

D-Code
www.d-code.com
Toronto, On

WHO ARE THEY?

D-Code is a strategy, research and innovation company that has been developing unparalleled knowledge and expertise on the Information Age Generations for more than seven years. Their insights and processes drive customer-based innovation in social, consumer, and work environments. Through stakeholder consultations, roundtable discussions and other methods, they help their clients develop and manage knowledge to innovate their approach to better engage citizens. D-Code brings a unique integrative approach to their work, working across the sectors of Canadian society to help organizations better understand, attract and retain young adults.

PRINCIPLES

D-code identifies several factors present in organizations that have formed successful intergenerational partnerships with youth:

- 1) Youth participation has a personal and transformative effect:
Participation allows young people to develop new skills, leadership abilities, personal growth, develop a sense of empowerment and agency, and engage in critical thinking and continuous learning. (*D-code*)
- 2) Participation is action-oriented and leads to tangible outcomes:
Programs and initiatives are designed with action-oriented, clear, relevant, and achievable goals that make complex social issues accessible to young people. Young people feel that their efforts are appreciated and valued by the organization, receive feedback on the result of their efforts, and feel they are making a difference. (*D-code*)
- 3) Participation is progressive and multi-layered.
The organization allows young people to progress in their involvement, from supporters and participants to organizers and leaders, so that they achieve multiple levels of engagement and their energy is sustained. Young people are encouraged to participate in a meaningful way and to develop capacity in other modes of civic engagement. (*D-code*)
- 4) The organization allocates resources and has a deliberate/envisioned strategy to engage young people. Engaging young people is not a side issue, but a core part of the organization's strategic objectives. As such, resources are dedicated to youth and young adult programming and outreach. The organization evaluates the effectiveness of these programs and builds its capacity to better engage young people. (*D-code*)
- 5) The organization operates with a participatory and/or non-hierarchical structure.
The organization has broken structural barriers to greater participation by young people and practices inclusivity. It makes it a matter of policy to involve young people in decision-making, program planning, and policy development (on boards, committees, etc.). It also facilitates intergenerational reciprocity so young people and adults can work and learn together in collaborative, respectful and non-hierarchical ways. (*D-code*)

“Participation enables young people to connect and collaborate with diverse community networks, as well as with like-minded people. Participation builds a sense of solidarity and belonging, develops social networks, and is fun.”

-Robert Barnard, Founder

WHAT ADVICE DO THEY GIVE?

D-Code stresses the importance of creating a sense of equal partnership between the youth engaged and the adults engaging them. A sense of vested interest and ownerships are important to making youth feel like they really belong to the organization and will motivate them to give their all.

WHAT THE YOUTH FRIENDLY GUIDE SAYS

The Youth Friendly Guide identifies three things that youth need in order to truly feel like a part of the organization they work for. They are meaning, control, and connectedness. When you allow youth to share in the decision-making process and allow them a share of the ownership of the organization, they'll feel like they are doing something important in their community and environment; that they're helping to shape and influence things. This way they'll feel a greater sense of control and connectivity to the initiative or the organization.

“I've recently realized the incredible power of bringing people together (who aren't necessarily those with a strong background in policy and program development) but who have interesting experiences and/or ideas who adopt a more eclectic and innovative approach to creating something new.”

-Robert Barnard, Founder

It's important to be open to ideas and to not be afraid of new ones that go against the norm. This doesn't mean that you should get rid of your scepticism or to surrender your judgement to new ideas. Rather, give new ideas the benefit of your full attention and don't shy away from experimentation. Great ideas often come from this. Youth have a strong capacity to be creative and their minds haven't been fully moulded into one way of thinking.

STRATEGY

“We have a network of about 800 people across Canada who are our eyes and ears on the ground to keep us in tune with the young reality of the Country. Among these 800 people, you'll find a lot of diversity and these people help keep us in touch with a wide range of perspectives, opinions and information. They are our decoders. They give us the insight we need, they act as experts in various fields, and act as innovators for new services and ideas.”

-Robert Barnard, Founder