CHUBB®

GEN-Z

"Boujee"

BOOMERS

"Fancy"

Selling across generations

Don't get trapped by stereotypes.

Learn how to sell to clients from different generations - and uncover the other side.

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How can we build trust, connection, and credibility across the generation gap?

PRESENTING PROBLEM

With five generations in our population today, age-related differences in communication, norms, and expectations are everywhere, including in our client conversations. A lack of intergenerational understanding is getting in the way of the most critical piece of any successful sales relationship: trust. Across generations, there are significant differences in willingness to trust.

For example, 40% of Baby Boomers tend to find people trustworthy, while only 19% of Millennials agree.[1] According to Harvard Business Review, clients believe that only 18% of salespeople are trusted advisors worthy of respect.[2] But, with 46% of insurance consumers across all generations using an independent insurance agent, it is imperative that you understand how to develop trust between yourself and your clients and prospects – or you could lose them to another, seemingly more "trustworthy" competitor.

A lack of intergenerational trust can create barriers to the personal connection and professional credibility that drive deeper client relationships and performance for insurance agents and brokers.

THE SOLUTION

It's time to reframe the way we think about generational differences and start building trust in an entirely new way.

In this guide, you will be introduced to Gentelligence®, a strategic approach to closing generational gaps in the sales relationship by deepening our understanding of the power of age differences and overcoming common challenges. You will also learn actionable, practical tools to help you integrate this new kind of generational insight into your customer conversations.

To help agents bridge this generational divide, Chubb has partnered with Dr. Megan Gerhardt (Professor, Generational Consultant, and Author of "Gentelligence®: The Revolutionary Approach to Leading an Intergenerational Workforce"), Jeff Bloomfield (Founder/CEO of Braintrust, Speaker, Brain Enthusiast, and Author of NeuroSelling® and Story Based Selling), and Dr. Dan Docherty (President of Braintrust, Leadership Professor, and Speaker). Together, these experts have crafted a powerful, cutting-edge approach to help you sell with Gentelligence®.

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What is Gentelligence®?

Gentelligence® is the ability to break down age-based tensions and build up intergenerational trust.

Becoming gentelligent means learning how to use research-based insights to create more profound levels of understanding of why differences exist and find common ground. This allows us to see our interactions with those older and younger than ourselves as opportunities for learning and connection rather than threats to our success.

WHAT IS NEUROSELLING®?

NeuroSelling® translates the complexities of neuroscience into a practical communication methodology that drives change and increases performance.

Sales as a discipline needs an approach that aligns how we communicate with how the brain works – a strategy that establishes personal trust by tapping into the parts of the brain where trust and decision-making actually occur. We often try to persuade people by starting with facts and figures. We've been selling from the outside in when we need to sell from the inside out, especially across generations.

Gentelligence® + NeuroSelling® = An entirely new approach to driving change across generations

Building trust with our clients is imperative to driving change, especially with generation gaps. Yet at times it can seem impossible.

This is because change requires two kinds of awareness: self-awareness (who you are and what lens or perspective you are bringing to the situation) and social awareness (who your client is and what they need). Both Gentelligence® and NeuroSelling® help create better insights into your clients' needs and the perspective you as an agent are bringing into your conversations. This allows you to drive change more successfully and help create better decisions. This guide brings together generational insights and cutting-edge strategies to provide you with the practical tools you need.

POWER INSIGHT

A lack of Gentelligence® can get in the way of building necessary trust, preventing you from creating the personal connections needed to establish your professional credibility with your clients across age groups.

Understanding Generations

Your generation is best thought of as a layer of your identity — one that interacts with multiple other layers to determine your values, norms, and behaviors. Knowing where in the world someone grew up can help explain their perspectives, while knowing which generation they belong to can also illuminate why they may have a different point of view. Ultimately, generations help you understand how historical events (social, political, economic, and cultural) influence the attitudes and behaviors of people of a similar age. Growing up, a generation has access to particular knowledge, experiences, and opportunities during its most formative years that prior and future generations do not.

