

# Gen Trends

December 2005

*Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!*

## At What Point - Consequences?

Last month, the Associated Press released a story about Tasha Henderson and her 14-year-old daughter Coretha. It seems that Coretha had developed the habits of talking back to teachers and chronic lateness along with the resulting poor grades. So after numerous attempts to correct the situation in traditional ways, Mom hauled her daughter off to a nearby street corner and stuck a sign in her hands that read, "I don't do my homework and I act up in school, so my parents are preparing me for my future. Will work for food."

Although Ms. Henderson stood next to her daughter, a passing motorist called police with a report of psychological abuse. The police asked them to leave and the report was forwarded to the state department of human services. Reports of the incident have prompted both praise and outrage, with one child development professor warning that such punishment would do "extreme emotional damage." As for Coretha, she admits that while the action was humiliating, she has stopped talking back in school.

Now I'm not here to argue the finer points of parenting but rather to ask what influence the public discourse around this incident might have on those Coretha's age. After all, it seems to be an adolescent's moral obligation to skirt the rules. Three years from now, when my then 14-year-old daughter is sanctioned over one transgression or another, will she Google this same Associated Press article and accuse me of "extreme emotional damage?" Then what should I do?  
RWW

## What Would Wally Do?

The American Management Association has released the latest of Bob Wendover's books! Co-authored with master storyteller, Terrence Garguilo, the book tells the story of Wally, the Weather Customer Satisfaction Bureau's new young director. The Bureau's latest survey has shown that customers are very unhappy with the weather of late. Amid the turmoil, one thing is clear: the old clouds, set in their ways and seeing no need to change, have had it up to here with the young upstarts and their newfangled technology. At the same time, the younger clouds have no patience for the old ways and can't wait to do away with every last vestige of "how we've always done it." With these two fronts clashing daily, the customers below are getting soaked.

It's up to Wally, the Bureau director, to "clear" the air and sort things out in *On Cloud Nine: Weathering the Challenge of Many Generations in the Workplace*. The book presents real lessons about what's truly valuable in the workplace like creating a balance between past and future, nurturing diversity of ideas, and more. And it's much more than a wise and witty fable. Part II, offers real guidance for improving communication and teamwork in multigenerational workplaces. The authors address key points and answer common questions with expert advice that will help readers apply the lessons of the story in their own organizations. And what about Wally and the clouds? To find out, go to [www.oncloudnine.org](http://www.oncloudnine.org) and click on "Buy the Book." It's a great holiday gift and a steal at \$13.57.

### Upcoming Center audiences include:

US Department of Veterans Affairs  
Air Conditioning Contractors Association  
Georgia Society of Association Executives  
Municipality of Anchorage  
Kodiak College  
Kenai Peninsula College  
Material Handling Equipment Dealers Assn..  
Northwest Public Power Association

## "GenTistics"

In the United States  
87% of teens use the  
Internet, 65% use  
Instant Messaging, and  
49% go on-line everyday.

Pew Internet & American Life Project



Robert W. Wendover  
Editorial Director



15200 E. Girard Ave.  
Suite 3000  
Aurora, CO 80014  
Phone: 303-617-7207  
Fax: 303-617-7209  
Toll Free: 800-227-5510  
[www.gentrends.com](http://www.gentrends.com)

## Test Your Knowledge of Millennial Markers, part 2

What was the name of the actor who left the show ER in 1999 after pulling in 36 million viewers?

- a. Noah Wyle
- b. George Clooney
- c. Anthony Edwards
- d. Eriq LaSalle

What music sharing software was named after its creator's out of control hair?

- a. Kazaa
- b. Napster
- c. Mozilla
- d. Gnutella

Which of the following is not a Teletubbie?

- a. Dipsy
- b. Lala
- c. Poe
- d. Dinky

In a computer-edited commercial, Fred Astaire dances with what kind of vacuum cleaner?

