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GenShift 2011: Lifestages Redefining the Kitchen Space

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Description: Provides an overview of the findings of the GenShift 2011 study about generational and societal influences on kitchen design.

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Learning Objectives

At the end of this program, participants will be able to:

- describe the Baby Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y generations, their sub-segments and unique characteristics;
- discuss the lifestyle demands of the Baby Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y generations and how they impact kitchen design;
- compare the lifestyle demands and desires of the Baby Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y generations and how these influence their requirements for universal design; and
- summarize the seven key findings of the GenShift 2011 study and how the information gathered from this study impacts the design profession on a daily basis.

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Overview

Objectives of the GenShift 2011 Study

The GenShift 2011 study is an industry study that was commissioned to gain insight into kitchen design as it relates to current generational needs. GenShift 2011 identifies changes in lifestyle, typical kitchen layout and functionality of spaces that have implications for the aesthetics, storage and other factors of today's ideal kitchen.

The main objectives of the study were:

- 1) to determine how the “new normal,” resulting from today's economy, is affecting generational needs as they relate to kitchen and home design, specifically those of Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y; and
- 2) to provide professionals with the most current insights into clients' generational needs in terms of kitchen and home design.

Study Sources

The survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive® from February 28 - March 2, 2011 among 1,027 U.S. adult homeowners aged 18 to 65 years old.

Additional information and statistics were gleaned from Nielsen-Spectra data from 2005 to January 2011.

The “New Normal”

So, what is this so-called “new normal” and how is it changing the way we live? The economic climate has forced some people to delay the sale of their homes, and others to watch their budgets a little more closely, which includes eating in instead of dining out as often. With people staying in their homes longer than anticipated, there has been an increase in different types of home renovations.

Life expectancy continues to increase as Boomers are retiring daily and Gen Y’ers enter the marketplace at full speed. With all of these changing evolutions, more consumers are interested in aging-in-place or having an elderly parent or younger child move in with them.



The “New Normal”

Given the fact that the “new normal” is shifting attitudes, behaviors and the realities of spending in the home—and that the kitchen is increasingly becoming a place where multiple users and generations congregate—the question becomes...

How will the collision of these social, economic and generational influences impact kitchen design?

The Discovery

As expected, the GenShift 2011 study confirms some widely documented stereotypes as they relate to different generations, but it also spotlights some surprising findings as well.



Generations in the Study

The study was divided into three generational groups—Baby Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y.



Baby Boomers



Gen X



Gen Y

Who Are the “Boomers”?

So, who’s considered part of the Baby Boomer generation?

The baby boom occurred after the troops came back from World War II; Boomers include anyone born between 1946 and 1964. Topping more than 76 million people, this generation is often in charge of taking care of their parents while planning for their own senior years. And aging-in-place has become more and more common for this generation.



Boomer Sub-segments

Even though Boomers can be grouped together based on when they were born, there are a number of sub-segments that can greatly affect the way they live.

Independent Singles have one person per household, no children, and are aged 45 to 64. This group is less likely to move in the next few years, which means it's more likely they're going to need universal design considerations.

Senior Singles are those independent Boomers who are aged 65 and over. Many live in apartments, and more than 50 percent of those not living in multi-housing facilities have fully paid off their mortgages.



Boomer Sub-segments

Senior Couples are more likely to remain in their house than those living alone. Senior couples are MUCH more likely than senior singles to live in the “family home”—the same larger home in which they raised their kids.

Established Couples are those Boomers who are aged 45 to 54 and have no children at home. They have often reached their peak earning potential, and have dual incomes with a below-average incidence of apartment living.

Empty-Nest Couples are aged 54 to 65 who are often in flux as they get ready for retirement. They have the highest incidence of major home improvement projects and may have an adult child move back in with them or may even take in an aging parent.

Boomers also have the potential for “**boomerang**” children, which, as the name implies, is when adult children come back to live with their parents.

Who Is Gen X?

Gen X is made up of people born between 1965 and 1978. Of the three groups, Gen X represents the smallest group at 50 million people. Gen X is currently busy taking care of their children, advancing their careers and trying to find that ever-elusive work/life balance. This generation is always on the go, and specific design elements can help accompany their fast-paced lifestyle. When it comes to seeking advice, Gen X tends to look to their friends.



Generation X Sub-segments

Gen X breaks down into its own sub-segments as well.

Small-Scale Families are small households with children. These parents try to strike a balance between time spent with their children and pursuing their own interests.

