

# Bridging the Generation Gap in the Turf Industry

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# Who we are

## Joel Rieker

- Iowa State Student (Turfgrass)
- Started in the industry at 14
- At 16 I knew what I wanted my career to be
- Experiences include: Minor League Baseball, Major League Soccer, College Athletic Fields, and Recreation Sports Complex

## Tim VanLoo

- B.S. and M.S. at Michigan State University (Turfgrass)
- Started in Industry at 16
- Experiences include: golf, Turfgrass research, and 3 different university athletic dept.

# Our Goal!!!

- Goal- To help educate the experienced turf managers in the new generations style of work and communication. Through many experiences of our own we will help illustrate the generational gap in the industry and give techniques and advice on passing on your legacy and grooming the next generation of turf managers.

# Outline

- Different generations
- Technology, how it has affected communication
- What professionals say about generation gaps
- What our experiences have shown us
- Generation gaps aren't the whole story when communicating

# We Have All Been Here!!!



# Generations

- Veterans – 1922-1945
- Baby Boomers – 1946-1964
- Generation X – 1965-1979
- Generation Y – 1980-2000
- Generation Z/Millennials – 2000-Present

When I was your age,  
"Modem" was what a  
landscaper did  
to lawns!



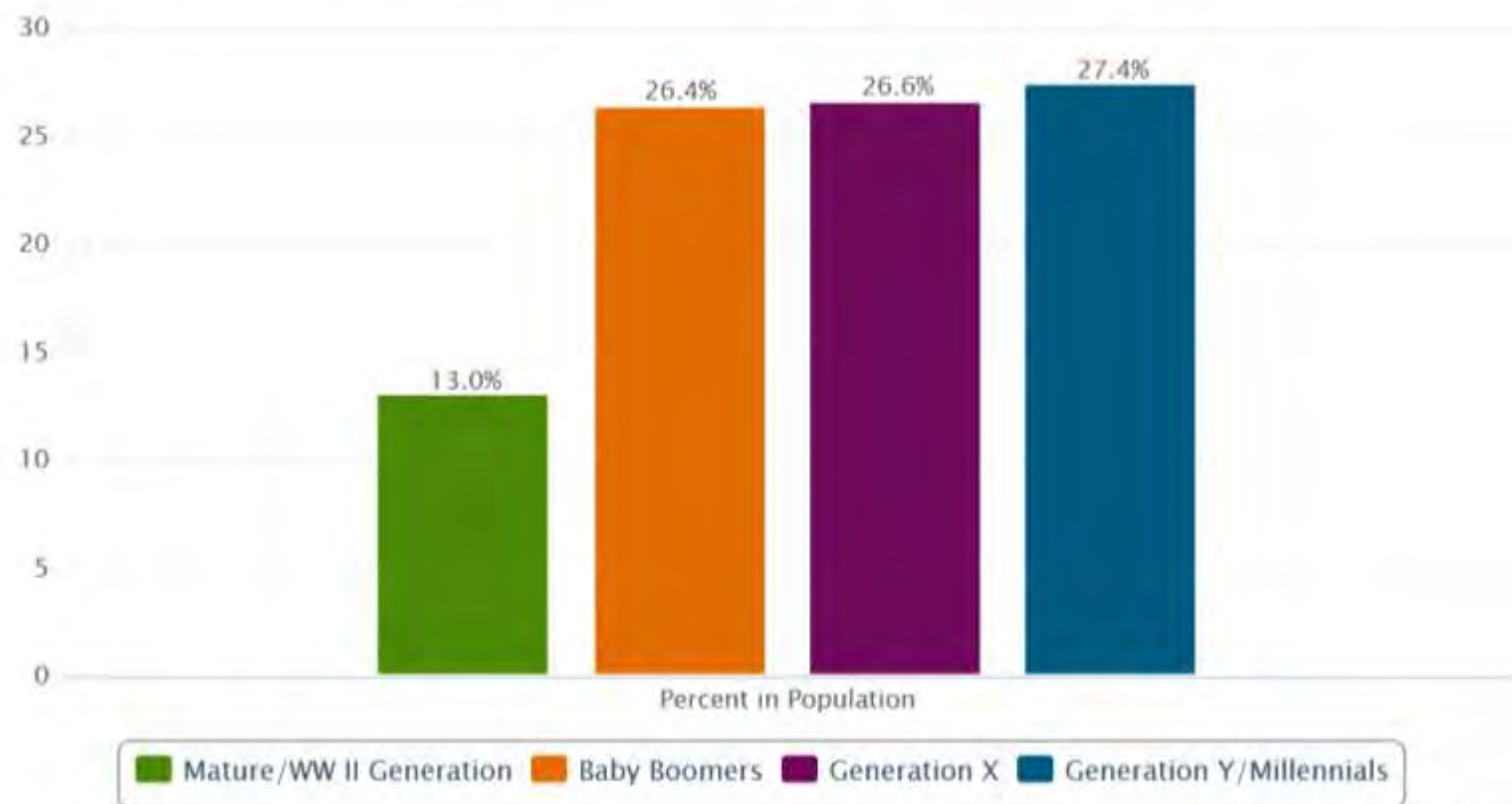
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# Workplace Characteristics