Current Generations in the U.S.[3]
By percentage of the overall population

The Greatest Generation
Born prior to 1928 (0.4%)

Gen-X
1965-1980 (19.71%)

Silent Generation
1928-1945 (6.61%)

**Baby Boomers**
1946-1964 (21.45%)

Millennials
1981-1996 (21.93%)

Gen-Z
1997-2012 (20.35%)

"A gentelligent mindset suggests that generational identity be used as a valuable lens of understanding: it can help provide important context for different behaviors or higher frequencies of particular attitudes when we compare one age cohort to another. However, Gentelligence® pushes back against universal labels and assumptions that all members of a generation are always a specific way."

FROM "GENTELLIGENCE®: A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO LEADING AN INTERGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE"

Roadblocks to Gentelligence®: What is getting in the way of intergenerational connection?
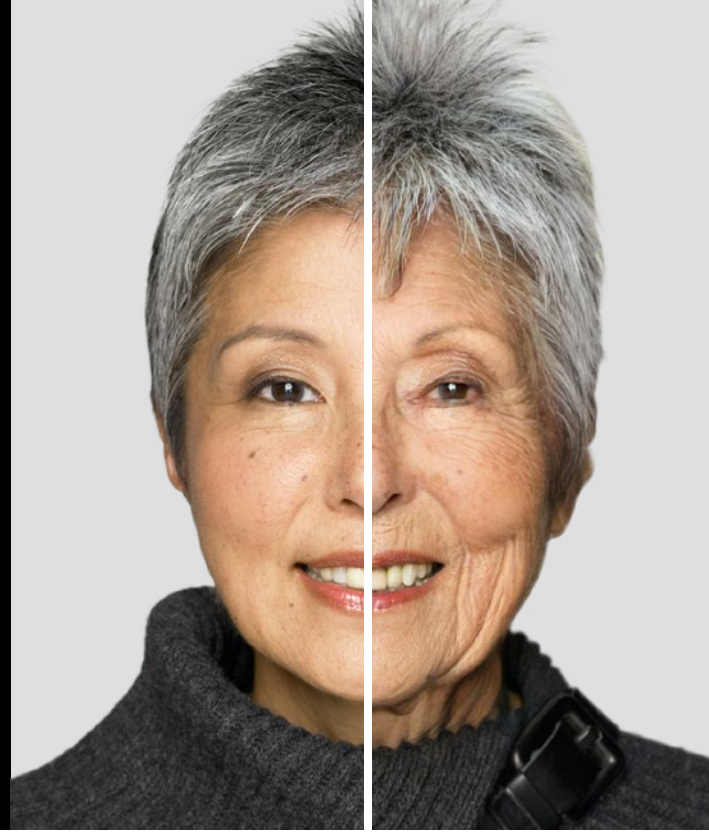
Before we go further, let's talk about the difference between stereotyping and understanding a generational lens. Stereotypes are shortcuts in decision-making, leading us to assume that all people in a particular group have a set of common characteristics.

When it comes to generations, there are interesting and important behaviors and perspectives that tend to be seen in higher frequencies due to the shared time in which the group was born and raised. But it's important to remember that not everyone in a particular generation may have the same experiences.

While agents need to understand how the life experiences of different generations may have influenced their clients' viewpoints (and their own), generational conversations can easily be riddled with clichés, unfounded assumptions, and generalizations that can lead to labelling, judgment, and deep misunderstandings about others. Because of this, exploring how generational identity impacts a client's point of view should be considered just the beginning of a longer conversation you will have about their needs, goals, and interests.

Roadblock #1: Generational shaming

One look at the daily news headlines illustrates a big problem: we've normalized using people's generational identity as an insult. As a result, multiple generations attempt to effectively interact without a solid understanding of their age-related differences, leading to miscommunication and lack of connection. Clickbait headlines in the media have reinforced the idea that our generations are engaged in some ongoing battle, and generational shaming stands in the way of Gentelligence®, whether it's calling Gen-Zers "snowflakes", Millennials "entitled", Gen X-ers "slackers" – or saying "OK, boomer" to anyone over 60.

Roadblock #2: Age bias and stereotyping

When navigating generational differences, we often fall into stereotypes and generalizations rather than realizing the complex ways age may influence identity. Unfortunately, ageism appears to be one of the last socially acceptable biases, with people of all ages freely using age and generational identity as a form of insult. Age bias can be direct and blatant or more subtle, such as a snide comment suggesting someone is less capable, innovative, or credible based on their age or generational identity.

