

# Gen Trends

April 2008

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

### Meaning

#### The Way to a Millennial's Heart

Why did you choose the career you're in? Truth-to-tell, the vast majority of working people have defaulted into what they do for a living. The Millennial generation is doing the same thing. I could go on about the lack of career planning provided by schools, parents and the rest of society, but that wouldn't address the issue.

Those in previous generations have not always been happy with their jobs, but they tended to "stick it out" for one or more of three reasons: 1) Parental influence ("You should be thankful to have the job.") 2) The long-term nature of the employment relationship which was interpreted as job security. 3) Eternal hope of advancement, modeled by those in society who worked for years, rose through the ranks and got the gold watch upon retirement.

Those in their twenties, like their older colleagues, are seeking to understand the meaning and significance of what they do. But while older generations remained out of a sense of obligation, Millennials are willing to leave if that meaning and significance is not readily apparent. The harsh reality is that the average employer hiring Millennials still teaches the how and the where, but not the why. Those in their twenties have read about the 100 best companies to work for and want to know why everyone doesn't do the same things.

As 81 million of these young souls continue to pour into the workplace, they will demand meaning. The research has demonstrated countless times that meaning produces better results. The employers that take time to provide it will increase productivity, reduce turnover, increase retention, reduce training costs, and go home with more money in their pockets. So why not you?

### The Danger in Junior's Backpack

The Wall Street Journal reports that the new concern among parents is the proliferation of handheld devices such as cell phones and Blackberrys™ being carried to school without supervision. As these instruments become more powerful, they allow middle- and high-schoolers to search the Web and connect with individuals the parents consider undesirable.

But herein lies the conundrum. It was these same parents who, after September 11, 2001, armed their children with these tools and insisted that schools accept them as much as they would a backpack. Now that this technological Pandora's box has been opened, parents are faced with the task of ensuring that junior does not make unwise choices.

These devices are also proving troublesome in the classroom. "Is Sally using her cellphone's technology to cheat on the test or simply using it as a way to stay in touch with Mom?" It all comes down to effective parenting.

#### Youngers Managing Older

On May 13<sup>th</sup> the Center will host a special tele-seminar on how emerging managers can effectively supervise those who are significantly older. The session will air at 2:00PM EST and is hosted by the Center's own Jeff Vankooten. Go to [www.askaboutthegenerations.com](http://www.askaboutthegenerations.com) for call-in specifics and to pose questions about this crucial issue.

#### Previews Now on the Web

After many requests, we are now posting video previews of the Center's programs on our website [www.gentrends.com](http://www.gentrends.com). Currently, previews are available for [\*Hey Dude!\*](#) [\*Managing Age Diversity in Today's Workplace\*](#) as well as [\*Leadership and the Emerging Generations\*](#). Look for us to add others in the coming months.

### "GenTistics"

Teen hiring has slumped by five percent since March of 2007.

*US Bureau of Labor Statistics*

Check out Bob's new blog.

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## To Ponder

Since the establishment of the current two-party system in the United States, American electoral politics have been characterized by a persistent pattern of relatively long periods of great stability in electoral outcomes, lasting about forty years, interspersed with shorter periods of sharp and decisive change. Usually, but not invariably, this realignment makes what had been the minority political party the new majority party. America is now primed for its next political realignment or makeover . . .

Today, our political institutions face another test from these same twin forces of change. A new generation, Millennials, born between 1982 and 2003, is coming of age in unprecedented numbers. The Millennials bring with them a facility and comfort with cutting-edge communication and computing technologies that is creating the same kind of bewilderment and bemusement that parents of the television-addicted Baby Boomers felt in the 1950s and 1960s. Every generation defines itself first by making it clear how and why it is unlike the generation that preceded it. Then, as it moves into positions of power and influence in society, the new generation demands that the nation's institutions change to accommodate its beliefs and its values. The Millennials are about to make those demands on America.

*Morley Winograd and Michael D. Hais*

## To read

***Millennial Makeover: MySpace, YouTube, and the Future of American Politics.*** Morley Winograd and Michael D. Hais. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8135-4301-7. This book is a thoughtful exploration of the tremendous upheaval currently underway within American politics. While you may not agree with the authors' conclusions, they provide a solid platform for discussion. RWW

## Case Study Corner

*I am the training director for a midsize utility. Over the past few years, I have found the instructions I need to give new employees getting more and more specific. They've all graduated with a trade and we wouldn't have hired them if they hadn't passed our tests and screening. Yet there is lots of obvious stuff about the job that doesn't seem to occur to them. Some of it revolves around safety. Some of it is operational. But I can't teach them every little thing. Help!*

You are not alone in your concern about this. Many of the managers with whom we speak have identified this same issue. There are a host of reasons for it, but let's talk about some solutions.

Begin by assessing the selection process. What task or project might you ask them to perform to better assess their reasoning? Look for the questions they ask, where they hesitate and the approach they use. Don't just pose a hypothetical. Ask them to perform the task. Since qualified tradespeople in your industry are in short supply, you may end up hiring them anyway. But at least you'll know what they need up front.

Consider your training materials. Can you be more specific in your detail? You might provide three levels of complexity: 1) The big picture of how and why, 2) The typical level of instructions you currently provide. 3) Step-by-step detail which addresses every conceivable scenario. More work upfront? Yes. But it should save lots of time by cutting down on questions in class and during the first weeks on the job.

Consider the way you deliver the actual instruction. Perhaps you should allow time for more questions and process. You might ask those more confident in their skills and reasoning to coach those who are more tentative.

Finally, you might work with supervisors to ensure that they are prepared for this increased concern about reasoning. Ask them now if they are seeing the same thing and where these questions keep arising. Then work together to anticipate and overcome those challenges.

## Got Seminar?

Think of us when planning your next conference. Our speakers are entertaining, thought-provoking and results-oriented. Check out the [programs](#) we offer or watch the [video previews](#) we've posted. Make your next meeting memorable and productive with one of our solutions-based topics.

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## From Generationsblog.com

The more time I spend with front-line managers, the more I am convinced that close supervision is the best way to begin the work relationship with those under 25. Now every time I say this to an audience, I get push back from two groups: 1) The managers in the room who say, "Who's got the time?" 2) The Millennials in the room who accuse me of perpetuating a myth that they're all dumb, lazy, good-for-nothings. But that's not my point. So let's get practical here:

To the Millennials: No, I am not perpetuating a myth. I am counseling managers and supervisors on the most effective means for getting the productivity they need out of those under 25. Yes, I certainly agree there are many in this age bracket who are hard workers and, in some cases, even super-achievers. These are the individuals who will lead their generation and society in general in the coming years. But at the beginning of the employment relationship, managers don't know which ones they are. No manager I know wants to waste a month waiting to find out if someone is a motivated, resourceful soul, someone who simply fogs the mirror, or someone who is somewhere in between. From a practical point of view, it is better to provide extremely specific expectations and close supervision to start. If a young person complains, the manager can simply say, "prove through your actions that you are a motivated, resourceful soul and I'll back way off." Besides, the Millennials who complain about this approach are . . .  
[For the full article go to www.generationsblog.com](http://www.generationsblog.com)