Fairleigh Dickinson University

	Veterans	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Generation Y
Work Ethic & Values	<b>Hard work</b> Respect authority Sacrifice Duty before fun	<b>Workaholics</b> Work efficiently Personal fulfillment Desire quality	Eliminate the task Self-reliance Want structure and direction	<b>What is next??</b> Multitasking Entrepreneurial Goal Oriented
Work Is...	<b>An obligation</b>	An exciting adventure	A difficult challenge	<b>A means to an end</b>
Leadership Style	Directive Command and Control	Consensual Collegial	Everyone is the same Challenge others Ask why	To be determined
<b>Communication</b>	<b>Formal memo</b>	<b>In person</b>	<b>Direct Immediate</b>	<b>Email or Voicemail</b>
Interactive style	<b>Individual</b>	Team player Loves to have meetings	Entrepreneur	Participative
Feedback & Rewards	<b>No news is good</b> news Satisfaction in a job well done	Don't appreciate it Money Title recognition	Freedom is the best reward	<b>Whenever I want it</b> <b>Constant</b>
Messages that Motivate	Your experience is respected	You are valued and needed	Do it your way Forget the rules	You will work with other bright and creative people
Work and Family Life	Never the two shall meet	No Balance Work to live	Balance	Balance

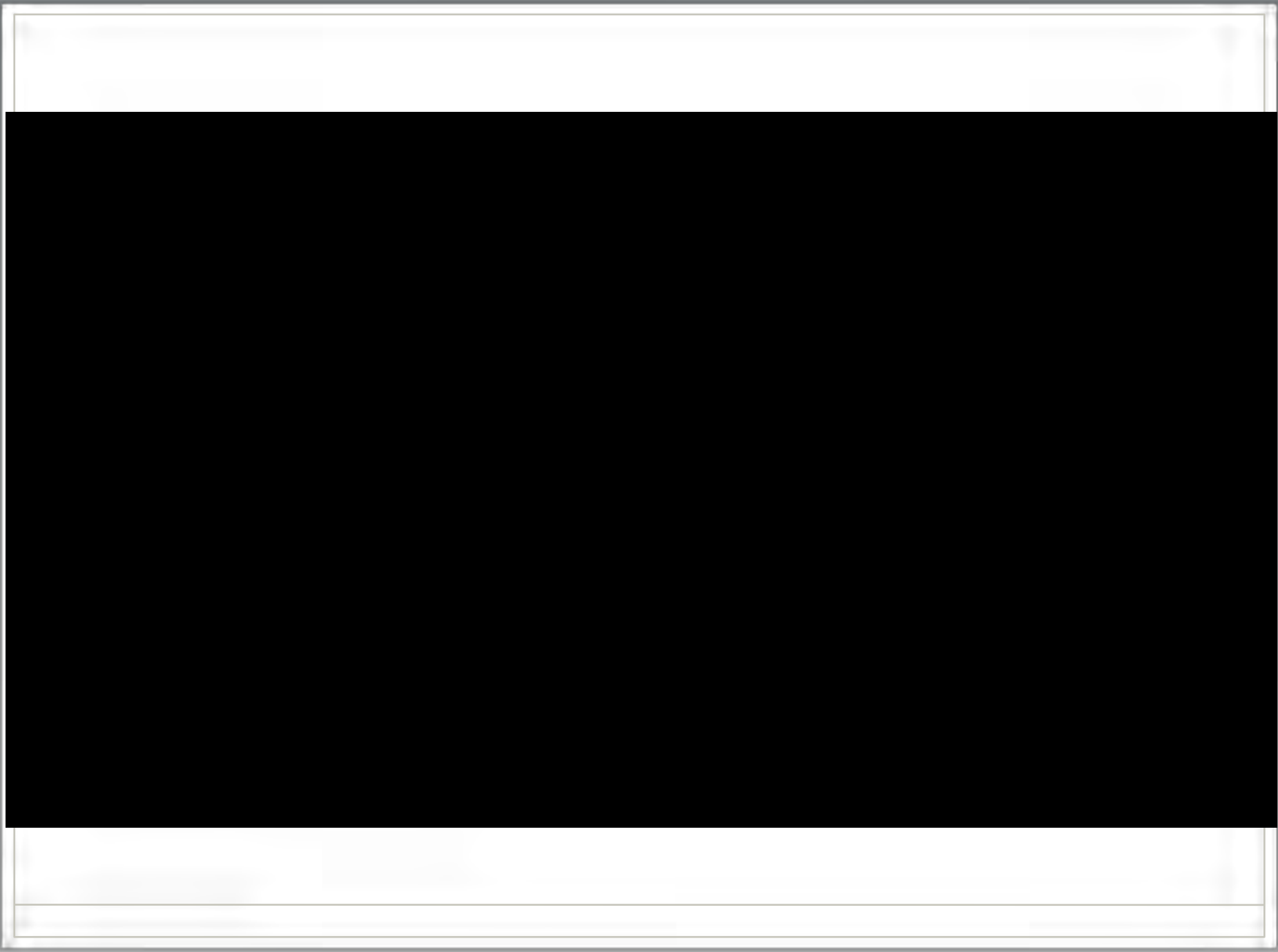
## United States by Generations, 2010, for Four Generations\*±



catalyst.org

Source: [United States Census Bureau, "2010 Census Briefs – Age and Sex Composition: 2010, Table 1" \(2011\).](#)





# Communication Types

- Social Media
