

# Gen Trends

April 2005

*Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!*

## Technology and the Detached Associate

A recent column in *The Wall Street Journal* addressed the issue of the out-of-office and automated replies people are now foisting on each other. They explain uncomfortably personal details of relationships, record extensive messages explaining their indispensability or simply use the feature to screen all calls rather than dealing with others. Prakash Rau, a chief architect for an information-systems company is quoted as saying, "We have become a society with a veneer of civility."

What are young professionals to conclude when they discover that those around them work with others and manage projects without engaging in the true discourse it takes to hash out the details of daily challenges? Does this not encourage them to model that same behavior? After all, they have come of age in an environment that increasingly substitutes electronic messaging for live interaction. Accepting that the majority of human communication is non-verbal, one has to wonder how their ability to empathize, encourage, persuade and resolve differences will evolve over time. Further, what impact will this have on society and the children they raise?

The fact is that most young workers crave the opportunity to interact with those in charge. They seek the time and insights that come from sitting at the feet of veteran managers. Are they not disillusioned when those to whom they report cannot find adequate time to mentor them? Rationalize all you wish about pressing schedules, but supervising and delegating via e-mail and voice mail removes the opportunity for genuine talent development. R.W.W.

## **Leadership and the Emerging Generations**

The Center for Generational Studies has introduced a *new* program focused on what leadership will look like in 2010. As the Baby Boom generation begins its slow march into retirement over the next decade, the faces of those running organizations, large and small, will change in both practice and philosophy. Organizations are seeing a migration away from the Boomer work tendencies of long hours and sacrifice for the corporate good.

But this is about more than work ethic. It's about how the next generation will alter leadership practices as we know them. Based on hundreds of hours of research and surveys, this session provides those attending with the insights and sources to prepare for this massive shift in practices. This is not about reaction. This is about preparing the groundwork for continuity of direction and management.

**Leadership and the Emerging Generations** will help you connect with the values and expectations of those presently in their 30s and early 40s who will assume responsibility for strategy and execution going forward. Walk away with practical ideas for recruiting, developing and mentoring the future leaders of your organization. Time marches on. This is an issue that requires the attention of every organizational leader today.

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## "GenTistics"

30% of young people say they either talk on the phone, instant message, watch TV, listen to music, or surf the Web for fun "most of the time" they're doing homework.

The Kaiser Family Foundation



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## How Will Xers Differ as Leaders?

As this new generation begins to migrate into positions of senior responsibility, they will transform both vision and practice. Here's how:

**Emphasis on life balance** – Xers' focus on balancing work with the rest of their lives has been a constant source of dissonance between the generations. As they assume responsibility at senior levels, these individuals will change the way work is evaluated. The overall emphasis will shift to an exclusively outcome-based measurement of performance.

**Less willingness to travel and relocate** – This same Xer desire for balance will result in more judicial travel practices. Many Baby Boomers have been conditioned to believe that so-called windshield time and regular air travel are a cost of doing business. While one should not discount the importance of visits to important customers and company sites, technology is already eliminating a portion of these trips. As Generation X assumes responsibility, they are sure to take even fuller advantage of these electronic options.

**Shorter average leadership tenure** – Those in Generation X have already demonstrated that they view jobs as more contracts than careers. While many will find themselves remaining with one organization for a long period of time, this general restlessness and desire for flexibility and versatility will undoubtedly reduce overall leadership tenure. Many Xers place a high value on the ability to position themselves for the next opportunity (not necessarily promotion). This, they feel, ensures economic security, intellectual stimulation, and an ability to maintain balance. This will force reconsiderations of assumptions about succession planning, development, incentives, recruitment and costs of turnover.

*From Leadership and the Emerging Generations*

## And the Hits Just Keep on Coming!

New releases to accommodate aging Baby Boomers . . .

*Willie Nelson:*

### **On the Throne Again**

*Helen Reddy:*

### **I am Woman. Hear Me Snore**

*The Bee Gees:*

### **How Can You Mend a Broken Hip?**

*Bobby Darin:*

### **Splish, Splash, I Was Havin' a Flash**

*The Temptations:*

### **Papa's Got a Kidney Stone**

*Tony Orlando:*

### **Knock Three Times on the Ceiling if You Hear Me Fall**

*Abba:*

### **Denture Queen**

## **Almost Half of Executives Plan to Work Beyond Age 64**

Forty-four percent of almost 2000 global executives surveyed, plan to continue working past the age of 64, with 15 percent planning to work past 70, according to the latest executive quiz from Korn/Ferry International. When asked at what age they planned to retire, executives' most popular response (29 percent) was between 64 and 69. Additionally 62 percent say they are planning to work later in life than they thought they would three years ago. In a possible clue as to why, the survey showed that 60 percent believe their employers have inadequate retirement benefits programs.

Only 41 percent of respondents believe their employers are "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about the potential for losing critical knowledge as Baby Boomers retire. Additionally, just 21 percent said their companies are actively taking steps to retain critical knowledge that might be lost as Boomers retire. *Inside Training*

## *Generations*

### **Understanding Age Diversity in Today's Workplace**

## Case Study Corner

*I am 28 years old and last month I found myself asking, "What's wrong with this younger generation?" I manage a family-owned hardware store and have a thriving business because of the personal service we provide. But it has dawned on me over the past few months that I, and those older than me, seem to be providing most of that service and not those who are younger. They're nice enough kids, but it doesn't seem to occur to them that there might be something the customer needs besides what he or she asks for specifically. I try to model what I expect of others, but they don't seem to get it. Any suggestions?*

I'm not sure it's a case of *not* getting it. I should begin by asking how specific you have been in training them. It's one thing, for instance, to say, "Use your common sense" when discussing customer interactions. It's quite another to ask as them to use specific phrases or questions. Remember that this may be their first or second job. While you are only eight to ten years older, you have turned that critical corner of converting experience into wisdom. They're still trying to figure out their role in the world of work. There may also be a gap in terms of life experience. Increasingly, we're discovering that those in their teens and early twenties are "multi-channelers" meaning they are paying attention to you – and a number of other stimuli at the same time. Simply because they nod their heads, doesn't mean that they truly understand.

As for strategies, I would provide these young people with the specific questions they should be asking to engage the customer. (e.g. "When you've showed the customer what he's looking for, ask 'What else do you need?'" or "Always ask the customer what she will be using the parts or equipment for.") Don't expect a transformation over night, but you will see progress with encouragement. For those who don't seem to catch on, I would end the relationship. After all, they're supposed to be there to sell, not just pick up a paycheck.