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Passing the baton to Gen X

By Fiona Crawford

Over the next twenty years, workplaces worldwide will move from a largely Baby Boomer-dominated management hierarchy to one where Generation X managers preside. This transition is unlikely to be seamless however, and unless Australian companies begin embracing generational change now, experts predict many businesses will likely close their doors in the ensuing decades.

Organisations need to create a well-structured leadership team now to avoid conflict as Baby Boomers start to hand over power to Gen X. Generation X represents 40 per cent of the workforce in Australia, yet Baby Boomers currently occupy the majority of leadership roles in Australia. As a consequence, the cultures of Australian organisations largely reflect the values and expectations of the Boomer generation, leaving many Generations Xers feeling frustrated and excluded.

According to Macquarie University PhD candidate Peter Fuda, who is founder and regional director of consultancy firm Professional Change and Development (PCD), bridging the 'Grand Canyon' that currently exists between Baby Boomers and Generation X is a business imperative that can no longer be ignored.

"Many of today's more enlightened organisations are coming to the conclusion that a mix of Boomers and Xers in the boardroom is the ideal situation to be in," he explains. "Companies who are able to bridge the generational gap will no doubt experience a greater level of commercial success in the future than those companies who don't."

Fuda is quick to point out that neither management style is wholly better or worse than the other, but with the speed and volume of change in today's

business environment, organisations that continue to operate under antiquated leadership and management models will be disadvantaged in the long term.

"We are in an age where intellectual capital is the primary driver of competitive advantage and yet many organisations are often a legacy of a command and control environment," he says. "For the first time in history, Generation Xers have more information

than their leaders. With that in mind, the ability to engage Generation X in the workplace is not going to be about controlling information, it's going to be about guiding, mentoring and coaching."

Traditionally, Boomer values have included achievement, advancement and promotion, economic security, power and authority, stability and status. Surveys conducted by Fuda's

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