters and numbers from Muppets on “Sesame Street” and had to drop a quarter into a slot to play a video game.



- Millennials are digital natives. The Oregon Trail taught them life lessons, and they remember singing along to “MMMBop” with Hanson.



# Generational Influences are Broad and Directional

**Understanding the times someone grew up in**, including the historic events, the dominant technologies and the social norms, may offer some general information about how a person is comfortable communicating. It could also offer some insights into their expectations for something like a purchasing experience. Knowing their generation may even provide some very broad and directional idea of what they might consider normal for their family and work life.

But expecting to understand someone's drives and motivations just by knowing their generation is unrealistic. Consider some of these polar opposites of the same generation:

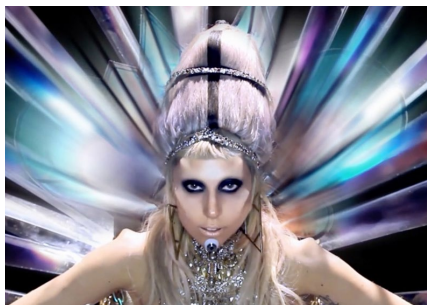
- Barack Obama and Donald Trump are both Baby Boomers. Both have served as US President, but their political views and policies couldn't be more different. The press referred to the 44th president as "No drama Obama" while our 45th president seems to revel in shaking things up in the world through his regular Twitter handle, @realDonaldTrump.



- House Speaker Paul Ryan and MSNBC Host Rachel Maddow are both Gen Xers, but you could expect a fiery debate on the US healthcare policy between the two.

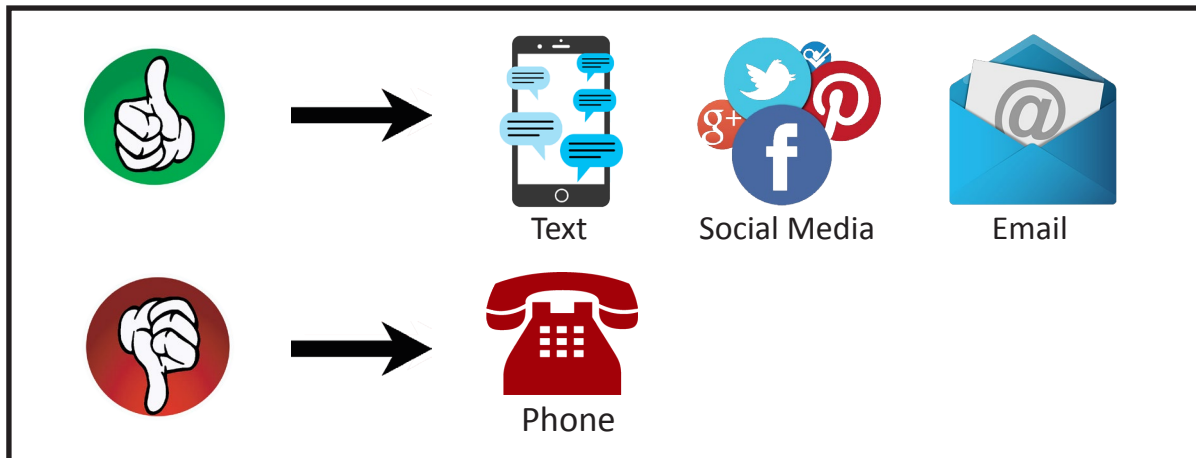


- Both Lady Gaga and Carrie Underwood are Millennials. While Lady Gaga is known for her outlandish fashion choices, Carrie Underwood could be called America's sweetheart.