  - Twitter
  - Facebook
  - Instagram
  - Snapchat
  - Vine
  - Pinterest???
- Phones
  - Constant internet access
  - Email
  - Text
  - Music
  - ESPN Updates
  - Games
  - Weather



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search ID: dden111

"So let me repeat this: nobody touches  
their smartphones during the meeting."

# Technology

- Positives
  - Information at your fingertips
  - Time savings
  - Portable office
  - Constant connection
  - Camera
  - GPS
  - Maps
- Negatives
  - Gives off appearance that work isn't important
  - Focus may not be solely on the task at hand
  - Changes interpersonal communication
  - False confidence
  - The "Now" affect

# STMA Members

## 2006 Internet Usage

- Home 20.1%
- Office 78.3%
- Other 1.6%

## 2013 Internet Usage

- Home 16.7%
- Office 60.9%
- Other 22.4%
- 79.4% Have a smartphone
- 41.5% Have a tablet
- 55.6% Use Facebook
- 20.7% Use Twitter

# What the Pro's say...

- “Gen Y covets, among other things, work/life balance, schedule flexibility, belief in the company mission, and access to and transparency of all information.” Randy Hain
- “the phrase ‘Pay Your Dues’ is strongly disliked by this newer generation.” Dr. Tim Elmore



# Recommendations for Gen X/Baby Boomers, (Randy Hain, 2013)

- Start listening, stop assuming
- Be present where they are, understand what they are about and expect
- View Gen Y as our next leaders/strategic business investment, tap into their potential
- Scrap “do as I say, not as I do”

# Recommendations for Gen Y

(Randy Hain, 2013)

