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Terron Cruey
of Beacon
Orthopaedics

A Battle for the ages: Clash of the Generations

Marilyn Orr
of Beacon
Orthopaedics

Middle
Jennifer Thacker of Beacon Orthopaedics

Features

- 12 **A Battle for the Ages — The Women Behind Beacon Orthopaedics** by Jennifer Davis
- 15 **Holiday Happenings** by Kathy Schlaeger
- 20 **Daily Gratitude** by Kathy Schlaeger



15

Columns

- 7 **Holiday Open House** H.J. Benken Florist and Garden Center Finds Hope in Holiday Giving
- 8 **Be Well** Fear, Stress and Anxiety, Oh My! by Claudia E. Harsh, M.D.
- 10 **Body Shop** Fitness Is Not ALWAYS About Losing Weight! by Elyse Jarard, B.S., CPT-NASM
- 18 **ARTitudes** Watercolor Paintings Capture the Richness of Life by Jaclyn Reynolds
- 21 **Sunday Faith | Monday Life** Headlines Scream Bad News. Now What? by Rev. David L. Story



8



18

On the Cover
 The Women behind Beacon Orthopaedics, from left to right: Terron Cray, HR Director, Jennifer Thacker, Lead Receptionist and Marilyn Orr, CEO. Photo courtesy of Broadway Photography. Cover design by Roger Dwenger.

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The Women behind Beacon Orthopaedics; from left to right: Terron Cruay, HR Director, Jennifer Thacker, Lead Receptionist and Marilyn Orr, CEO. Photo courtesy of Broadway Photography.

By Jennifer Davis
Cincinnati Woman Magazine

A quick Google search of the query "How many years in a generation?" turns up a wide and inconsistent array of possibilities. Ranging from fifteen years on the low end to as high as seventy years, "generation" seems about as easy to define as the meaning of life.

What does seem to ring consistently true is the role that ever-changing societal standards play in defining each generation. Technological advances, world events and common family customs all serve to outline the differences between people born across the decades, shaping their outlooks and attitudes towards life, family, career and themselves.

X, Y, and Double B

Marilyn Orr is the Executive Director of Beacon Orthopaedics. At fifty-eight years old, Orr falls under the generational heading of "Baby Boomer." As a child of the fifties

and sixties, Orr's formative years preceded the domination of computers and the proliferation of cell phones. She was raised on a Nebraska farm and was among the first in her family to complete a high school education.

"This farm family educated their daughters. I have a sister who has a PhD and another sister who has an MBA," Orr says with pride. As the oldest of six children, Orr knew that college was always an option, but it wasn't the requirement that it has nearly become today, nor was it available as the custom-tailored educational experience that has become the norm.

"Choices back then were primarily nursing, secretarial, or teacher," Orr remembers. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in medical technology, and later, an MBA.

Times have certainly changed. For "Generation X-er" and only child Terron Cruay, there was never really any alternative to pursuing higher education. "It wasn't an option - I was told I was going to college," she says with a laugh.

Cruay graduated in 1993 with a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and holds a Master's in Education. Despite the relative specialization of her educational path, Cruay got her start in the workforce as a scheduler in an emergency room. From there, she quickly found herself scaling the ranks.

"It was a good stepping stone for me," she recalls. "I moved up to Unit Secretary." From there, Cruay was able to translate her experience into her current position as Human Resources Director for Beacon Orthopaedics.

One of the primary differences between the generations is the outlook on career development. While the Baby Boomers are more inclined to find steady work and hold onto it, the more restless Generations X and Y are likely to move from company to company multiple times throughout their careers. It's a testament to the way these younger generations were raised, in a society that puts more emphasis on personal growth and development and less on stability. The different philosophies are highlighted in the

ceptions of work ethic and expectations that members of each generation hold for themselves and for one another.

Jennifer Thacker is a twenty-four year old "Generation Y'er" who works as a Front Desk Supervisor for Beacon Orthopaedics. When she talks about her ascension and expectations with Beacon, the pride is evident in her youthful voice.

"Hopefully, I'll keep moving up. It's kind of nice being the lead and having people under you. I feel like I get more respect from other people," she says.

Different Views

However, differences between the generations run more deeply than simply educational opportunities or self-expectations. Orr, Crucey and Thacker are all strong, intelligent women, but they are women who hold very different views on what to expect, not only from the company they work for but from their supervisors and co-workers, as well.

For Orr, much of what she seeks is recognition by those with whom she works. "I like working as a team, but I also like to know that my ideas are valued. I like people to listen to some of the issues that I am bringing forward," she says with the confidence of a woman who has spent her life working for everything she has. "I look for autonomy. I look for respect. I look for opportunities for leadership, inside the organization as well as out."

For all of the women, respect is a key element. But while Orr seeks to let her experience as a leader shine brightest, Crucey has a slightly different outlook.

"For me, I would say [a good boss is] someone who's willing to listen, would embrace change, and allow you to take risk," she says. "I want to be empowered as far as being given the opportunities to expand my skills and my knowledge." As a wife and mother, the ability to take time for her family is also key. "Flexibility is a huge thing for me. It has to be family friendly."

Like Crucey, Thacker places value on an employer who pays attention and lets her speak her mind. While the younger generations are repelled by intense scrutiny and oversight ("I don't like to be micromanaged," asserts Crucey), they do look for a more open-door policy than was once considered normal.

"[A good boss] would definitely have to be able to listen to people and hear what they're saying. They need to be available and approachable," she says. "They need to show that they care about me on a person level."

Perspective and Priorities

While Generations X and Y seem similar in many aspects – both were raised in an explosive technological age and each came up in a time when higher education became the standard – there are certainly differences in both perspective and priorities.

Crucey's take on what makes Generation X powerful lies in the creativity and drive that's been built into their worldview. "My generation tends to be more entrepreneurial. I'm always saying, why can't we do it this way, or have you thought about it?" she says passionately. "Eventually I'd like to go back and get my PhD. For me, it's continual growth and education."

Thacker credits Gen Y's expectations of immediate gratification to the swift upward climb in which she and others her age have found themselves.

"We are used to getting things now and doing things now and we have everything now now now," she says unapologetically. "At Beacon, I got promoted over some people who had been there longer than I have. I think that we realize to get things now, you have to do things more quickly."

For Orr, however, that urgency is unnecessary. "I look at this position as being my ideal position. This is the one I've been waiting for," she says with no artifice. "I'm very satisfied."

Despite their differences, however, the ladies of Beacon Orthopaedics and the thirty-four years that separate them do not hinder their rapport, but rather evoke a deep respect.

"I truly admire the focus on family [of Gen X]. They're more balanced. And the Gen Y are not afraid to try anything new," she says warmly.

Crucey echoes Orr's sentiments about the courage of the Gen Y-ers and commends the Boomers for their efforts in the Civil Rights Movement, as well as their work ethics.

Thacker speaks of her more seasoned co-workers with admiration. "They follow through with everything," she says. "You know if you ask them a question, they will give you everything they can. They take the time to help you."

In every generation, it always comes back to time.

Jennifer Davis is a freelance writer based in Northern Kentucky, where she lives with her husband and daughter. She is currently studying theatre at Northern Kentucky University, and is working her way towards a career as a full time arts writer.



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