

Gen Trends

April 2003

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

Everyone's a Winner?

My brother's four-year-old daughter attends a pre-school whose motto is "Everyone's a Winner." But while the sentiment may be virtuous, day-to-day application can leave people shaking their heads. A recent birthday celebration illustrates the point: The birthday girl's family brought with them a pin ata full of candy. But rather than requiring a stick to break it open, this one contained 10 pull strings on its bottom so that everyone would have an equal chance and no one would get hurt.

With the kids raring to dive in and grab the sweet booty, the pre-school director suddenly announced that after everyone had pulled a string, they would be asked to stand back while the candy was collected and divided evenly among all children. Finally, he dictated that the candy would be placed in bags and held until their parents arrived to pick them up. That way, there would be no risk of anyone stealing each other's allotment. Talk about taking the fun out of one of childhood's basic experiences . . .

Stories like this abound in both the media and day-to-day conversation. But one wonders at what point will today's youngest generation learn to cope with the adversity that will face them as they come of age? Employers tell me stories of youngsters entering their first job thoroughly intimidated by the fact that they are no longer surrounded by parents and policies that allow them to dodge adversity. With this kind of outcome, is everyone truly a winner?

R.. W.W.

Ahh, Situational Ethics . . .

Ninety seven percent of college seniors said their studies had prepared them to act ethically in the future. However, 73% said professors had taught them that right and wrong are not susceptible to uniform standards but depend upon individual values and cultural norms.

Source: Zogby International

Proof that we're getting older . . .

Every Tuesday is
AARP Nite!

Sign at tavern in Denver, CO

So much for earning perks . . .

According to *Business Week*, a number of companies, including American Express, AT&T, IBM, and Deloitte & Touche, have reversed the pecking order for office space by giving junior workers coveted corner offices. Workplace experts say this boosts productivity and reduces absenteeism since these new workers will have more of an incentive to work hard while veterans can be counted on to always give their all. The switch also negates the problem of supervisors who hide in their offices rather than being accessible to the troops. Of course, veteran managers are none too pleased. Said one, "It is not so easy to alter the old incentives of corner offices, country clubs, and sports cars."

**Of the Center's programs in 2002, 98%
resulted from repeat or referral business!**

Upcoming audiences include

Department of Veterans Affairs
Maryland Municipal League
American Public Power Association
Yuma Regional Medical Center
The Missouri Lottery
Oregon Telecom Association
Nat'l. Electrical Contractors Assn.

"GenTistics"

**50% of all U.S.
teenagers ages 12
to 17 carried a
cell phone in 2002**

Frank N. Magid Associates



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To ponder . . .

It is worth noting that adolescents, those aged fourteen to twenty are often the early adopters of mobile communications and are among the first whose identities, families, and communities begin to change. The most obvious explanation for the key role of youth in the diffusion of mobile telephones and texting is that adolescents have adopted a medium that allows them to communicate with peers, outside the surveillance of parents and teachers, at the precise time in their lives when they are separating from their families and asserting their identities as members of a peer group. Another explanation is that young people are comfortable with technologies that didn't exist when their parents were growing up.

Researchers studying Norwegian adolescents' use of mobile telephones found that the indirect nature of text messages allows one to arrange 'face'. The same researchers noted that chain messages, jokes (often of a sexual nature), and expression of interest in potential boyfriends or girlfriends all have an expressive element that constitutes a confirmation of a relationship. It is a type of social interaction wherein the sender and receiver share a common, though asynchronous experience. When one sends a message it refreshes the contact between the two.

Howard Rheingold

To Read:

Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution. Howard Rheingold. Perseus Publishing, Cambridge, 2002. ISBN 0-7382-0608-3. While not targeted specifically at generational issues, this book provides a glimpse into the "electronic wiring" of our youngest cohort and how they will use technology as they continue to come of age.

Case Study Corner

I manage a call center with employees ranging in age from 17 to 70. About once a week one of the more senior workers finds a couple of youngsters "necking" in the hallway or in an empty room. While I've explained to the perpetrators the inappropriateness of their actions more than once, they simply look for more discreet places to do the same thing.

This has not been limited to just one, isolated couple. The teens argue that it's just nature running its course and don't seem to accept that there could be anything wrong. One even said to me, "If they can do it in the backroom of McDonald's, why can't we do it here?"

The organization does not have a fraternization policy and no one has mentioned anything about it being sexual harassment. I don't want to fire productive people over something like this, but it is becoming the topic of discussion among the older set. What's the answer?

Editor's note: This case study is based on a real situation taking place within one of our client organizations. Rather than providing a "definitive" answer, we ask for your thoughts and comments. E-mail your solution to wendover@gentrends.com and we'll print those answers in the next issue (sans names, of course).

Send your questions to wendover@gentrends.com. If we address your issue in the Case Study Corner, we'll send you a free CD or tape from the Center's library of resources.

Consider this . . .

According to the National Federation for Credit Counseling, the average credit card abuser is in their 30s, carries \$27,000 in debt and is beholden to nine creditors.

"Debt was once a social shame. These days young people get credit cards before they have their first job."

Robert D. Manning
Credit Card Nation

Do You

Remember When . . .

It took five minutes for the TV to warm up?

Your Mom wore nylons that came in two pieces?

They threatened to keep kids back a grade if they failed . . . and they did?

All the girls had ugly gym uniforms?

You got your windshield cleaned, oil checked, and gas pumped, without asking, all for free, every time? And you didn't pay for air? And you got trading stamps to boot?

Pick Your Target Generation

According to A.M. LetterLink, there are five generations in American society.

Generation Y (born between 1980-2000) They represent 8% of households and 5% of spending.

Generation X (born between 1965-1980) They represent 19% of households and 18% of spending.

Baby Boomers (born between 1945-1965) They represent 46% of households and 50% of spending.

Middle -escents (born between 1930-1945) They represent 14% of households and 15% of spending.

Silvers (born before 1930) They represent 22% of households and 12% of spending.

