

Communicating with Today's Student Athlete

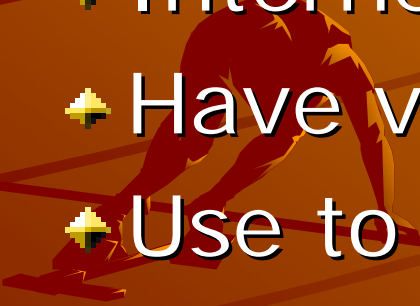
The Millennial Generation

Penny Lucas-White, Head Coach
United States Air Force Academy



Who are they?

- ◆ Born between 1982-2000
- ◆ Estimated presently 76 million born (largest generation)
- ◆ Internet savvy
- ◆ Have very high expectations
- ◆ Use to quick response rates



They are....

- ◆ The eldest of this generation entered college during the fall of 2000
- ◆ Life expectancy of 75-100 years old
- ◆ Began their college search in their sophomore year
- ◆ Know their first choice of college by their junior year

They are....

- ◆ Smart and ambitious
- ◆ Incredibly busy
- ◆ Want to get involved in community service
- ◆ Very ethnically diverse
- ◆ Dominated by girls
- ◆ Greater exposure to a vast level of information
- ◆ Very determined on attending college and have very demanding parents

Characteristics of the Millennial Athletes



Achievement Oriented

Team Oriented

Special

Sheltered

Pressured

Conventional

Technological Astute



Pinckney Hall, Dean of Students
University of Wisconsin Stout

Achievement Oriented

- ◆ Smartest group of Americans at this age of any generation
- ◆ All time high college attendees
- ◆ Lots of experience in extra-curricular activities
- ◆ Have more knowledge, but less creative



Team Oriented

- ✦ Have spent a lot of time working in teams and learning in groups
- ✦ Have established tight peer bonds
- ✦ Cultural shift from “I” to “We”
- ✦ Civic minded—think in terms of greater good

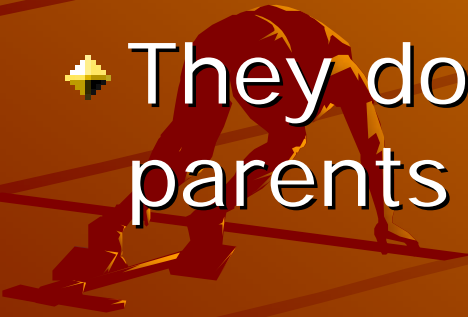


Special

- ◆ They are vital to the nation and to their parents sense of purpose
- ◆ Parents very active from preschool
- ◆ Catered to: Sports Illustrated for Kids, Baby Gap
- ◆ Parents believe in importance of self-esteem
- ◆ Owns lots of “stuff” in the dorms—refrigerators, laptops, Xbox 360, etc.

Sheltered

- ✦ They are the focus of the most sweeping youth movement in American history i.e. (helmets, car seats, etc.)
- ✦ They do things together with their parents



Pressured

- ◆ Pushed to study hard and achieve
- ◆ Grade driven (many were very successful in High School)
- ◆ Stressed, ambitious, sleep deprived



Conventional


- ✦ They support societal rules and standard of behavior
- ✦ Most indicate no relational problems with families
- ✦ Worried about reducing debt—credit cards, college expenses



Technologically Astute

- ◆ Connected 24/7
- ◆ Interdependent on family, friends, teachers
- ◆ Would live without TV before computer
- ◆ Internet is primary source of news
- ◆ Cell phones (apron string)

Meet the Parents

- ✦ Education is a priority
 - ✦ Knowledgeable of NCAA/NAIA
 - ✦ Struggling with transition of childhood to adulthood
 - ✦ Expects to be involved from admission to graduation
 - ✦ Socially intertwined in son or daughter's life
- 

Parental Influence

- ◆ Reflect parents values
- ◆ Trust their parents
- ◆ Aim to please authority
- ◆ Micromanaged their lives
- ◆ Overscheduled them
- ◆ Provided everything
- ◆ Attempted to fix everything

Cultural Paradigm Shift



What defines culture?

Shared Beliefs

Behaviors

Money

Spirituality

Values

Customs

Language



"A system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning."

Franz Boas. *The Mind of Primitive Man*



Why has the paradigm shifted?