Younger-Bustling Families are large households with children where the head-of-household is less than 40 years old. Spending money on home improvements is above average for this group.



Generation X Sub-segments

Older-Bustling Families have head-of-households who are older than 40. They're at the peak of their earning power and work hard to be able to afford the latest styles and trends. In most cases, both parents are working.

Independent Singles are between the ages of 35 and 44, live in single-person households and have no children. This group often lives in apartments or smaller homes. A place for entertaining, quick meal prep and other daily activities may be a priority for this group.

Established Couples are ages 35 to 44 who decided not to have children or have children who no longer live at home. Most are dual income and have reached their peak earning potential.

Who Is Gen Y?

Gen Y is born between 1979 and 1999. Also known as Millennials or Echo Boomers, this group consists of 87 million young consumers. Even though they're somewhat new to the workplace, they're in the market for big-ticket purchases, often purchasing homes as early as age 26. Armed with the latest technologies, they turn to third parties or the Internet for advice, information and the lowest price for getting what they want...now.



Generation Y Sub-segments

As the youngest group, Gen Y has the fewest number of subsets.

Young Transitionals are the most mobile, with more than 50 percent of them moving into a new home in the past year. They also have an abundance of freedom, while having the highest incidence of living in multi-unit buildings.

Start-Up Families are households with young children less than six years old. For this group, this is a time of both learning and transition—from an outward-looking life before kids to an inwardly focusing family life that centers on their home and young ones.



What Questions Were Asked?

Kitchen design can be affected by everything from market differences (southwest versus New England, for example) to budget constraints, and peer influence to personal preferences. Every client and project presents different challenges and opportunities.

As part of the GenShift 2011 study, participants were surveyed as to:

- Whether homeowners expect their parent (or parents) to live with them in the future;
- Whether homeowners currently live in a multigenerational household;
- The likelihood of moving over the next five to ten years;
- Whether homeowners feel their kitchen is universally designed for living;
- The amount of time homeowners spend in their kitchen doing various activities;
- Homeowners' opinions on the top three "extras" for kitchen layout;
- The floor plan of homeowners' ideal kitchen; and
- The suitability of their current kitchen for children.



Key Finding #1

Multigenerational Homes

The first key finding is that Gen Y and their parents may live together in the future—even more likely than other generations.

Of the three generations in this study, Gen Y has the highest expectation of parents living with them, not now, but in the future. This means that multigenerational homes will continue to be on the rise, which will have a profound effect on the functionality of the homes in which they live.



Generational Differences

When looking at all homeowners, just 7 percent said they expect their parents to live with them in the next 20 years. But as seen below, Gen Y skews significantly higher than Gen X or Boomers.

- Gen Y - 17%
- Gen X - 8%
- Baby Boomers - 1%

Multigenerational Needs

Attitudes are changing. As a result, multigenerational homes are on the rise.

As homeowners become more aware and accepting, the desire for kitchens that meet multigenerational needs will become more common.



Parent / Adult Balance

The Gen Y kitchen may need to be the most versatile. It must meet young-child needs—like a space for high chairs and storage options for small, kid-friendly dishes—as well as adult needs, such as a place to entertain for the occasional get-together with family or friends. The kitchen must meet both the needs of parenting and adulthood.



Keep-It-Simple

An overlapping subset of the Boomers and Gen X has been called the Sandwich Generation. Sandwiched between their aging parents and children at home, there are three generations living under one roof. The aesthetics for this group follow a “keep-it-simple” design philosophy. This includes cleaner lines, less countertop clutter, and easy-to-clean surfaces. Consider pullout drawers that provide easy access to snacks, pet food and small quantities of prepared items.





Key Finding #2

Homeowners Are Staying Put

The second key finding of the study is that homeowners believe that they will be staying in their current homes longer than originally anticipated.



Homeowners Are Staying Put

The study found that 63 percent of Baby Boomers and half (49 percent) of Gen X homeowners said they planned to stay in their current homes over the next five to ten years.

63%



49%



Generational Differences

More than half (53 percent) of ALL homeowners believe they will be staying put for up to the next ten years, with the Baby Boomer generation skewing significantly higher.

- Gen Y - 35%
- Gen X - 49%
- Baby Boomers - 63%

More Improvements

Past real estate statistics indicate that homeowners spent an average of five to seven years in their homes. But the GenShift 2011 research spotlights the fact that a large number of Boomers and Gen X'ers are expecting to spend up to a decade in their current homes. This indicates a major shift that will most likely result in additional home improvements to enhance functionality and quality of living.



