

q advice: with ROXANNE CALDER

5 things you need to know about your boomer boss to get ahead

Count yourself lucky if working with a boomer boss. Born from 1946 to 1964, they are loaded with experience and wisdom. But that is not the half of it. They are the post-war babies. Their parents knew hardship and loss, and that cannot be passed down. They witnessed the first moon landing and unparalleled social change. Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, the Beatles, Elvis, and Buzz Aldrin are just some of their idols.

Boomer bosses are tough with high standards. With the economic cry for higher productivity, there could be a call to action for a little bit more of that, please. Whether it's your existing boss or via matrix reporting, the chances are you will experience a boomer boss somehow. Do yourself a favour and get close. It will help you get ahead!

Communication is likely to be formal. Use salutations and the person's name. Respect for position matters, so if dealing with a doctor or professor, use their title' they earned it! Addressing an email as, 'hiya' won't cut it. It may indicate a lack of respect or that you don't take them seriously.

Equally, there is no generation that uses business language quite like the boomer. If you think their business communication lacks emotion, you are right; it is supposed to. Stripped of fluff and straight to the point, boomer bosses communicate with clarity. Don't take their direct communication personally; relish it.

Rather than dallying, they are more likely to pick up the phone in seeking answers. Preferring face to face or phone conversations instead of email and texting, as it is easier for resolutions. Also, what you see as confrontation, or a difficult conversation is just a normal day at the office for them.

They respect authority and follow the rules. Hence why punctuality is important for them. If a meeting starts at 8 am, it's 8 am, not 8.05 am. I have known boomer bosses to shut meeting room doors right on the dot of the start time. If you have courage, knock to enter, but your excuse better not be traffic. Their mindset is, why didn't you leave earlier?



Adherence to deadlines is non-negotiable. If you are part of their team, be sure to uphold your end of the bargain. Being responsible and reliable is at their core. As is their work ethic. If a job requires more effort and extra hours, it's done, and with no expectations of accolades or rewards.

They take pride in the job, making details imperative. Proofread emails and documents and fact-check! Errors are spotted in a heartbeat. With no reliance on word processors and google back in the day, that's how they were trained. Pride is also reflected in personal presentation. Ensure it is professional, and leave scruffy sneakers for home.

Relationships are everything. Guaranteed, they know the barista's name at the coffee shop. Wondering how they skip the coffee queue - that's how, the original influencer! This follows through to all-life relationships with dentists and mechanics for life.

It is the Rolodex you want to be a part of, for they are networked through experiences and reputation, not likes. Their family values provides the strong link to relationships. They are used to a family structure, growing up with the message that supporting each other is essential.

Loyalty is a big-ticket item for a boomer. It signifies dependability and to be counted on. Changing jobs and companies was frowned upon in the boomer's formative working life. If you had a job, you were grateful and held onto it. Unemployment during the 80s ranged from 6% to 10%, with inflation in 1982 at 11.07% and interest rates as the undesirable guest in January 1990 at 17.5%.

So, as an aside, if you are lamenting the unfairness of our current economic times and your boomer boss is staying silent- this is why. They suffered worse and made it through. Perhaps seek their learned advice- but don't be shocked or upset if they say they saved their money and didn't use Afterpay.

As a final note, don't be too quick to dismiss your boomer boss's technical skills. You might be born into the digital era, good for you, but try going from zero. That's a significant embracement of change. They know how to adapt.

There are many extraordinary albeit generalised values in every generation. Let us foster those characteristics in ourselves that we admire in others. Your baby boomer boss brings a wealth of virtues to choose from. Consider which ones to assist you in getting ahead at work and in life.

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