

Gen Trends

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

October 2005

A Tale of Two Dentists

I recently have become acquainted with two dentists, both women in their early thirties. One, whom I shall call Amy, works with her husband, also a dentist, in a small practice they own. She and her husband work six days a week opening at 7AM and serving patients into the evening.

The other dentist, whom I'll call Terry, works from 10AM until 4PM, four days a week, taking one week off every two months. Patients sometimes find themselves waiting six weeks for an appointment. While they sometimes complain about the delay, Terry is unapologetic. "One of the reasons I became a dentist is so I could control my hours. I have a one-year-old at home," she says, "and he is my priority. Do I have a duty to those I serve? Absolutely, but only when I am working. After all, dentistry is a business."

Amy, on the other hand has a different objective. She and her husband plan to shut down the practice and retire at 45. While their present hours may be onerous, they're socking away the money and looking forward to a carefree future. Does she feel any obligation to those who provided her with education and training? "Not at all," she says. "Our training was bought and paid for. How we choose to use it is our business. After all, I'm a person who happens to be a dentist, not the other way around."

There are those in our society who might argue that these women are violating their ethical obligations. "They have a duty to their profession and should count themselves lucky to be in their positions." Others might argue that these women are simply acting on opportunities they've worked hard to develop. "It's not about duty and ethics," they might say. "It's about providing for family and maintaining balance."

And here in lies the conflict – both groups are judging others' actions within the context of their values. This story illustrates the difference in job expectations between older and younger generations. Workplaces across the nation are filled with individuals who differ considerably in their sense of obligation about the job. Yet they have to work together daily.

Is there a solution? Yes, and it's amazingly simple . . . talk! Rather than hiding behind the pretense of being considerate, hash out the differences. Speak respectfully, but frankly and work toward a common understanding about what those of different generations expect from their jobs. Will you find agreement on every issue? Of course not. But if you agree to disagree, then everyone knows where they stand. Now, was that so hard? *RWW*

Test Your Memory, Boomers

Match the variety show emcee with his sidekick:

Jack Benny	Don Pardo
Milton Berle	Rochester
Jackie Gleason	David Rose
Arthur Godfrey	Richard Wattis
Steve Allen	Arnold Stang
Red Skelton	Art Carney
Jonathan Winters	Tony Marvin
Freddy Martin	Gene Rayburn
Liberace	Merv Griffin
Dave Garroway	Jack Haskell

Source: **The Best of Baby Boomer Trivia**
by Nancy Bernhard

Check the back page for the answers.

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us for your next meeting.

Upcoming Center audiences include:

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"GenTistics"

Ninety-three percent of Americans polled blame parents for not teaching good manners to their children.

2005 Associated Press—Ipsos poll



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Kid-friendly Cell Phones

Wireless company Enfora LP and educational toy maker Leap-Frog Enterprises are unveiling a cell phone specifically designed for kids ages 6 and up. The new phone called TicTalk aims to give these youngsters a phone of their own – within limits. TicTalk and Firefly, a competing phone offered by Firefly Mobile, Inc., lack keypads but can be programmed by parents with preset numbers the child can dial.

Boomers to the End

A recent survey by the National Funeral Directors Association found that 62% of those who want funerals want them personalized. This generally includes photo boards or stories. But some take it to the next level, including costumes or unusual caskets. One man asked for re-runs of Packer football games to be played. Another one wanted everyone attending to wear Hawaiian garb. As Boomers reach their eventual demise, some are sure to play “Can You Top This?” After all, he who dies with the most toys wins.

Teacups:

A New Educational Term

Some school administrators have coined this term to describe the carefully crafted but fragile kids who lack resiliency due to over-protective parents. Says one, “If you rescue a child too quickly, he or she will fail to develop the requisite coping skills to thrive in a diversity of environments.”

Answers to the Baby Boomer Quiz

Jack Benny	Rochester
Milton Berle	Arnold Stang
Jackie Gleason	Art Carney
Arthur Godfrey	Tony Marvin
Steve Allen	Gene Rayburn
Red Skelton	David Rose
Jonathan Winters	Don Pardo
Freddy Martin	Merv Griffin
Liberace	Richard Wattis
Dave Garroway	Jack Haskell

To Ponder

Good news! Most people moving home today will find that the stigma of living at home has all but disappeared. Having come out of the basement, boomerangers are proud, loud, and not afraid to show the world they mean business. With so many young adults around the world opting to return to the nest, it’s become clear that we boomerangers are not going away anytime soon.

While there may not have been any overnight breakthroughs, there has been a slow and gradual acceptance of boomeranging. Over the years the nuclear American family has evolved to the point where we can barely recognize ourselves, steadily morphing into a model European family where multiple generations live and even thrive under one roof.

What used to be seen as a social taboo has now become a commonly accepted life passage. Attitudes have significantly changed, bringing with them an entirely new way of looking at adulthood. No longer do we set a rigid timeline for how long it takes to mature, establish a rewarding career, or start a family. . . .

Sociologists, economists and psychologists have been scratching their heads analyzing various statistics to figure out what brought about this unexpected shift. And after much research and painstaking data collection, the following emerged as some of the main contributors to the explosive boomerang phenomenon:

- Financial problems
- A tight job market
- A reluctance to grow up
- A delay in the average age of marriage
- Prohibitive cost of housing
- Illness or death of parent
- Breakup or divorce
- Best-friend relationships with parents
- Multiculturalism and its emphasis on intergenerational living

Elna Furman in *Boomerang Nation*

To Read . . .

Boomerang Nation: How to Survive Living with Your Parents the Second Time Around. Elna Furman. Fireside Books, New York, 2005. ISBN 0-7432-6991-8.

Case Study Corner

I have a couple of teenage employees who see little reason to show up on time for work. Last week, I tried to send both of them home when they showed up 30 minutes late. They told me I couldn’t do that, that they had rights. So I relented, only to have them show up late again the next day. What are my options?

There are a couple issues to be addressed here. First, they have no rights when it comes to punctuality. As long as you treat those you manage with consistency, you can send these individuals home at your whim. But rather than approaching this punitively, you might consider how to better engage them.

As young workers have discovered for perpetuity, all jobs can be repetitive and boring even in the best of circumstances. The difference between older generations and today’s young workers is what they have been taught about the nature of work. The romantic notions they see depicted on TV sitcoms have created for many an expectation that work is a series of one-liners and amusing situations. I wouldn’t doubt that a few even wonder where the laugh-track is when they watch their boss say something particularly silly.

Second, few young workers have any appreciation of their role within the larger organization. They can’t explain how the firm operates, how it makes money, its competitors or place in the market. Simply taking time to explain these things and sharing how you manage them and your other responsibilities begins the process of engagement. Encourage their questions. Ask them questions. Involve them in the decisions you make. Praise even their minor contributions and suggestions.

Finally, I would recommend that you think through the corrective actions you plan to take prior to taking them. Remember that you are being observed by everyone you manage, not just those creating the issue. Rehearse what you plan to say. Consider their possible excuses and how you can respond effectively. When everyone observes your consistency, they’ll be less likely to push the envelope.