Aging-In-Place

Due to a variety of factors—from healthcare to financial issues to an increased focus on family—more Baby Boomers are aging-in-place versus moving during retirement. This means they are more likely to spend money (or more money) on kitchen renovations if they're going to remain in their current home for a longer length of time.



Life Expectancy

As life expectancy increases, many Boomers will face the reality of having their parents move in with them.

Floor plan modifications, including wider walkways and more clearance around kitchen cabinets and islands, will help improve accessibility for multigenerational homes.

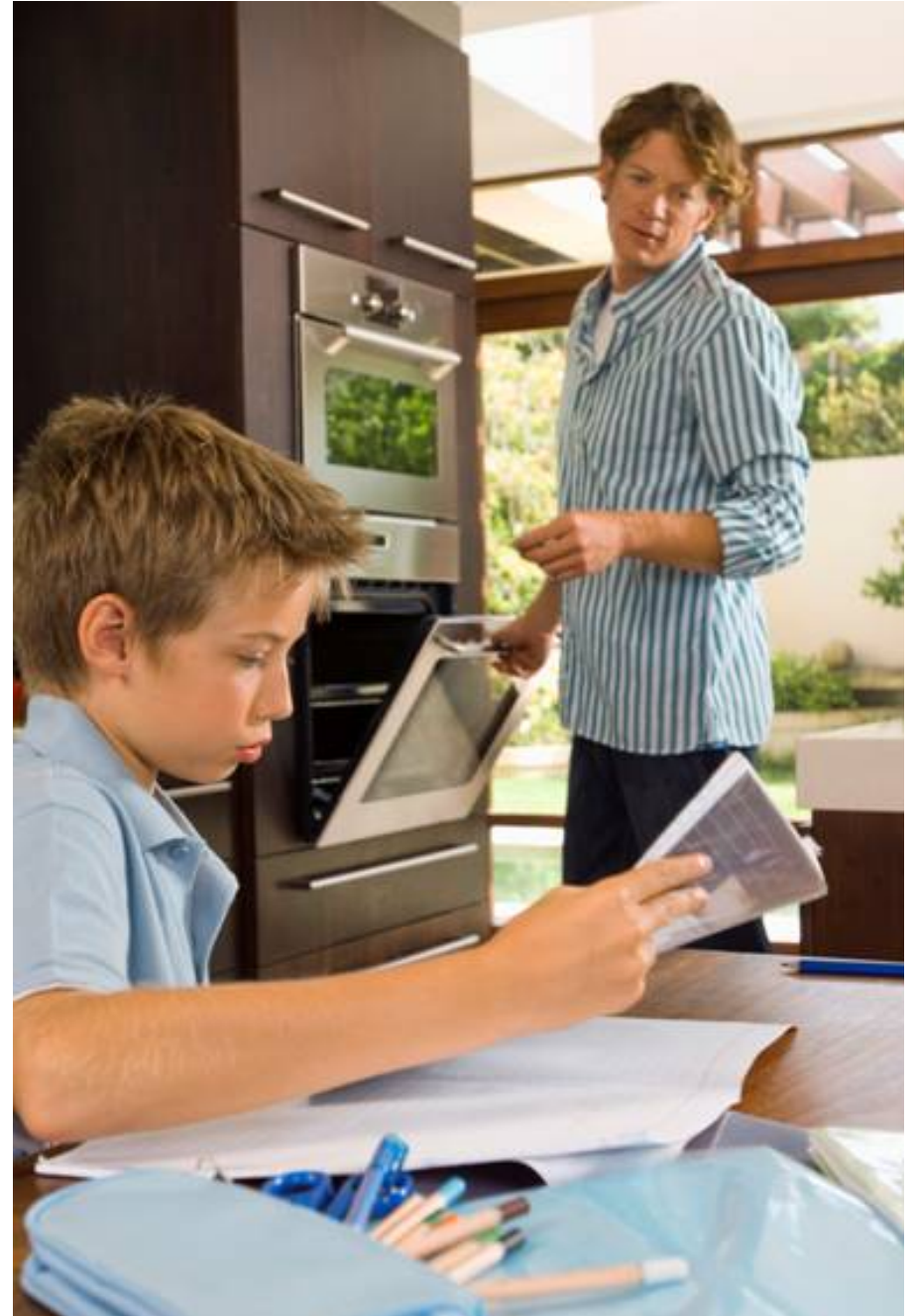




Key Finding #3

Appropriate Kitchen

The third key finding of the study is that homeowners of all generations may not have the kitchen they really want—or need.