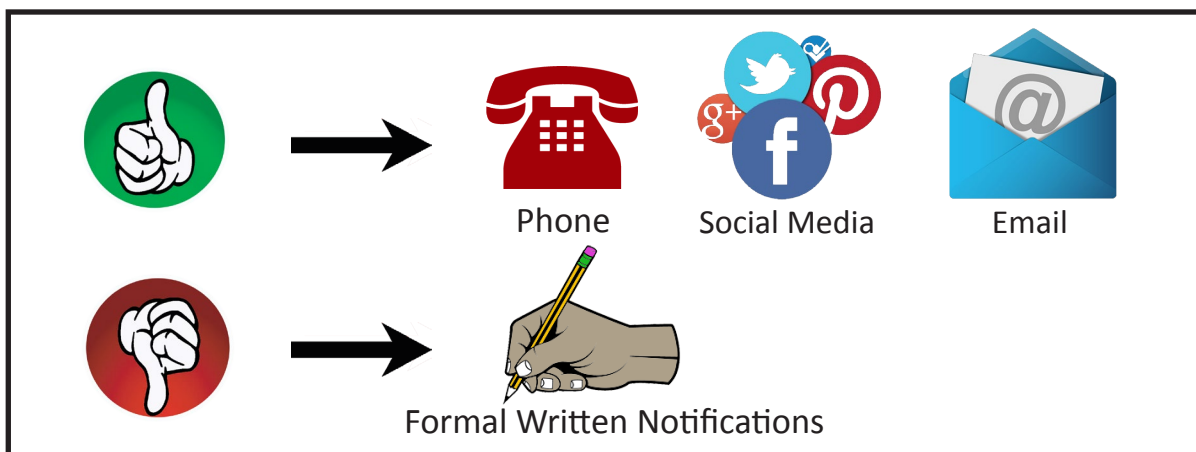


# Communications

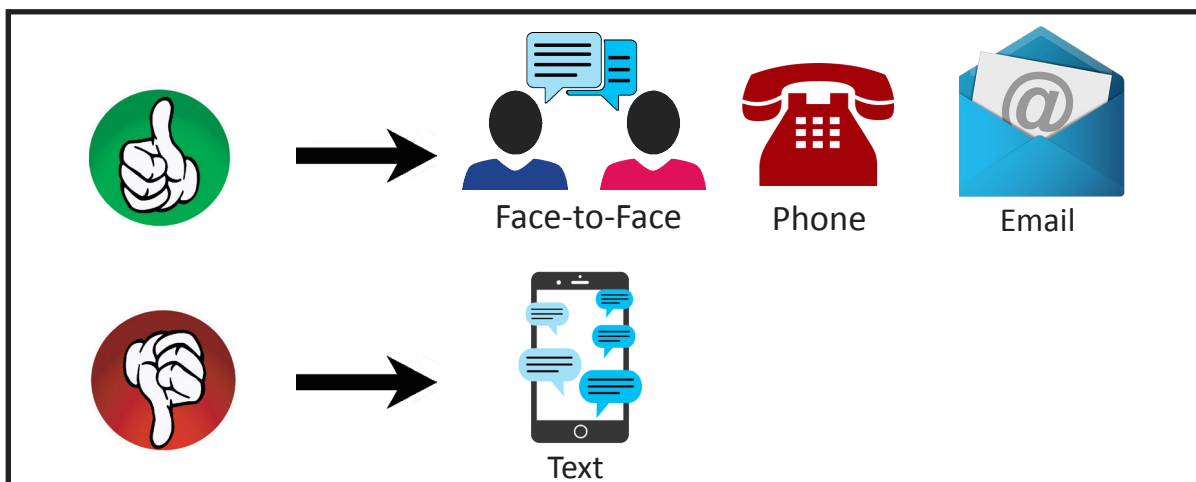
## Millennials



## Gen Xers



## Boomers





# Work Ethic

**Millennials:** Entrepreneurial, Multi-tasking

**Gen Xers:** Independent, Balanced, Work smarter

**Boomers:** Driven, Workaholic



# Family Experience

**Millennials:** Helicopter Parents, Merged families

**Gen Xers:** Latch-key kids, Dual income families

**Boomers:** Stay-at-home moms, Disintegrating “Clever Family”



Hinda Incentives, Generational or Life Stage Influences?