- ◆ Relocation/Employment Opportunities
- ◆ Philosophy of Money
- ◆ History not Transmitted
- ◆ Family Values not Readily Embraced



Values

- ✦ Yesterday vs. Today
 - “Yes Ma’am vs. Yeah”
 - All Americans are not patriotic
 - ✦ Burning of the American Flag
 - ✦ Controversy over The Pledge of Allegiance
 - ✦ Prayer at School or Athletic Events

Assumptions

- ✦ Arrogant
- ✦ Self Absorbed
- ✦ Disrespectful
- ✦ Narcissistic
- ✦ Searching for Self

Bridging the Gap



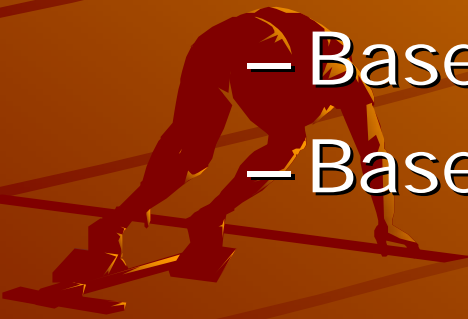
◆ Finding the commonalities

◆ Not all assumptions are facts

◆ Perception of values

– Based upon experience

– Based upon environment

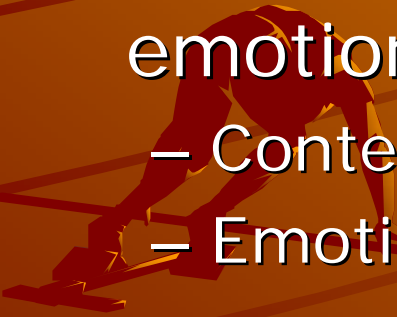


Communication Tools

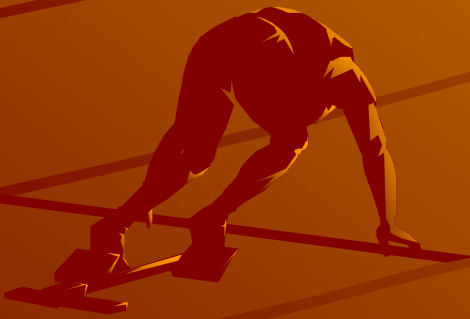
- ◆ E-mail
- ◆ Text messaging
- ◆ Cell phone
- ◆ Instant Messaging
- ◆ Snail Mail
- ◆ Chat Rooms
- ◆ Face to Face

Dimensions of Communication

- ◆ Sending and receiving messages
- ◆ Consist of non-verbal as well as verbal
- ◆ 70% of communication is non-verbal
- ◆ Communication has 2 parts: content and emotion
 - Content is the substance of the message
 - Emotion is how you feel about the message



Making the Connection by Speaking the Millennia's Language



Their Language is:

- ◆ Technology
- ◆ Chat room (getting in and talking)
- ◆ Text message (using cellular phones)
- ◆ Instant message (computers)



Our Language is:

- ✦ A personal touch
 - Lunch with team/individuals
 - Individual meetings
 - Specialized training
 - Recognition of birthdays
 - Weekly performance
 - Team building exercises
 - Community service



Blending the Generations

✦ Working from a common place

- Goals
- Academics
- Holistic Development

✦ Making a SALAD

- Emailing
- Modeling (leading by example)



Blending the Generations

Practice

- ◆ Compliment and encourage
- ◆ Give prompt and accurate feedback
- ◆ Reward them when practice was great (100% effort)
- ◆ Balance being a Coach, Mentor and Friend

Blending the Generations

Alumni

Recognition of past athletes

Alumni Match (2-5 yrs)

Alumni Luncheon (share professional success)

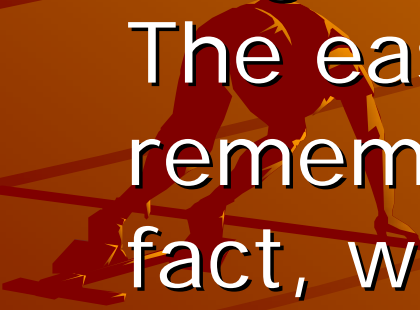
Getting a glimpse at the future

Signing Off



Summary

In order to communicate effectively with today's athlete we must bridge the gap of technology, the diverging values of the generations and the language barriers that confront us. The easiest way to do this is to remember that they are people. In fact, when the hand meets the ball we are more alike than unlike.



QUESTIONS?