💡 POWER INSIGHT

Gentelligence® can help us create a starting point to ask better, more empathetic questions, ones that show your client you see what makes them unique and are invested in understanding who they are.

💡 POWER INSIGHT

Older people are often stereotyped as resistant to change, less motivated, and lacking interest in learning and development.[4] Younger people have generally been labeled as inexperienced, unreliable, or arrogant.[5] Rarely are any of these stereotypes valid, but instead stem from evaluating others using our own lens of perspective and misinterpreting actions we don't fully understand.

Roadblock #3:
Myths about
generational needs

Despite popular perceptions, research shows there are core universal needs that all people share, regardless of generation: the need to be seen as competent, to connect, and to be autonomous.[6] In terms of the complexity, while many of the underlying needs are the same, the strategies and norms we have learned to pursue and fulfill those needs are likely different depending on the generation. While people of all ages tend to share these core values, they may end up expressing those values in ways other generations may not recognize or understand.

For example, creating that sense of competency or autonomy will likely require a different approach and different tools, depending on your client's generation.

Baby Boomers, for example, are most likely to prioritize "ease of use" for their insurance, a factor not mentioned by Gen-Z. Gen-Xers (famous for their independence) are the generation most likely to prefer self-service tools, even over digital or phone support. Millennials have shown the strongest preferences for apps and mobile sites.[7] These are different norms and behaviors, stemming from common needs for competence, autonomy, and connection. When you experience norms contrary to the ones you have grown up with, it can lead us to react to them as wrong because they are different. Gentelligence® helps you understand the driving force behind these differences.

Roadblock #4:
Knowledge
relevance

Whenever we encounter people we believe are "different" from us, our brains are activated to perceive it as a threat. This is especially the case when the knowledge and experience inherent to one generation (such as digital skills in younger generations) is highlighted or valued. It triggers concern that our inherent expertise is less valuable. We then feel we are in competition for relevance and recognition rather than seeing ourselves as collaborators with complementary skills and expertise. By realizing the importance of different forms of insight, you can begin to view one kind of knowledge as a complement rather than a threat to the importance of any other. This opens the doors for intergenerational learning and collaboration.

> 💡 **POWER INSIGHT**
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> *Research finds there are universal needs that people share regardless of age. However, the norms and strategies they use to fulfill those needs may look different across generations.*

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The Four key practices of Gentelligence®

How can you overcome these roadblocks and use a more complex understanding of generational differences to create stronger connections with your clients?

It's a matter of developing a new mindset. To do so, we present four "practices": essential habits to begin to work into your client interactions that will fundamentally change the intergenerational dynamic from one of frustration to one of collaboration.

💡 Practice #1:
Identify assumptions

Consider what implicit assumptions about generational differences might be creating barriers to establishing personal connections with your clients. When you are preparing to meet with a Baby Boomer, what conclusions do you automatically jump to about their needs? How do those conclusions change when you meet with a Millennial client? What do you assume "goes without saying" that may need further exploration?

Consider how a potential client who is considerably older or younger might define or understand key concepts that are critical to your message or approach. Are you assuming they define these concepts the same way you do or how other clients have looked at them in the past?

Think about the traditional role an agent was expected to fill. An agent was seen as the source of information in the past, as clients may not have had other sources to rely upon. More recently, younger generations have grown up in the era of information overload. Instead, they may need an agent to help them filter and navigate that information, not provide them with more. Both roles are valuable, but they are indeed different, and the risk of assuming everyone has the same expectations is a recipe for miscommunication.

While older generations grew up believing that they would likely own their first home in their 20s, we know younger generations have differing ideas about the timeline as well as the importance of home ownership. Why? Is this true for your clients? Was it the case for you? How might a lack of awareness on an issue like this get in the way of your ability to meet their needs? Other concepts such as security, risk, retirement, flexibility, and legacy may take on different meanings across generations.

Practice #2:
Adjust your lens

As agents (and as people), we see things through the lens of our own experiences without realizing it. We often have a cognitive bias that comes from framing our approach through our own generational perspective rather than our clients' perspective. Gentelligence® requires adjusting your lens to demonstrate empathy for your clients' perspective. This can be difficult across generations because of assumptions, stereotypes, and a lack of deep levels of understanding.

