

Gen Trends

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

August 2007

Sometimes It's the Simple Things

A friend of mine has a son who works as a driver for one of the over-night delivery services. Josh is 28 and hardworking. He would love to get his route completed and go home. But he is required to take two 20 minute breaks and a 60 minute lunch every day whether he wants to or not.

Another friend of mine has a son who drives a truck for a residential trash hauler. Peter is also 28 and has been with the firm for 6 years. When he completes his route, he goes home and gets paid the same amount regardless of how long he takes. "In the winter, it takes longer," he says. "But in the summer, I paint houses on the side."

Do our work rules sometimes defeat our best efforts at efficiency and retention? Both of the organizations above seek to hire hardworking souls and keep them as long as possible. But in one case, the company's rules seem to be doing more harm than good. Obviously, there may be other factors that might mitigate Josh's situation, although it is worth noting that neither firm has a unionized workforce.

Sometimes, in our rush to respond to isolated situations, we create rules that impact productivity in ways we hadn't anticipated. At other times, these practices evolve over time and become institutionalized. It's worth asking if there are practices within your organization that discourage those who wish more flexibility in their work process. Worse still, are there rules within the organization that encourage those with less than a good work ethic to simply toe the line instead of taking initiative?

Cross the Generational Divide

Be one of the first to buy a copy of the Center's new book *Crossing the Generational Divide: Essential Skills for Managing in Today's Workplace*. Written with the busy manager in mind, this "short course" on the generations is the perfect orientation to the beliefs and behaviors of the four age groups inhabiting the present work environment. In addition to why each generation shares certain values and expectations, the book is filled with strategies for resolving differences between veteran employees and those new to the world of work. The book is also filled with case studies and short exercises that you can use for self-learning or to produce a training session for those you supervise. With a retail price of \$22.99, the book is on sale on the Center's website for \$15.99 through September 10. Quantity discounts are available. [Click here for more information or to order the book right now.](#)

The New Commerce of the Pre-Teen Set?

For the second time this month, I've come across a mother who has said to her child, "If you want a new toy, you better find a way to sell some of the old ones." The result in both cases has been a new 12-year-old member of the E-Bay community. In one case the youngster is now surfing garage sales on weekends to purchase and resell other children's toys as well. RWW

Upcoming Center audiences include:

APQC
Shell Oil Company
KPMG
Midwest Association of Community Bankers
Nash Finch – IGA
Nebraska Economic Development
Otter Tail Power Company
National Tool and Machining Association

"GenTistics"

In 1950 there were 40,174,705 males employed in the US and just 15,559,454 employed females.

US Bureau of the Census



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To ponder . . .

In the six decades since the end of World War II, Americans have been busy exploring the new environs of mass affluence. Those decades have witnessed both exhilarating discoveries and tragic errors, as well as a great deal of blind groping and simple muddling through. There is much to be learned from a careful examination of this accumulated experience—not only about the altered nature and course of American life, but also about the broad direction in which the rest of the world is moving . . .

The story of postwar America is thus the story of adaptation to new social realities. Adaptation, in particular, to mass affluence. At the heart of this process was a change in the basic orientation of the dominant culture: from a culture of overcoming scarcity, to one of expanding and enjoying abundance. From a more rigid and repressed social system focused on achieving prosperity to a looser and more expressive one focused on taking wider advantage of prosperity's possibilities. America capitalism is derided for its superficial banality, yet it has unleashed profound, convulsive change. Condemned as mindless materialism, it has burst loose a flood tide of spiritual yearning. The civil rights movement and the sexual revolution, environmentalism, feminism, the fitness and health-care boom and the opening of the gay closet, the withering of censorship and the rise of a "creative class" of "knowledge workers"—all are the progeny of widespread prosperity.

Brink Lindsey

To Read: The Age of Abundance: How Prosperity Transformed America's Politics and Culture.
Brink Lindsey. HarperCollins, New York, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-06-0747664
Author Lindsey provides a brilliant historical perspective on the influences that have shaped the generations of the past 60 years.

Case Study Corner

I run a chamber of commerce that has a board of directors whose average age is 47. Our chairman is 32. Since acquiring a Blackberry at the beginning of the year, he's been presiding over our meetings and responding to his messages at the same time. While he seems to maintain adequate control over the agenda, I and others can tell that his mind is not totally on the issues we are discussing. I have to wonder how much of his enthusiasm and wisdom we're missing if he continues to do this. Your thoughts?

I can see how this presents a dilemma. He's a volunteer leader with lots of business commitments. At the same time I can understand how distracting (some might say inconsiderate) it is for him to do this. If he is allowed to continue, others may adopt this behavior as well.

Obviously much of this depends on the relationship you have with this individual. If you relate well with him, you might simply mention your concern to him in passing. If I were in your shoes, I might say something like, "You know, I find it rather distracting to have you running the meeting and responding to e-mails at the same time. I have to wonder how the rest of the board feels." If he takes your comment to heart, the issue should resolve itself.

If, on the other hand, he resists, you might want to enlist the diplomatic assistance of one or more board members whom he respects the most. A gentle nudge from them should get him to understand that this practice is not in the best interest of the board.

Once it has been resolved, I would suggest that you revisit the board's operations manual and insert a note about meeting etiquette related to this issue.

Don't be concerned that this person will resign or turn against you. It's your job to manage the operations of the chamber and to provide feedback to its volunteer leaders. I'd like to think that he is mature enough to understand this. Besides, you're his lifeline to the chamber, and chair of the chamber board is a prestigious position. This is all part of a learning experience for both of you.

Leadership and the Emerging Generations

This newly-released video program is based on the popular presentation of the same name that's been conducted for associations and corporations across the US. Discover how aspiring leaders are going to change the way we all do business. Learn how to anticipate these upcoming impacts. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) or call our offices at 1-800-227-5510.

Just because it can be done . . .

This fall CBS will release a new show called Kid Nation in which "40 kids have 40 days to build a brave new world without adults to help or hinder their efforts." To produce this series producers encamped children ages 8-15 at an abandoned New Mexico ghost town with little, if any, adult supervision other than a physician in attendance. The youngsters were then filmed for 40 straight days -- at more than 14 hours a day -- as they worked to relate to one another, cook food, and perform other survival tasks in a setting not dissimilar to Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Each was paid \$5000 if he or she completed the entire production. Producers skirted New Mexico's child labor laws by declaring the production a "summer camp" instead of a place of employment. This loophole has since been closed.

The show debuts on September 19th and child advocates are sure to level charges of exploitation against the network and producers. But a larger issue is the impact on young viewers watching this latest attempt at televised sensationalism. While some may argue that this production is the next frontier in entertainment, others may wonder about the wisdom of televising the emotions, trials, and tribulations of children at such an impressionable age. With little opportunity for processing the resulting emotions, what long-term influence might this show have on young viewers?