# Life Stage Influences

**Life Stage Influences are based on individual circumstances.** As such, life stage influences are much more accurate predictors of the drives, motives and perhaps even the values of an incentive program participant. Take a moment and think about the following three people and which two are most similar.

- A married 27-year-old with a toddler living in a home in Omaha and working as a manager in a manufacturing company.



- A single 26-year-old working for a Silicon Valley startup who lives in a rented apartment.



- A 45-year-old middle manager who owns a home in Charlotte and lives with their spouse and two young teenagers.



Although separated by a nearly 20-year generational divide and half a continent, the parents with their own homes probably have much more in common with one another than either would have with the lifestyle of the single, Silicon Valley Millennial. It's likely their drives and motivations are tightly tied to the needs of their children. While the single person might choose experiential awards to enrich their own life, the parents are just as apt to select awards as gifts for their children than items for themselves.

In fact, life stage influences tend to outweigh generational differences when it comes to incentive awards.

- Homeowners will choose grills, lawn furniture and housewares to make their abode more comfortable, appealing and easier to entertain guests.



- Apartment dwellers with less space may opt for awards creating memorable experiences.



- Parents always relish giving gifts to their children and might be very driven by a bicycle or gaming system for their youngsters.



- Singles may be looking to give one of their rewards as a gift as well, but are more likely to be searching for adult gifts like jewelry for a significant other or perhaps even their parents.





# Life Stage Influences are more narrow and specific to the individual.

**Understanding a participant's life stage offers a much clearer picture** of the underlying circumstances driving their behaviors. But not all of your prospective incentive program participants are at the same life stage simultaneously. That's why you should look to create an award portfolio appealing to a wide variety of people at different life stages. Studying people at different life stages simplifies creating an award selection to inspire behavior changes.

## **Young Adult:**

According to the [Pew Research Center](#), there are over 75 million Millennials in the US. Generally, young adults between 18 and 35 are actively engaged and passionate to leave their mark on the world. They often seek new experiences to expand their world and enrich their lives.



## **Single, Living Alone:**

[Reuters](#) reports 28% of the US population lives alone. That's the most in our history. The growth in Americans living alone crosses all generations, and this may affect their drives. "Solitaires" report spending more time on self-improvement. Knowing this could lead you to include fitness equipment as an option in your award portfolio.



## Couples without Children:

For years, Americans have been delaying having children. So, today more young couples are without children longer. This offers time to deepen interpersonal relationships and spiritual intimacy. Traveling with a spouse creates memories and bonds. This also offers them time to build a comfortable home life and security for the future when they choose to add to their family. Including individual travel and housewares might be very appealing to this group.



## People with Children:

Children change people's outlook. Suddenly, all decisions are based on how the outcome affects the child. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), only about 15% of American women between 40 and 44 have never had children. But the face of the American family is changing dramatically. Eight million unmarried couples are cohabitating and 38% of those have children. Additionally, the [US Census Bureau](#) finds over 10% of US households are headed by a single parent with children under 18. An engaging award portfolio should always consider the importance of items that can be used by the entire family or gifted to the kids.



## Empty Nesters:

After raising a family, empty nesters find they have more discretionary income, more free time and will look for ways to contribute to society through volunteerism, mentorships and other philanthropies. Providing award opportunities to help support charities can be ideal for these participants. But don't forget, these empty nesters are often grandparents. Gifts for the grandchildren can be very motivating to them as well.