Universal Design Needs

The study found that 24 percent of homeowners say they live in a multigenerational home. However, three out of four indicated that their current kitchen isn't designed to address universal design needs: for example, making their home ideally accessible to both children and older adults, and addressing important issues such as aging-in-place, mobility and functionality.



Generational Differences

Here are the numbers for the individual generational groups. It makes sense that Gen Y would lag a little behind, since they're just establishing their households, but it's not as low as might be expected. So what does this mean when it comes to building or renovating a kitchen? And what are some of the generational considerations to keep in mind for universal design?

- Gen Y - 66%
- Gen X - 78%
- Baby Boomers - 75%

Think Ergonomically

Older or smaller hands may have trouble grasping or pulling certain types of drawer or cabinet hardware. Consider larger handles that are easier to grasp and more ergonomically friendly. Ergonomically friendly details could range from decorative hardware with greater space and projection, to wider hardware widths, or larger, easier to grab knobs.



Easy Access

Bending down and reaching can become more difficult as homeowners age. Pull-out shelves in kitchen cabinets that fully extend into the room make for easier access and can reduce the chance of injury. Plus, access is gained from three sides.



Shed Light

Lighting is an important consideration. Different kitchen tasks (and different generations) require various levels of lighting. A combination of recessed, pendant and under-cabinet lighting provides both aesthetics and functionality. Adding dimmer switches is a way to add even more flexibility.



Color Matters

Monochromatic color schemes have been popular in recent years. But older clients may need more contrast between countertops and cabinets in order to maximize visual acuity. This will help increase safety and efficiency in the kitchen.





Key Finding #4

Pets Are Important

There are many pet lovers out there, be it of cats, dogs or birds.

The next key finding in the GenShift research is that a place for storing dog food in the kitchen is more important than a place for wine storage. This is true for all generations. But what exactly does that mean?



Pets Are Important

More than 20 percent of all homeowners surveyed indicated that a place for feeding pets is a top three kitchen extra, compared with only 10 percent who felt they needed a place to store their wine. While this doesn't necessarily mean the homeowner won't like a wine rack or wine refrigerator, it's important NOT to overlook these very important members of the household.



Generational Differences

While there are some slight generational differences, for the most part, all three generations put more emphasis on their pets than on their penchant for wine.

Homeowners feel a place in the kitchen for feeding pets is a top three kitchen extra.

- Gen Y - 19%
- Gen X - 20%
- Baby Boomers - 24%

Homeowners feel a place in the kitchen for wine storage is a top three kitchen extra.

- Gen Y - 12%
- Gen X - 12%
- Baby Boomers - 7%

Family Matters

Pets are often considered members of the family. As families grow and the nest becomes empty, pets often become the children of the household. When it comes to kitchen design, creature comforts are no longer limited to just people.



Make Room

When building or renovating a home, consider spaces for pets, including a feeding area and a place to store food and supplies. Mudrooms and laundry rooms sometimes become “bedrooms” for the family pet. In addition to a feeding area and storage, pet washing stations are becoming commonplace as well.



A Spot for Pets

An emerging trend suggests that homeowners are moving away from the traditional kitchen desk, which could be used as a pet feeding area instead. This doesn't necessarily require ordering custom cabinetry, although there are some good options there. Here is a great example of a multipurpose area that includes standard items as well as a place for feeding pets.





Key Finding #5

Multifunctional Spaces

The fifth key finding of the study is that multitasking requires multifunctional spaces.



Multitasking

The youngest of the three generations, Gen Y, is very good at multitasking: text messaging, using Facebook[®], instant messaging and watching TV, all while working out. The list goes on and on...and all at once, simultaneously. In fact, on a typical weekday, 44 percent of Gen Y spends time entertaining and watching TV or using a computer in the kitchen.

44%



Generational Differences

Again, Gen Y is more likely to be doing more things in the kitchen—all at the same time. So it only follows that their kitchens should reflect and complement the way they live.

- Gen Y - 44%
- Gen X - 36%
- Baby Boomers - 33%

Center of Activity

The kitchen is truly the hub of the home, especially with Gen Y homeowners. And it's so much more than just a place to prepare food. It's essential for everyday functionality, efficiency and time management.