Communicating across generations requires the same thought and effort as cross-cultural communication. When interacting with colleagues who grew up in a different culture, you have an awareness that there's a higher likelihood of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. As a result, you work harder to make sure you understand the context and put in more effort to ensure alignment on essential issues. This is the same kind of mindset needed to assure intergenerational understanding and trust.

For example, let's take our Gen-Zers, who today range from 10-25 years of age. What events has this generation lived through during their most impressionable, formative years, and how might those events impact their attitudes and decisions about issues central to your work? How might growing up during a pandemic influence their attitudes about risk and stability? We can't say with certainty what this will look like for all Gen-Zers (that would be stereotyping), but realizing we need to explore this and adjusting our lens to step into their shoes is critical.

Once you have identified the assumptions that you may be making, it's time to pause and consider whether taking your clients' generational perspectives into account might change how you evaluate a situation and help you reach that critical point of personal and professional connection. Then, use generational trends and narratives as a starting point for customer insights and developing thoughtful questions that show you appreciate what makes them unique and are interested in learning more about who they are and what they need.

GENTELLIGENT CLIENT QUESTIONS FOR ADJUSTING THE LENS

01
"When I say the word _____, what does that mean to you?" (e.g. security, retirement, legacy, planning)

02
"When you think about owning a house/planning for the future etc. how do you see your perspective being different from others?" (your age, or your parents/ your children/your friends?)

03
"Often it's assumed people in your generation will want to _____ [insert your own assumptions here, or ones you have heard others repeat]. Is that true for you?"

"Great questions are as much about how they are asked, when they are asked, and from whose perspectives they are asked, more than anything else."

FROM "NEUROSELLING® AND STORY BASED SELLING"

Practice #3:
Strengthen trust

Now that we've broken down the tension and roadblocks standing in our way, we've cleared the path to focus on building those critical elements of sales success: **personal connection** and **professional credibility**. Both are challenging in any sales situation, but even more so when working with clients of different generations than our own.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

Data shows that generations differ when it comes to the level of automatic trust they have for their insurance agents.[8] Currently, an "us versus them" mentality often exists between different generations, leading to a sense of threat rather than much-needed connection. While growing up during different periods of history provides us with diverse and valuable perspectives, the experienced differences of other generational norms/perspectives are often perceived as a threat. In the presence of threat, there can be no trust.

We miss generational opportunities to connect because we fail to fully value the client's perspective above the self-preservation of our own goals. Connection has more power when we put the customer's goals ahead of our own.

💡 POWER INSIGHT

Research shows Baby Boomers are most likely to automatically trust their insurance agents, while Gen-Z is the least likely to do so.[9]

One of the biggest reasons we struggle to maximize our customer conversations across different generations is a concept we call "self-preservation orientation". Biologically, we are predisposed as humans to activate self-preservation when we are in any situation where something is at risk. Obviously, in a sales conversation, something is at stake. Therefore, it's critically important that we learn to recognize our own barriers to change so we can help our prospective customers overcome their own barriers to change.

For years, many of us have been successful in intuitively sensing how to navigate a customer conversation that leads to a commitment. More recently, neuroscience research has shown us why some are incredibly successful at this process, and others tend to be very inconsistent. Couple this research with the fact that we are now in a world where up to five different generations can be present in any given sales conversation and it's all the more imperative that we not only understand the nuanced differences between generations – but also the science and psychology behind how and why they buy.

AGENT EXPECTATIONS ACROSS GENERATIONS

53% of Millennials strongly agree it's important for their agent to educate them on how their value- added services match their long-term goals. This number drops to 42% for Baby Boomers and 40% for Gen-X.

PROFESSIONAL CREDIBILITY

Once that critical personal connection is formed, it's time to focus on building up professional credibility. This can be challenging when working with a considerably younger or older client than you. Regardless of generation or age, everyone wants to believe they are getting guidance from a credible source. Without credibility, there can be no trust.

There are times when we miss generational opportunities to be credible because we fail to fully value the client's perspective above the self-preservation of our own goals. Credibility has more power when we put the customer's goals ahead of our own.

