



Generational Leadership: Bridging the Generations Gap

By Dee Dee Raap

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“Where have all the young members gone? Long time passing...” If the slightly revised version of that 60’s classic describes your organization, you’re likely looking at some gray hair—yours and others—and you risk losing what you’ve built.

Seniors and Baby Boomers are aging. Sometimes gracefully, sometimes not. Baby Boomers especially have worked very hard to defy the process. Anti-aging products for skin, hair, body and mind fill the shelves of stores helping Boomers lessen the appearance of age. Boomers want to last—forever, thank you very much—and we want that life to be the way it always has been.

OK, so we’re not realistic. But we really do exist, and our way of thinking has an inherent danger attached to it: we can think our way is best, especially if we built it.

Snowmobilers who are Seniors and Baby Boomers built the trails that today stretch across your state. Congratulations on a legacy of recreation you’ve developed for generations to come.

But look around at your club. Do you mostly see members your own age, with your same hair color? Where HAVE all the young members gone?

It’s time to take the energy you used to build the trail system and use it to build membership that will sustain the trail system. You did it once, you can do it again. But you can’t do it the same exact way you’ve done everything else. Follow these tips for building your membership:

1. Inspire a vision. Remember the first time you looked at a hill and said you build a trail there? You could see it, right? Same here. Create a vision in your head with the members who are young and who take leadership roles quickly.
2. Create a plan. Create a plan for targeting young members. Focus on them, their needs, who will contact them, what they need to hear to say “yes.”
3. Give it up. You can’t control and grow with today’s generations. Think “influence” and “coach” instead. Remember when you were young and someone told YOU how to do something, but you wanted to do it your way? And when you did things YOUR way, whether it was building a trail or building a business or succeeding at your job—didn’t you feel more ownership?

Young members need ownership. Ownership will sustain trails, sustain the system. Ownership will create the next wave of snowmobilers who fight to protect access—because they’ll figure out that

without access, there's no place to ride. And that just may help them not just join your cause, but make it theirs.

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About Dee Dee Raap:

Dee Dee Raap is a service expert, national speaker and consultant who loves to help people make their journey great. Dee Dee believes we all serve, and how we serve, lead and live is guided by the authentic, timeless values inspired by our moms and other key people. Putting those values to practice every day not only makes service great, but helps organizations grow and retain employees, a result Dee Dee's clients and audiences know well.

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