

# Gen Trends

July 2005

*Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!*

## Getting Millennials to Engage

First, an apology. There will be those in their twenties who will rail against what you are about to read. They will complain that I am over-generalizing, jumping to conclusions or have a personal bias against young workers. None of this is true.

I applaud the hardworking young stars emerging in today's workplace. But I have heard countless stories about young employees who seem to lack the desire to contribute more than the minimum, show up on time, if at all, and take the initiative to think through the normal challenges of daily life. "What's happened to the work ethic?" most of these storytellers ask.

We could stop here and examine the root causes of this conundrum, but that wouldn't provide a solution. So let's get to the point. Millennials need three things when they come to work: Direction, structure, and stimulation. If you provide these three, you and they will get along just fine. Allow me to explain:

**Direction:** Critical thinking, without the aid of menu driven devices, does not appear to be a strong suit for many of these people. Give them the opportunity to dance their fingers on a keyboard and they will do it better than anyone over 40. But when it comes to so-called common sense decisions, be more specific in your direction. Rather than simply saying, "clean up the stockroom," list for them exactly what steps they should complete. If you ask them to type a business letter, provide the specific format that should be followed. If you are delegating a project, use the four step process I described in an earlier issue: 1) Be crystal clear in describing the project. 2) Help them

brainstorm an approach. 3) Set specific benchmarks to be completed. 4) Refuse to allow them to re-delegate it back on your shoulders by professing inability.

**Structure:** A friend of mine manages a clothing store. The other day, one of her best employees said, "When I signed on here, I never figured you were going to make me work the whole time." The hard reality is that my friend, along with countless other managers have assumed the responsibility for teaching these young workers what hard work looks like. The solution? Break tasks into smaller bites and keep a list of them handy for assignment when Millennial workers have completed what they're doing. Develop a standing list of on-going tasks for which everyone is responsible when other projects have been completed. Be sure to model these behaviors for them. Let them see that if you're on the job, you're always looking for the next task to be done.

**Stimulation:** This group multi-channels and multi-tasks 24/7/365. There is no way you and your job can compete with the rest of their lives. So don't even try. Get past your idea of how work should be done and allow them some freedom to work the way they are used to. Rethink the parameters that you have in your head about the right and wrong ways to get a job done.

Finally, delegate more than one project at a time and let them bounce back and forth between assignments. They're used to multi-tasking rather than working sequentially. All of this requires a bit of trial and error, but the result will be engaged, productive young workers.

Call 1-800-227-5510 to book us for your next meeting.

**Upcoming Center audiences include:**  
Oregon Society of Association Management  
Electrical Generating Systems Association  
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Art Institute of Las Vegas  
Society of Animal Welfare Administrators

## "GenTistics"

At age 16, boys get into 27 car crashes per million miles driven, and girls 28 crashes. By the time these drivers reach 20-24, there are eight crashes for men and nine for women.

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety



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## To Ponder . . .

If there are no real needs, no incentives, and certainly no one pushing them, why would a dependent teen ever want a job? Why take a ten-dollar-an-hour babysitting post? After all, mom and dad have the means to give the kid everything: a laptop, a cell phone, an mp3 player, a motorized scooter, a car, and plenty of running-around cash. Today, even 12-year-olds are handed credit cards in their own names with the assurance that mom and dad will pay the tab.

Statistics prove that this phenomenon isn't limited to families living in affluent areas. Look around. Even in middle-class and lower-class neighborhoods, kids sport \$100 athletic jerseys, iPods, cell phones, and all kinds of other desirable (and expensive) stuff. If you were to add up the price of all the items found in a kid's bedroom today, it would dwarf what a kid 20, 30 or 40 years ago owned by a factor of 25 times or more. Realistically, kids couldn't earn a sum of money equal to all these goods anyway – the snowboard, the CDs, the X-Box, the Air Jordans, the makeup kits, or the low-cut designer jeans. And they know it.

Eric Chester in *Getting Them to Give a Damn*

## To Read . . .

***Getting Them to Give a Damn: How to Get Your Front Line to Care About Your Bottom Line.*** Eric Chester. Dearborn Trade Publishing, New York, 2005. ISBN 1-4195-0458-4.

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## Using Your Head to Educate Your Kids

Thirty-year-old Kari Smith of Salt Lake City has had her forehead tattooed with the Web address of a gambling site in return for \$10,000 after auctioning off the space on e-Bay. She says she will use the money to get her 11-year-old son a private education because he's fallen behind in school. The tattoo artist and his staff spent nearly seven hours trying to talk her out of it. The auction attracted 27,000 hits.

*The Denver Post*

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## 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 the 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. [Click here](#) for more information.

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## Hey! That's My Job!

The Center for Labor Market Studies of Northeastern University reports that the summer employment rate for 16- to 19-year-olds has fallen steadily in the past four years, dropping to 36.3% in 2004. Study authors credit a stalled economy and corporate downsizing for much of the drop. Older workers are taking jobs that traditionally went to teens. They are also staying in temporary jobs longer than expected.

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## Case Study Corner

*I manage an insurance agency with about 200 employees. While many have been with me for more than 20 years, the tide is beginning to shift as they retire and we add young people to take their places. A particular source of tension has been the use of technology. My veteran workers are content using the company's proprietary software, but these new workers are constantly complaining about how it doesn't have the features they want. I am in no mood to spend a chunk of this year's profits to meet their demands. But I'm fearful that without upgrading, they'll leave. What do you suggest?*

First, you must ask yourself whether these young people have a point. As much as upgrading can be an expensive process, falling behind technologically will play havoc with more than just intergenerational relations. With that said, accept the fact that young workers have grown up with technology that seems to get better and faster with every month. That doesn't mean you have to spend your hard earned dollars catering to their technological whims. You may find, for example, that a nucleus of hotshots is driving this grouching. But their job is not to critique your systems but to complete assignments using the resources provided.

Some of this may be a result of the people you hire. It can be tempting to select applicants who demonstrate a high level of technical skill. It can also be these same people who will possess an insatiable desire to tinker and complain rather than work and complete assigned tasks. Remember, you're looking for users, not wizards.

Gather a selection of users from different generations and ask them for input on the present system. In return, you will probably receive a list of realistic suggestions for improvement. Then you can decide on where to go from there. Everyone will know that you're listening and hopefully the grouching will diminish. If not, I would invite the grouchers to look for other employment. Life's too short.