> 💡 **POWER INSIGHT**
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> *Research shows some interesting generational differences in how we determine credibility: while all generations care about character and competence, younger generations place more importance on a person's sociability (the ability to connect) as a key factor in determining their credibility.[10]*

Why is there a difference in how generations determine credibility? Most likely, it has to do with how access to information has changed over time, and as a result, how the role of an agent has changed along with it. An agent was often the source of valid information and expertise about insurance and other financial decisions for older generations. Information was not readily available elsewhere. Therefore, an agent was there to be the expert, and taking that agent's advice seemed logical as they had access to much more information and education on the topic than the client did.

As our access to information has increased at a dizzying pace, that dynamic has shifted, particularly for those who grew up having excess information right at their fingertips. Younger people, therefore, often seek out an agent for slightly different reasons: as an expert to help filter all of that information, to have someone guide them through how to make sense of what they have read, and someone who is invested in understanding who they uniquely are so they can help them make informed decisions. Those roles require a deeper level of connection between agent and client, and that is why younger generations perceive connection as so vital for credibility.

AGENT EXPECTATIONS ACROSS GENERATIONS

73% of Millennials vs. 44% of Baby Boomers read social media reviews of an agent before using them.

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44% of Gen-Z vs. 19% of Baby Boomers strongly agree that they need their insurance agent to define their goals and challenges.

To strengthen this credibility, take time to calibrate your shared goals/mission with your client. First, establish your shared goal (e.g., "to create financial independence by protecting their investments"), and vet that goal for assumptions by asking those curious and gentelligent questions: What does independence look like for a 25-year-old today, compared to what it may have looked like several generations ago? What happens if you don't realize the difference?

Once this authentic connection is established, your client begins the important process of believing you care about what they care about. Although this element is key for all sales relationships, achieving this kind of alignment with a client from a different generation is critical to unlocking the opportunities that Gentelligence® can create. Mutual respect develops when your client trusts that you share their goals and understand their values. Threat levels decrease, and we are more willing to share our ideas and our concerns openly.

> 💡 **POWER INSIGHT**
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> *Consider the following. People buy from people they trust. They trust people they like and respect. And they like and respect people they connect with and find credible. Connection and credibility – in this order – across generations can impact your conversations.*
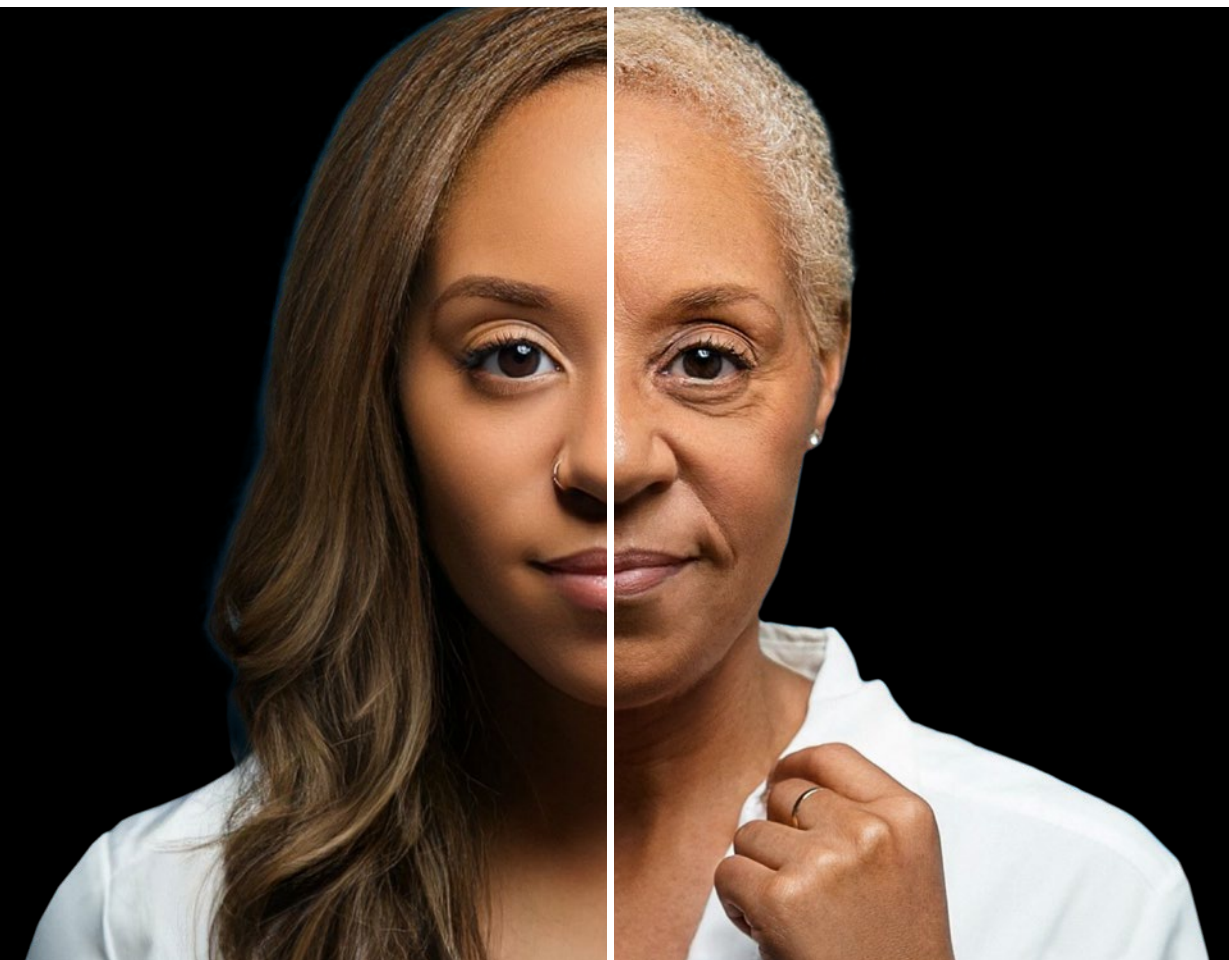
Practice #4: Expand the pie

