



Meet the Future

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"Who's Smarter These Days?"

Submitted: December 16th, 2022

I recently read a newsletter from Dr. Tim Elmore entitled “Who’s Smarter These Days: The Young or the Old?” Dr. Elmore is the president of Growing Leaders, which is a nonprofit organization that provides resources that help develop young leaders for school, universities, etc. across the globe. And, his recent newsletter article really stood out to me as one to share in a world where we oftentimes find ourselves confused about the mentality of generations other than our own.

To start the article, Dr. Elmore reflects on a confrontation between two coworkers. He shares, “Last month, Janet called Rory into her office. She’s the department manager and Rory, a young professional, serves on her team. She did not appreciate his disrespect toward her when he questioned her authority and her decision in Monday’s meeting. Things came to a head when he walked out of her office before the issue was resolved. She was fuming.”

Dr. Elmore shares that Janet confronted him about the situation shortly afterwards and described Rory as arrogant, disrespectful, lacking the knowledge of her years invested in the organization and needed to pay his dues before sharing his opinions.

This mindset of younger generations is not a new concept. In fact, there are quotes from historical Greek philosophers dating back to 470 BC which similar concerns for a viewed lack of respect and listening to elders. “Some things never change.”, states Dr. Elmore.

Rory had a fundamentally different belief, that he was attempting to make improvements in their department and assumed this would be appreciated. He later quoted Mark Zuckerberg, who in 2007, famously said: “Young people are just smarter.”

"Who's Smarter These Days?", Cont.

Dr. Elmore shares, "While most who heard Zuckerberg's comment chuckled, they all understood what he meant. He was describing the new world that young entrepreneurs and techies were creating. Truth be told, young people tend to jump on board with future trends more quickly than their elders. They seem to "get" where the world is going, hence they can appear smarter."

But is the vision of youth more valuable than decades of experience?

Mark Zuckerberg's quote surfaced a debate about what kind of knowledge is most needed by 21st century businesses. Is it more important to have veteran experience or the younger generation's "smarts"? A constantly evolving society has created tension between generations and the problem seems to be that we often forget to recognize and appreciate the value that each generation can bring to the table. Instead of assuming that if one generation brings expertise, the other cannot... we must face that fact that we can benefit from each one.

Dr. Elmore goes on to discuss the "Different Kinds of Smarts" by sharing a quote by Arthur Brooks, a social scientist at the Harvard Business School. Brooks states, "When you're young, you have raw smarts. When you are old, you have wisdom. When you are young, you can generate lots of facts. When you are old, you know what they mean and how to use them."

I couldn't agree more with Dr. Elmore's final statement in this article, "We must bring out the best in each team member, knowing everyone is smart in different ways."

Information in this article has been adapted from Dr. Tim Elmore, founder of Growing Leaders.

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