

Gen Trends

December 2007

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

I Will Not Hire a Gregarious Accountant

Someone once said, "Don't hire the lawyer you like. Hire the one that will get the job done." The same might be said of those in other professions. Gregarious accountants come to mind.

What started me reflecting on this was a comment made by someone after a recent presentation. "I like to work with people I like," she said.

"That's fine," I responded. "But do they get the job done?"

"Most of the time," she reflected. "But we've had our days. But what do I do? Who wants to work with people you don't like?"

It's only human nature to be attracted to people who share our beliefs and ways of looking at life. While there's nothing inherently wrong with that, placing the "get-along" requirement ahead of other attributes can be a recipe for all kinds of problems. So how do we balance the desire for harmony with the need for skills, accuracy, focus, creativity and the other attributes essential to a job?

In my mind, it's a matter of three issues:

Number one, you have to have a clearly defined and prioritized set of benchmarks for what you and others are seeking in a successful candidate. It is easy to say, "I'll know the right person when I see him or her," but ensuring that the top three to five characteristics are met should win out over the likeability of the candidate.

Number two, you need to develop a set of questions and tasks that will provide enough insight into the candidates' skills and beliefs so that you and others can make an accurate assessment. For lots of good ideas on how to do this, check out chapter six in my book, [Smart Hiring](#).

Number three, create a matrix of the benchmarks you identified at the beginning and give each candidate a numerical rating on those characteristics. Then look for the patterns between those ratings for each candidate and examine the differences. If you have two or more candidates that equally meet the top three-to-five benchmarks, then you might discuss likeability as a factor.

Replacing the likeability debate with a numerically-based evaluation will place you in a better position to make an accurate selection.

Corporate Knowledge Transfer It or Forget It?

In a survey of 2000 HR professionals, Novations Group found that only four percent of firms have developed formal mechanisms for transferring the knowledge of retiring workers. Twenty-three percent indicated that they retain the information informally. Finally, 44 percent say that they take no steps – nor are they planning to – to retain corporate knowledge.

Coming Next Month

In January, the Center will debut a new offering. **Ask About the Generations** will provide monthly tele-seminars on a range of topics impacting age diversity and managing within the intergenerational workplace. Go to www.askaboutthegenerations.com in 2008.

I Remember When

The Center's electronic game for understanding generational differences.

[Click here for more.](#)

Upcoming Center audiences include:

Continental Data Graphics
Purdue University
Mechanical Contractors of America
Otter Tail Power Company
Visiting Nurses Association
American Supply Association

"GenTistics"

43% of the US workforce will be eligible to retire in the next decade.

US Bureau of Labor Statistics



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To Ponder . . .

Peel that bored exterior off your teen and you'll find a complex being who seeks your love and approval; peel off that media-generated image of predator-saturated MySpace and you'll find a window into today's teen culture.

As a parent, I am sure you are well aware of the ubiquitous role media and technology play in kids' lives today—and how different it is from just a decade or two ago. It cannot be exaggerated to what extent teens are bombarded with media information and images and encouraged to incorporate each techno-gadget into their daily lives. It is this new adolescent world that we as parents must be committed to understanding. Anyone who undertakes a super-media-saturated way of life is at risk of becoming a disconnected and lonely individual, but a preteen or teen whose delicate coming-of-age process is set to a 24-7 backdrop of reality television, iPod videos, and MySpace messages is at risk of more lasting and less trivial effects. As one cultural critic wisely claimed, "The medium is the message." And if the medium for our teens is permanently rooted in an electronic screen, what ultimately is the message our kids are hearing?

*Candice M. Kelsey writing in
Generation MySpace*

To Read: *Generation*

MySpace: Helping Your Teen Survive Online Adolescence.

Candice M. Kelsey. Marlow & Company, New York, 2007. ISBN 978-1-60094-011-9

We receive a constant barrage of questions from both employers and parents about the impact on teens of on-line technology and social networking. This is the book to which we refer everyone. Candice Kelsey has written a comprehensive, yet easy-to-read resource that addresses both the intellectual and emotional questions most people seem to have. Full of resources and good advice, this book is a winner.

Case Study Corner

I manage a parts store for a large distributor. While I may be in charge of everything else, my area manager insists on hiring everyone who works here and at the other locations. He prides himself on being able to hire accurately, but he's sent me some real losers. What do I do?

Without knowing how you define "loser," it's a little difficult to provide specific ideas, but here are a few thoughts.

You might begin by massaging your manager's ego. Ask him to teach you how to hire the way he does. Do this with sincerity and glean what you believe are his best strategies. Then ask him to let you try to hire people, under his watchful eye of course. You can argue that this will relieve some the pressure on him. Over time, the hiring responsibility for your location should migrate to you.

You should also become more proactive in your recruiting of applicants. Quality hiring is dependent on quality candidates coming in the door. The only way for you to ensure this is to reach out to the local community and ask for referrals. You'll send them to your boss at first, but over time they'll begin applying directly to you if all goes well. If those you refer don't start showing up in your store as hires, ask your boss. "What ever happened to Charlie?" you might say. "I thought he'd be a good match and sent him up the line to you." Do this enough and your boss will begin to pay more attention to those you refer.

Lastly, I would make sure your boss is diplomatically informed when someone he has hired for your store leaves voluntarily or involuntarily. Be sure to document everything, however, so that he understands that he might want to re-examine his approach.

Now more than ever, young people especially see a retail job as a contract. Therefore you must be careful to assess not only their skills but also their investment in the job before employing them. The Center's book, [Crossing the Generational Divide](#) goes into considerable detail about this. Buy him a copy and maybe he'll catch on. If not, you might want to consider other opportunities within the parts distribution industry.

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.

Test Your Memory

The sitcom *Mork & Mindy* was set in what town?

- Peoria
- Boulder
- Nashville
- Des Moines

Which of the following groups was stripped of their Grammy award?

- New Kids on the Block
- Wham!
- Milli Vanilli
- Backstreet Boys

Bart Simpson's dog's name is

- Snowball
- Mr. Beaver
- Santa's Little Helper
- Klondike

John Lennon was shot in this city:

- Paris
- New York
- Milan
- London

Who was not a member of the Sweat-hogs on the sitcom *Welcome Back Kotter*?

- Barbarino
- Alphonse
- Epstein
- Horshak

The first televised presidential debate featured

- Nixon and Kennedy
- Eisenhower and Kennedy
- Johnson and Nixon
- Nixon and Johnson

Answers – b, c, c, b, b, a