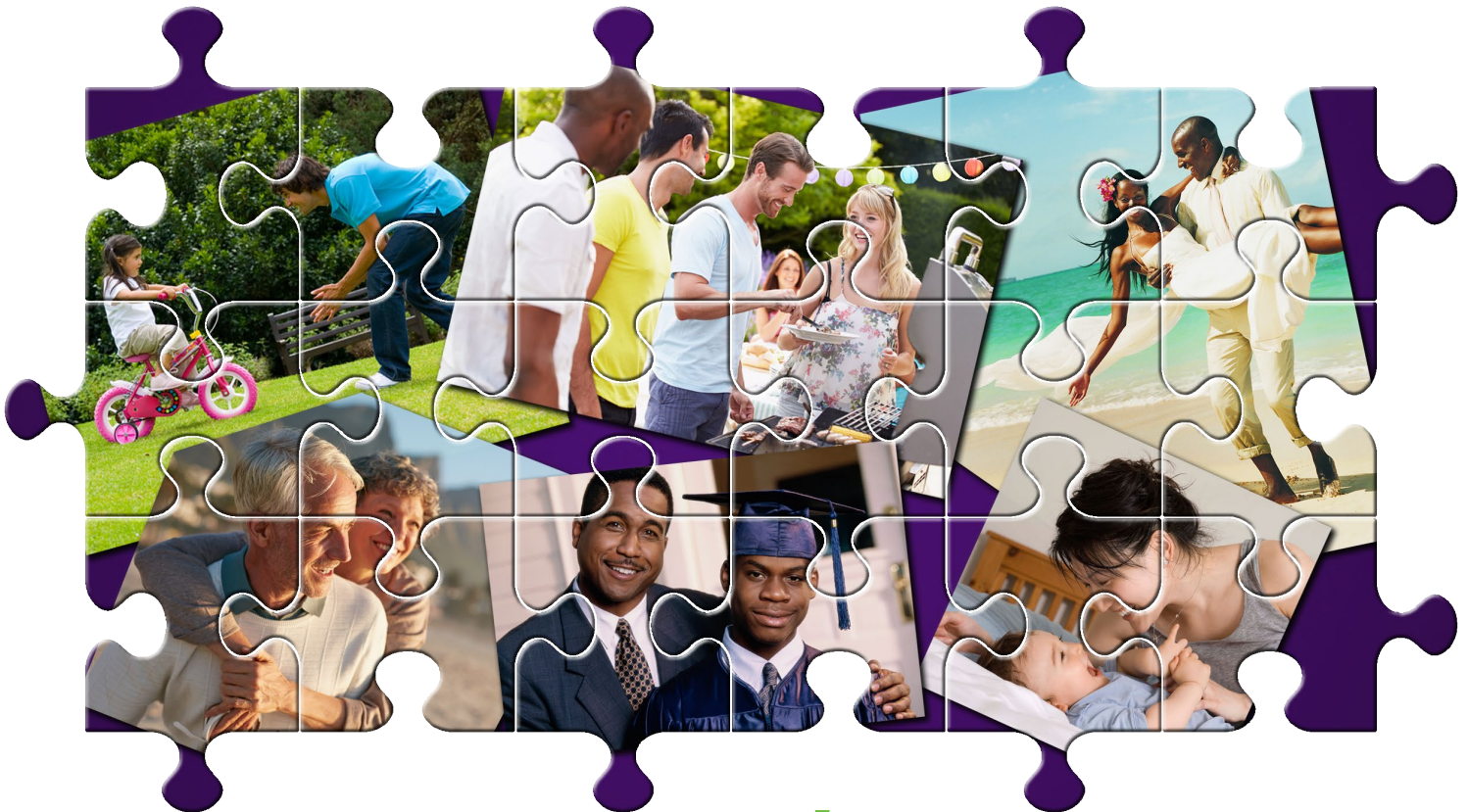


# Takeaways

- **Understanding generation will help with communications.**
- **Knowing life stage pinpoints incentive awards that inspire action.**

The three best pieces of advice we can offer for choosing awards for your next incentive program are:

1. Choose a broad selection of awards appealing to a variety of life stages.
2. Look for memorable rewards.
  - Durable items like home furnishings are consistent, lasting reminders.
  - Experiential rewards like concert tickets create long-term memories.
3. Make the participant feel special with an award delivery experience recognizing their efforts.
  - Changing the packaging just a little like using a white shipping box or colored tissue paper can make the rewards feel more like a present and accentuate the reward delivery experience.



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