

# Gen Trends

July 2007

## *Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!*

### The Forgotten Front Line (Ideas and Solutions)

I spent last month's column lamenting the lack of training and opportunities for those on the front-line, particularly in non-professional jobs. But what good is a lament without some answers? What follows is a short collection of approaches, strategies, and solutions for offering effective training and opportunities for the front-line. Adapt these according to your needs and don't be afraid to take a leap outside the boxes. That's what separates those who are making a difference from those who are simply maintaining.

We might begin with Jet Blue Airlines and its Friends Crew Program that allows managers to hire two individuals for one full-time position and let them share the schedule. What an opportunity for those trying to balance work and family commitments. The company also has all of its reservations agents working out of their homes. Not only does this allow for better work/life balance, but also saves the company \$10 per hour per employee.

Then there's Merkle Direct Marketing which requires all its employees to take and teach classes in its Merkle Institute of Technology (MIT). All workers must earn a certain number of credits per year to be eligible for salary increases. Think of the hidden talents that can be encouraged in a system like this!

King Soopers, a Colorado-based supermarket chain, posts pictures of each store's managers at the front end in each store. Listed below each photo is the progression of jobs the person has had within the company. If there's one thing many front-line people want to know, it's how to get promoted within the system. This practice opens

the door to that discussion. Front-line people need to see progression in their minds-eye.

Something as simple as providing a periodic "date-nite" for employees with young children can ease some of the stress associated with work/life balance. California-based Genetech has been doing this for years by providing a place to drop the kids once a month.

Some McDonalds managers have allowed employees to study on the clock during slow times. While that may not appear to be the best use of labor dollars, think of the thousands it can save in retention. The Golden Rule rings true for front-line people too.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car goes out of its way to teach its in-coming employees the business. Virtually every manager has started at the bottom and worked his or her way up. When new employees know that their manager has walked a mile in their shoes, many can't help but embrace the company's philosophy of enthusiasm and development.

Finally, Denver-based Chipotle Mexican Grills offers classes in culture, diversity, and English to its employees. Since the majority of its workforce is Hispanic, this enables them to better integrate into society and the employees are paid to attend.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Send your ideas and observations to us and we'll spread the word. You can also check our program on best practices by clicking here [www.gentrends.com/seminars.html](http://www.gentrends.com/seminars.html).

#### Upcoming Center audiences include:

Western Association of Chamber Executives  
Shell Oil Company  
Food Marketing Institute  
Midwest Association of Community Bankers  
Nash Finch – IGA  
Nebraska Economic Development

Coming soon . . .  
*Crossing the  
Generational Divide*

### "GenTistics"

In 2005, 49% of 16- to 24-year-old full-time college students held jobs. This compares to 35 % in 1975.

*US Department of Education*



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## To ponder . . .

Historians, demographers, and marketers all distinguish one generation of young people from the other (yes, there are some differences), but deep down most of us experienced the same impulsiveness, invincibility, and highs and lows otherwise known as teen angst, puberty, or if you believe in modern psychology, a phase called adolescent development.

What's different about today's totally wired teens is that the viral and public nature of these new technologies has magnified and publicized, though not changed, what it means to be a teen. Instead of gossiping with a friend and having it travel telephone-style through your school, that gossip can now travel through several schools and include mean pictures posted on a website. The once solitary act of writing in a diary has become a public form of what can be at times deeply personal expression. Instead of making mixed tapes, teens can now load thousands of songs onto an iPod and create playlists for any occasion. You can now talk to your friends from anywhere on a cell phone, in a text-message, via e-mail, over instant messenger, through a comment, in a video game, in a chat room, or on a message board. Instead of hanging out at the mall, teens can now hang out together on community sites without leaving their bedrooms.

*Anastasia Goodstein*

## To Read: *Totally Wired:*

### *What Teens and Tweens are Really Doing Online.*

Anastasia Goodstein. St. Martins Griffin, 2007. ISBN 978-0-312-36012-2. This insightful little book provides a wonderful perspective on how teens are now communicating and the societal impact of this evolving phenomenon.

## Case Study Corner

*Over the past two years, I've been grooming a thirty-something in my division to assume the position of someone who is retiring. Now that that person is about to leave, the person I've been grooming has told me she doesn't want the job. She has decided that it requires too much time away from home. She's known all along about the level of commitment. Besides feeling betrayed, what else can I do?*

One of the first tenets I suggest to all employers is to never anoint or "groom" one person to assume a future responsibility. Besides the situation you've experienced, too many other things can go wrong. I counsel having a pool of individuals from which you can draw when a position becomes open.

It doesn't surprise me that this individual would choose to refuse the job even though you've been grooming her. Balance of life is apparently important to her, and she probably views this job as a contract, as she does any job. If she is well trained and qualified, she's probably not worried about finding another position if need be. Professionals in their thirties tend to think strategically about their options at work.

As for your situation, you might

(1) Consider whether the position is necessary. I'm sure you think it is, but it doesn't hurt to reflect on that possibility. Are all parts of it necessary? Is all the travel required? If you can modify the amount of travel, you might even approach the person you've been grooming. (Even if she takes it, please learn from this experience.)

(2) Take your time in filling the position. Another individual within the division may come forward as a promising candidate now that the "wired" candidate has gone away. Assume though that anyone who comes forward will probably have checked with the person you were grooming to find out why she didn't take the job. Keep in mind that there may be a "backstory" as to why she declined it.

Outside of this situation, begin now to develop a pool of candidates for future openings. Planning for these vacancies is an evolutionary process. To check out our program on succession planning go to [www.gentrends.com/seminars.html](http://www.gentrends.com/seminars.html).

## The Impoverishment of American Culture

*Dana Gioia*

I have a recurring nightmare. I am in Rome visiting the Sistine Chapel. I look up at Michaelangelo's incomparable fresco of the "Creation of Man." I see God stretching out his arm to touch the reclining Adam's finger. And then I notice in the other hand Adam is holding a Diet Pepsi.

When is the last time you have seen a featured guest on David Letterman or Jay Leno who isn't trying to sell you something? A new movie, a new TV show, a new book or a new vote? Don't get me wrong. I have a Stanford MBA and spent 15 years in the food industry. I adore my big-screen TV. The productivity and efficiency of the free market is beyond dispute. It has created a society of unprecedented prosperity.

But we must remember that the marketplace does only one thing – it puts a price on everything. The role of culture, however, must go beyond economics. It is not focused on the price of things, but on their value. And, above all, culture should tell us what is beyond price, including what does not belong in the marketplace. A culture should also provide some cogent view of the good life beyond mass accumulation. In this respect, our culture is failing us.

*Dana Gioia is the Chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts. This is excerpted from an address at Stanford University.*

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## *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.