This final practice has its roots in negotiations and speaks to the reality that any sales situation is fundamentally asking a client to change their behavior, try something new, and trust that together you (as their agent) can help them create something fundamentally better for their future than they may have thought was possible. By utilizing the practical tools of Gentelligence®, we can co-create better solutions with our clients.

Gentelligence® expands possibilities by encouraging two-way knowledge-sharing and balancing the natural strengths of one generation against the challenges of others. This creates a collaborative focus on collective success. When it comes to the agent-client relationship, a deeper understanding of the unique challenges of your client can help you build those beneficial solutions.

NeuroSelling® provides a practical model to "expand the pie" while incorporating and immediately activating visual storytelling as a framework in your generational customer conversations. When these stories are placed in the right order based on the science of decision-making, your customers' brains will work more efficiently and lead to faster decisions.

As an agent, activating these stories in the right order will help create change urgency and drive higher performance when selling across generations.

Storytelling framework to expand the pie

01 Personal connection story

What it is: Understanding your client's unique story
Why it's needed: Creates values-based connections

02 Prospect story

What it is: Clarifies clients' objectives/challenges
Why it's needed: Defines the goals

03 Problem story

What it is: Using insights to quantify the client's gaps
Why it's needed: Increases urgency to solve problems

04 Product story

What it is: Positioning unique differentiators of your product/solution
Why it's needed: Bridges the gaps and provides proof to support your solutions

05 Gain commitment

What it is: Positions you as a trusted advisor
Why it's needed: Allows you to win more clients

By utilizing the four practices of Gentelligence® (identifying assumptions, adjusting the lens, strengthening trust, and expanding the pie), agents will be able to more powerfully craft these stories and boost the effectiveness of their intergenerational client communications.

Pulling it all together

What might these tools look like in action? The formative years of Gen-Z and the Millennials have involved both a Great Recession and a global pandemic. As a result, both generations show more risk aversion than older generations and are more concerned about protecting themselves from loss. However, unless these generations feel a sense of trust via connection and credibility, they are less likely to choose you.

Using the Gentelligence® practices applied to the NeuroSelling® model, agents will demonstrate their understanding of these generationally unique opportunities and share how you and your products can help address these priorities.

Successfully communicating across generations requires a belief that we can co-create better solutions by bridging the generation gap. Serving others by solving their problems enables you to sell more. The four Gentelligence® practices integrated with the above NeuroSelling® model will help you connect more deeply, solve problems more frequently, and position your product more appropriately across generations.

GEN-Z

"Ghosting"

GEN-X

"Ignoring"

Thanks for taking the time to read our report

For more on Gentelligence® tools and advice, head back to **chubb.com/generations**

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