- Having perspective is important
- Be patient
- Look at relationships and communication differently
- Convey respect while pursuing goals
- Pursue mentors and advocates

# Generation Y

## Our Observations in the Turfgrass World

- Intimidated by Authority
  - Young people would rather ask questions among themselves
  - Fear of doing something wrong is less than asking how to do it right
  - Fear of showing a weakness or not knowing something
  - Hard time admitting fault

# Generation Y

## Our Suggestions in the Turfgrass World

- Suggestions for Authority
  - Be patient
  - Be very clear with expectations
  - Allow failure to happen and create learning opportunities
  - Focus on results, not how the job gets done

# Generation Y

## Our Suggestions in the Turfgrass World

- Suggestions for Authority
  - Answer all questions, promote environment where questions are encouraged
  - Speak about experiences, admit your faults and shortcomings
  - Promote professionalism, CSFM!!
  - Give responsibilities, show them they are a vital part of the process

# Mentoring Gen Y

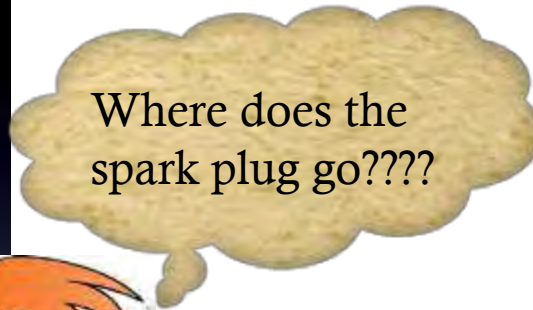
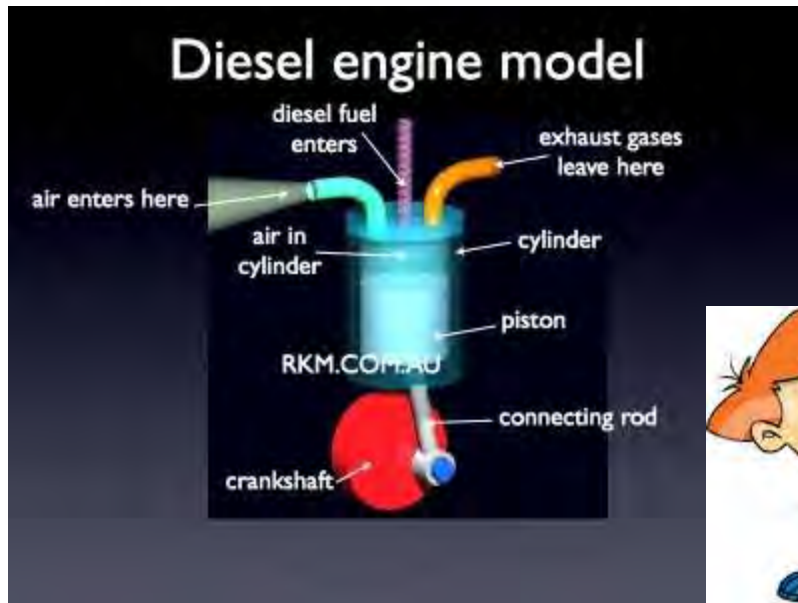
- Name a person that meant something to you professionally, can you be that person to your employees?
- Help them achieve their goals, its likely you had a person do the same for you....
- Good managers surround themselves with people that are smarter...at least ones that are smarter than them in some areas!! (Admit weaknesses and try to fill that void.)

# Incoming/Recent Turfgrass Professionals

- Most are educated (maybe a sense of entitlement)
- Many know the WHY, but haven't experienced the HOW!! (Though they won't admit they don't know the how) \*\*This is different from our founders\*\*
- Many Gen Y employees don't think ahead, **constantly need to be told what to do next.**
- Some are very inexperienced around equipment: Mowers, tractors, large trucks, trailers, and small motors.

\*\*\*Understanding how to communicate knowing these circumstances is very important.