- a. Hoover
- b. Kirby
- c. Dyson
- d. Dirt Devil

What beverage brand was pitched by two lizards named Louie and Frank?

- a. Coca-Cola
- b. Miller
- c. Pepsi
- d. Budweiser

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**Check out the answers in next month's issue of GenTrends.**

### The Answers to Last Month's Quiz

*What disability did Erik Weihenmayer overcome to reach the summit of Mt. Everest?* Blindness

*Who was the lead singer of the band Nirvana?* Kurt Cobain

*What two celebrities had their first year of married life caught on camera for an MTV show called "Newlyweds?"* Jessica Simpson & Nick Lachey

*Which trick helped Johnny Moseley win the gold medal in the 1998 Olympics Freestyle skiing moguls event?* 360 Mute Grab

*What pop superstar got married in Vegas and had the marriage annulled 55 hours later?* Britney Spears

*What Keanu Reeves movie became the first DVD to sell one million copies?* The Matrix

## To Ponder

In our survey, eight job factors were significantly more important to women than to men. Two of the eight have to do with work relationships (with supervisors and co-workers). Even though both male and female respondents rated these two factors as high in importance, the women chose a significantly higher importance rating than did men. This doesn't mean relationships are unimportant to GenX men; it's just that women place significantly more importance on positive relationships. This may be because women have higher oxytocin and lower testosterone levels or it may simply be a learned value/need.

Performance feedback and recognition are also significantly more important to women than to men. Once again, the ratings don't tell us why. Perhaps women place greater importance on these job factors because they are wired to need more feedback and recognition. Or, perhaps they do so because they receive less attention than do men in the workplace. Certainly the salary and promotion discrepancies between the two genders suggest it could be the latter. . .

It is important to remember that even though women selected significantly higher importance ratings for performance feedback and recognition than did men, these two factors are low in terms of relative priority for both genders. Performance feedback is ranked tenth out of fifteen on the women's priority list, and it's twelfth out of fifteen for the men. Recognition is ranked fourteenth in importance for both. Neither gender appears to be addicted to feedback or recognition; therefore the higher importance ratings women give these job factors may merely be a reflection of gender inequity issues in their workplaces.

Charlotte Shelton and Laure Shelton  
in *The NeXt Revolution*

## To Read . . .

**The NeXt Revolution:** *What Gen X Women Want at Work and How Their Boomer Bosses Can Help Them Get It.* Charlotte Shelton and Laura Shelton. Davies-Black Publishing, Mountain View, 2005. ISBN 0-89106-200-9.

## Case Study Corner

*I manage a sales organization for a heavy equipment manufacturer. While most of my reps are 45-plus, the engineers who provide installation and service are in their mid-twenties. I receive regular complaints from the reps about the cavalier way in which the engineers treat their customer contacts. As one said to me the other day, "I spend all my time building relationships, and our engineers treat them like idiots." What do I do?*

There are probably several factors influencing this situation. Yes, some of it is about the difference in ages between veteran sales reps and younger engineers. To this we should add the level of engagement these young professionals have in their jobs. We also need to take into consideration that these are engineers working with individuals for whom technical expertise may not be a strong suit. Finally, we have to be careful not to simply accept one version of what's going on.

I would begin with education. Spend more time helping these young professionals better understand how to communicate with your customers. After all, it's not just about technical skills; part of their job is to maintain the relationship. Next, I would check with the customers directly, but discreetly. You don't want your reps to think you're checking on them. But at the same time, you need to get a clear understanding of any concerns your customers may have. Thirdly, I would conduct some training on the differences in attitudes between the generations. It's probably safe to assume that both groups are leaping to mistaken assumptions about the other. Finally, I might ask the reps to bring the engineers along earlier in the relationship. This will allow them to get to know each other better. It will also allow both of them to see the other in action in front of the customer. But remember, these relationships take time.

**Happy Holidays!**

from all of us at the  
Center for Generational Studies