Get Connected

For Gen Y, technology and multitasking are hardwired into their personalities. And they spend so much time in the kitchen doing more than just cooking. Gen Y homeowners might appreciate a workspace in the kitchen so they can do their online banking and check their Facebook® status. A charging station for all their devices is something else that would align nicely with their lifestyle.



Entertaining Ideas

For Gen Y homeowners without children, the functionality of the space changes slightly. This group is more focused on friends, cooking and wine clubs, intimate dinners for two and baking. An entertainment space adjacent to the kitchen might be an important addition.





Key Finding #6

Sweat the Small Stuff

Key finding number six is DO sweat the small stuff.



Top Three Kitchen Extras

When surveyed, homeowners indicated the following top three kitchen extras:

- A place for hiding small appliances.
- Storage for bulk food and/or cleaning supplies, and
- An easily accessible area for waste and recycling.



Generational Differences

Granted, appliance storage, a place for bulk food and cleaning supplies and a well-placed trash can and recycling bin may not be at the top of your list of design considerations. But, these small details are of significant importance to homeowners. It's about convenience and functionality seamlessly integrated into your designs.



A Place for Everything

Cooking (and even coffee drinking) comes with more gadgets and appliances than ever before. So how can you provide easy access to these gadgets without cluttering the countertop? There are a number of storage options that not only contain the clutter, but also have intelligently placed outlets to keep cords under control.

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Close at Hand

In the 70's and 80's, trash compactors could be found in many custom homes. Today, slide-out trash and recycling bins are making kitchens even more functional. It's important to consider placement (to the side of the main sink, but perhaps a second trash area under the bar or prep sink). A single door pull-out with a swinging action is ideal; it takes less effort to open and it is immediately accessible.



Storage Space

While traditional pantries are still fairly common, more homeowners are choosing a separate, tall cabinet door with slide-out storage. Tall, adjustable shelves can accommodate big cereal boxes, heavy canned goods and even appliances like slow cookers. Oftentimes, the slide-out storage is placed near the entry to the garage, which helps make unloading groceries more convenient.





Key Finding #7

Kitchen Plans Are Open to Interpretation

Kitchen plans are open to interpretation; this is one of the study findings that is more of a confirmation than a revelation.



Floor Plans

According to the GenShift survey, nearly 90 percent of all homeowners prefer a semi-open or completely open floor plan. This in itself isn't earth-shattering information, but is something to keep in mind as you consider multigenerational homes and the importance of universal design.



Generational Differences

Breaking it down a little further, Gen Y is higher than other generations at 92 percent, Gen X is at 88 percent and Baby Boomers come in at 87 percent. Let's take a look at a few ideas that should be considered when designing for each of these groups.

- Gen Y - 92%
- Gen X - 88%
- Baby Boomers - 87%

Different Levels

Baby Boomers use their kitchens for a variety of multigenerational activities—from socializing with friends to caring for their grandkids. A standard-height table near or connected to an island is an ideal extension of the kitchen space. Multiple countertop and table heights in the same area offer the most options for universal design, whether it's multiple generations living together or one generation aging-in-place.



Open Things Up

Eliminating walls or creating half-walls can help make small areas feel bigger, in addition to providing better flow. But including peninsulas and islands is still important because they enhance the functionality of the space. There needs to be adequate room for cooking and entertaining, often at the same time.



Clear the Way

The size of the island or peninsula isn't as important as its proportion and relation to the rest of the kitchen. If space allows, there should be at least 42 inches of clear floor space around islands and peninsulas, and even more room (48 to 60 inches) between the counter and kitchen table.





Summary

Summary

How does this information impact your profession on a daily basis?

The new normal has shifted the way homeowners think and behave. The collision of social, economic and generational factors will impact kitchen design. If designers, architects and other building professionals are more aware of the generational differences, it will lead to more satisfied clients and more successful projects. This not only applies to the kitchen, but it applies to the rest of the home as well.

The new normal can be viewed as a challenge, or it can be used as an opportunity to strengthen customer relationships and grow your business. So, how do you use this information to your advantage?

When beginning a project, ask questions related to generations, their differences and similarities. Work with clients to interpret their needs...both spoken and unspoken. If you take the time to understand the specific lifestyle and lifestage of your clients, you're more likely to have a higher degree of success in designing a beautiful kitchen that works.

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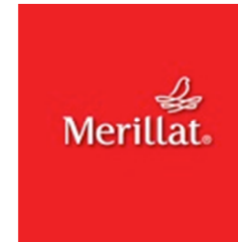
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