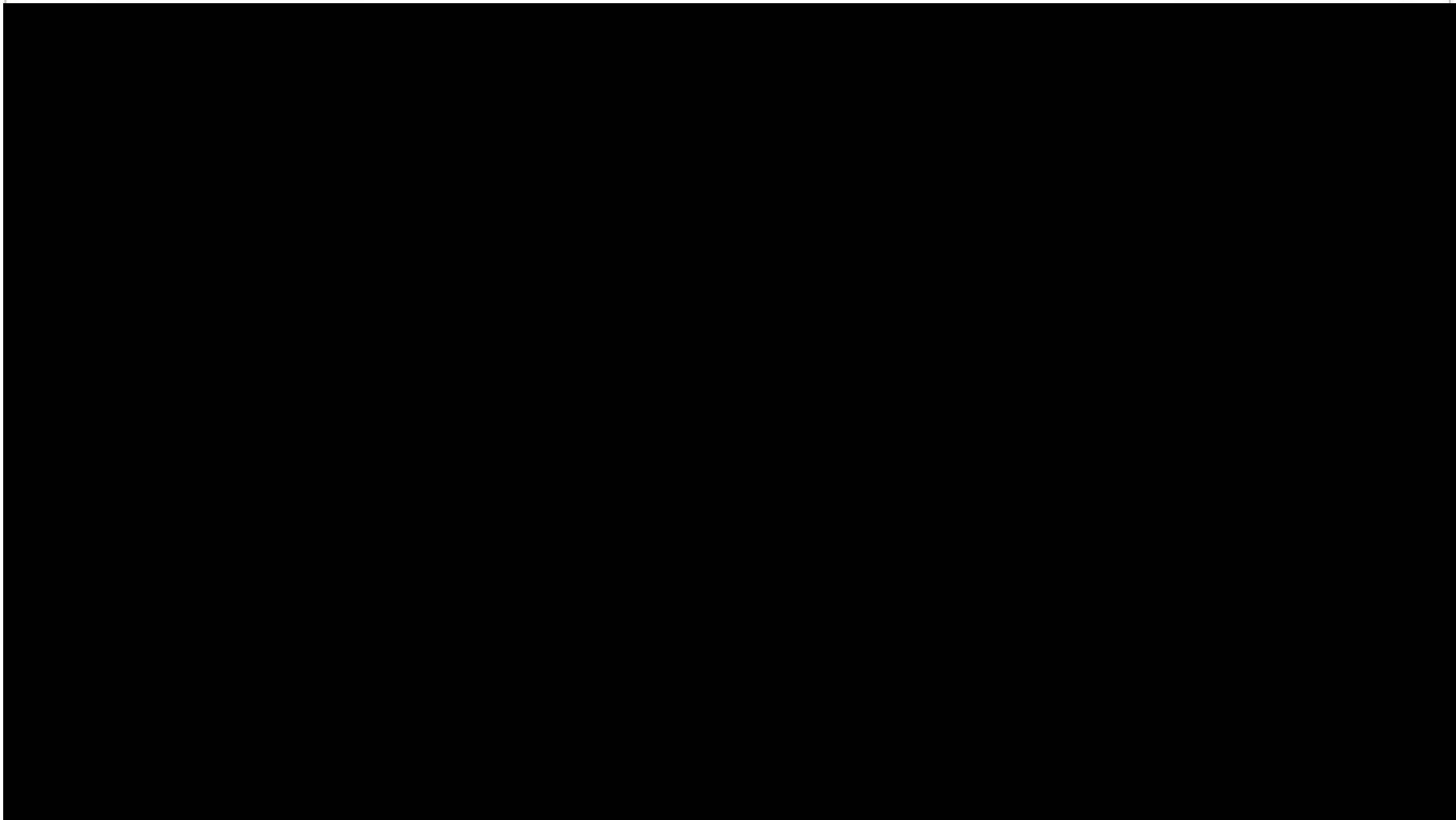
# The Ultimate Litmus





# Founders and Experienced Turf Managers

- Many learned the Art before the Science. (Learning the science may have happened out of the classroom. It holds the same credibility as a degree, in our opinion)
- They have been there and done that, that experience should NEVER be taken for granted.
- They will find new ideas very useful/helpful if presented in a way that is non-combative.

