If you are 30-44 years old, you are a member of Generation X, the generation that has drawn the short stick when it comes to work. At least that's how author Tamara Erickson views it in her latest book, What's Next Gen X. The economy has been stacked against Gen X from the beginning – and worse yet, they're sandwiched between the know-it-all boomers who refuse to retire and Gen Y with their overbearing confidence and consistent demands for attention, according to Erickson.

What's Next Gen X is the author’s third book on generations. Her first was on the boomers and the second was on Gen Y – the techno-savvy Millenials. Since she worked on both ends of the sandwich, she now brings us what's inside the sandwich – Gen X. Frankly, I haven't given much thought to the workplace plight of Gen X, but then maybe that's part of their problem...they haven’t been given much thought.

The author writes that nearly 95 percent of Gen X'ers work in organizations that are owned or managed by others. So, to get what they want in those organizations, they need to be perceived as valuable contributors and work effectively with others. In other words, play to their strengths...focus on what they're good at and be aware of what they're not. Erickson has done extensive research on changing demographics and employee values, and also on how successful organizations work. So the 95 percent statistic is most likely accurate. But, don't 95 percent of all generations work for organizations that are owned or managed by others. Clearly, most employed people today do not own their own business and are not managers.

You may detect some cynicism on the part of the reviewer regarding the “difficult” place that Gen X finds themselves. And you would be right. Although the book is chock full of tales of woe (actual quotes) from Gen X'ers relating the hardships they have endured in the workplace, there are also a refreshing number of quotes from X'ers telling other X'ers to “get over it” and make something happen. And I think that is what Erickson is saying as well.

The PR piece that came with the book describes Erickson as a storyteller – and she is a good one. The writing is clear and concise, sprinkled with quotes and interesting demographic statistics and flows like a well-written story. This is not only a how-to book but a how-not-to book, which is equally important. Some of her advice includes:

• Find work that aligns with your passions.
• Understand where the boomers and Gen Y's are coming from – work with them not against them.
• Spot and seize newly emerging professional opportunities.
• Develop an exit plan if corporate life is no longer for you.

This is a hopeful book for those X'ers who feel short-changed, put upon and sandwiched. Erickson describes a plethora of strategies to be successful and is empathetic to the X'ers dilemma. What I get from the book is that Erickson is telling Gen X that she feels their pain, while providing the tools for them to become pain-free. I am not convinced that Gen X has it any tougher than any other generation. Their challenges may be different and perhaps their path to success will be different, but Erickson has adeptly provided them with an optimistic handbook to success. I think many Gen X'ers will feel better about their situation simply because somebody wrote a book about them. Erickson has done her job. Now it's up to Gen X to do theirs.

Reviewed by Tom Faulkner, publisher, Workforce Solutions Review