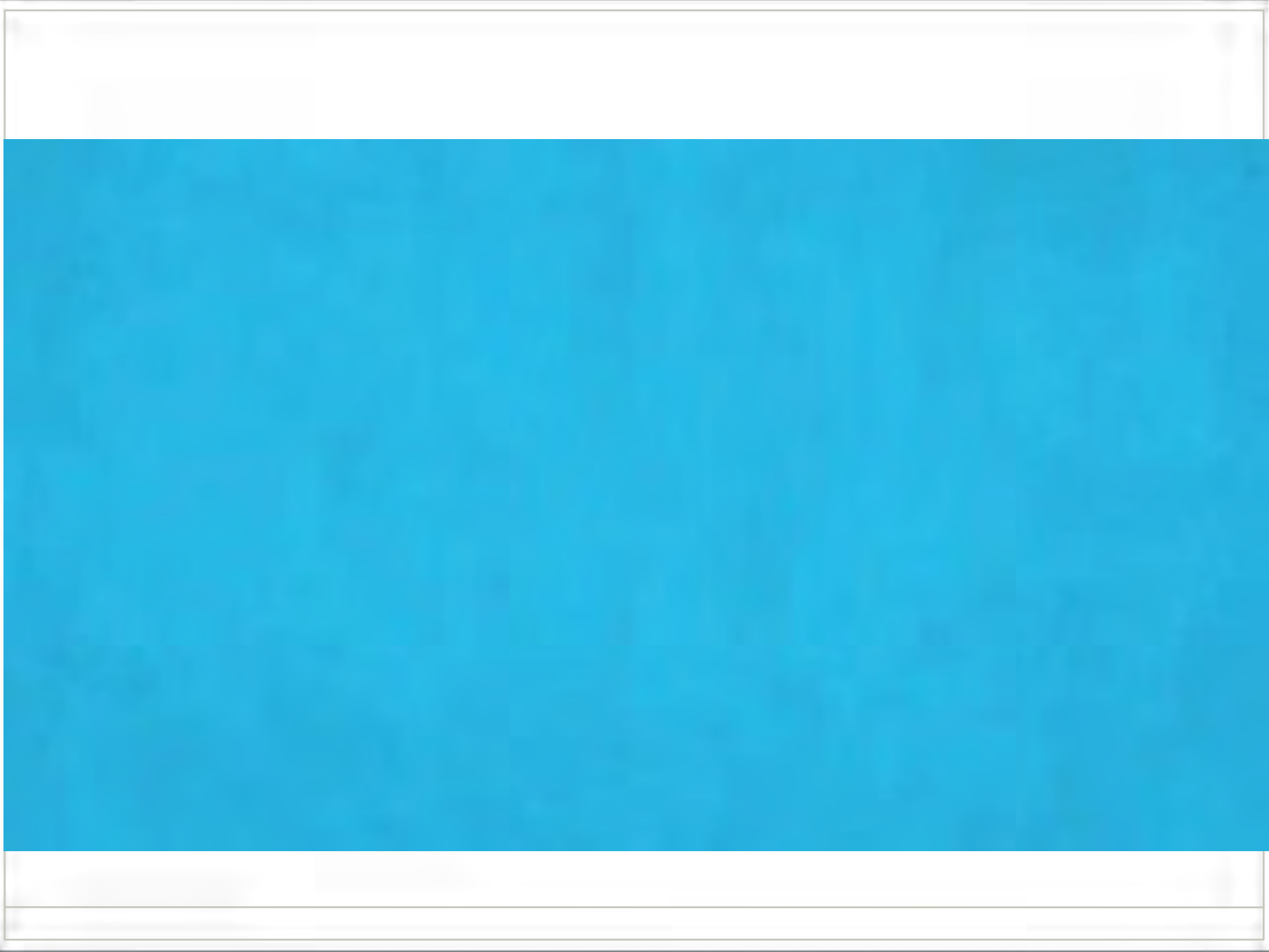


# Communication Fail...

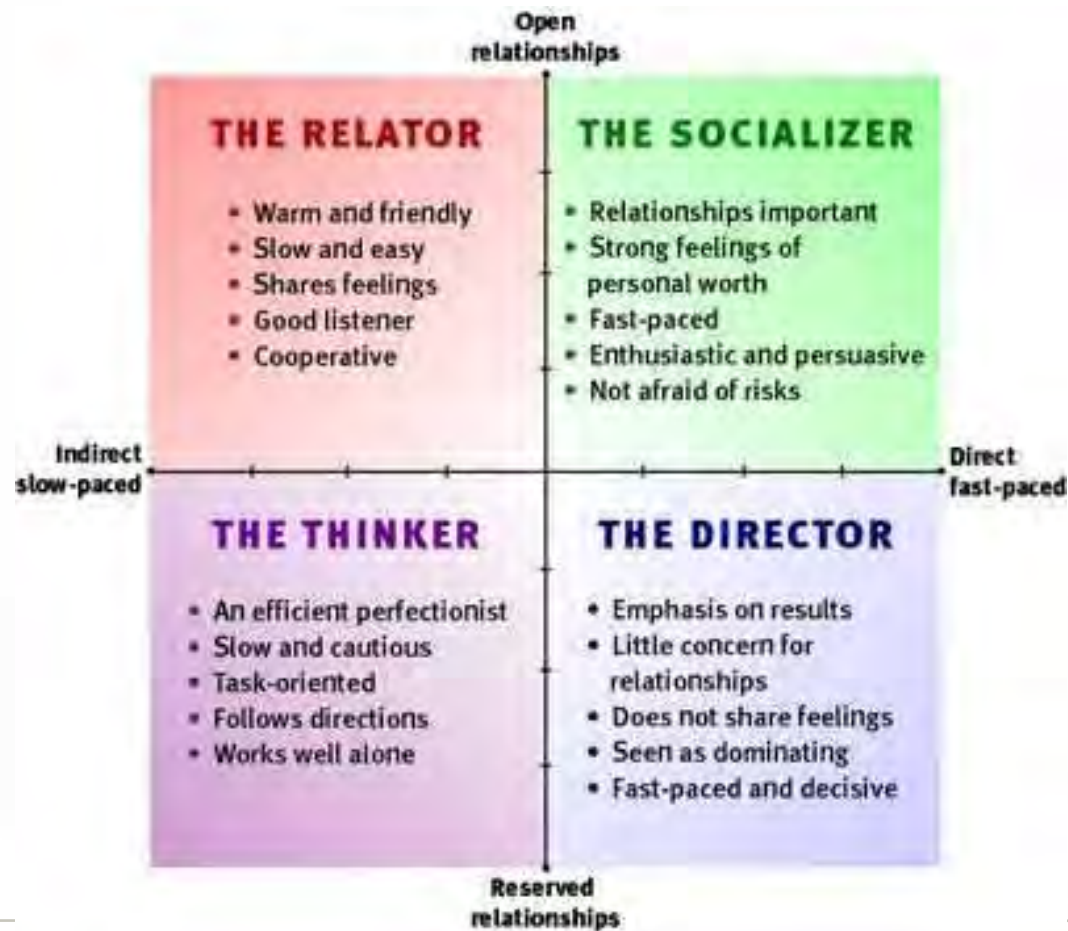


# Communication Success!!





# People Communicate Differently No Matter the Generation



# People Communicate Differently No Matter the Generation

- Take the time to figure out how your employee/employer communicates best
- It's important to remember that we are all different
  - You will have to communicate differently with different people if you want overall success!!



# Final Thoughts

- “Young Leaders are not raised up in crowds, but through life on life mentoring relationships.” Dr. Tim Elmore

When I was your age,  
“Cell Phones” is what  
someone who worked  
at Radio Shack did  
for a living.



(c) 2010 Colm Ryan



# Final Thoughts

- "Regardless of the changes in technology, the market for well-crafted messages will always have an audience."— Steve Burnett, The Burnett Group



# Final Thoughts

- "If you have nothing to say, say nothing."  
— Mark Twain
- "It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt."  
— Mark Twain



# Final Thoughts

- "The less people know, the more they yell."  
— Seth Godin
- "Be amusing: never tell unkind stories; above all, never tell long ones."  
— Benjamin Disraeli



# Any Questions??

