

Gen Trends

August 2008

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

Engage Them from the Get-Go

Think back to your first day on the job, any job you've held. Chances are you were greeted at the reception desk and led to the human resources office where you spent the morning completing forms and learning all the rules and regulations associated with your new position. You may have been introduced to your supervisor, someone you had met during the interview process. Depending upon his or her schedule, you spent anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes getting acquainted with the department. Then it was lunch time – on your own – in a strange cafeteria or eatery – wondering if this job is going to work out. The afternoon was probably spent learning your new tasks and responsibilities from someone who already had too much to do. By the time you got home, you were feeling overwhelmed and even frustrated. You swore that if you ever got into the position of orienting people, you wouldn't do to them what this organization was doing to you.

In spite of all that has been written about so-called "on-boarding," the example described above is still the experience for the vast majority of new hires. As we continue to try to do more with less, the critical task of bringing new people on board successfully continues to languish. Yet employers lose countless numbers of workers to job abandonment every year. Collectively, this costs billions of dollars. The Millennial generation of employees continues to enter the workplace, but firms are discovering that their patience for being treated as another cog in the wheel is almost non-existent. Millennials have read and heard too much about the way

things are supposed to be to tolerate this kind of treatment. Instead, they look elsewhere, find another opportunity and continue to do so until the environment matches their expectations. After all, a job is simply a contract. When the employer breaches the contract by not providing an engaging work experience, it's time to move on.

I don't have a silver bullet for this. No one does. It's all about time, empathy and priority. Year after year business magazines publish their annual list of the best companies to work for. I pore over these listings and others looking for tidbits and insights to pass along. I find it troubling that these lists are populated by the same firms year after year. When I interview people within these firms, I find that they're not using any one earth-shattering strategy. Rather they are doing a whole bunch of little things well. One of these is on-boarding. The literature is filled with ways to improve the first day experience and these firms have simply tested and embraced these ideas if they work within the firm's environment.

Take the experience described at the beginning of this article. Write a prescription for what could have been done better. Might the receptionist been prepped for your arrival? Might there have been a welcome posted on the marquee? Was it absolutely necessary to begin with the human resources paperwork? Could the supervisor have given you a tour and bought you a cup of coffee? Could your trainer been given the authority and time to truly focus on you rather than between other distractions? You get the picture. It's the little things that can really make a difference.

Upcoming Center audiences include:

Int'l Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
North Central Electrical League
P2 Energy Solutions
Colorado College Association
Health Facility of Maryland
Nova Scotia Association of Realtors
Texas Cattle Feeders Association

"GenTistics"

The US Census Bureau projects that the working-age population is to become more than 50% minority by 2039.

Check out Bob's blog.
[Click Here](#)



Robert W. Wendover
Editorial Director



15200 E. Girard Ave.
Suite 2500
Aurora, CO 80014
Phone: 303-617-7207
Fax: 303-617-7209
Toll Free: 800-227-5510
www.gentrends.com

To Ponder . . .

The way we live is eroding our capacity for deep, sustained, perceptive attention—the building block of intimacy, wisdom, and cultural progress. Moreover, this disintegration may come at great cost to ourselves and to society. Put most simply, attention defines us and is the bedrock of society.

Attention “is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously possible objects or trains of thought,” wrote psychologist and philosopher William James in 1890. “It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others, and is a condition which has a real opposite in the confused, dazed, scatterbrained state which in French is called *distraction*, and *Zerstreuung* in German.”

James came tantalizingly close to understanding at least one aspect of this mysterious phenomenon whose inner workings eluded philosophers, artists, historians, and scientists for centuries. But today, we know much more about attention, and all that we are learning only serves to underscore its irrefutable importance in life.

Attention is an organ system, akin to our respiratory or circulation systems, according to neuroscientist Michael Posner. Attention, as James astutely understood, is the brain’s conductor, leading the orchestration of our minds. And its various networks are key to not only higher forms of thinking but to our morality and even our very happiness.

To Read . . .

Distracted: The Erosion of Attention and the Coming Dark Age
Maggie Jackson, Prometheus Books, New York, 2008
ISBN 978-1-59102-623-5

Case Study Corner

What ever happened to common sense? I manage 20 account executives, 10 of whom are under 25. We all notice a lack of critical thinking skills among them. They always seem to be looking for someone else to give them the answer. When they have completed their tasks, they just seem to stop and wait for instructions. What’s the fix here?

I sense your frustration, but you’re drawing a couple of broad generalizations. While I hear these sentiments regularly, I’ve also seen young professionals in their twenties who make a difference from their first day on the job. A lot of it has to do with each person’s approach to work.

I always begin with the selection process. Effective managers take time to build a hiring regimen that will produce the kind of applicants they need and ultimately the best match for the job. A good primer for this is my book, [Smart Hiring](#). There are also many resources at www.gentrends.com. If you don’t hire the right people, no amount of coaching and training is going to rectify that.

Secondly, set clear expectations. Do not assume that young people will throw themselves into the job on the first day. Setting the stage provides them with clear steps to take on everything from break times to specific work process.

Thirdly, provide clear instructions and a clear outcome for each task. Some may rebel at this intensity of detail. Assure them that once they have demonstrated ample self-initiative, they’ll be rewarded with more latitude

Finally, delegate one or two steps ahead of them. When they have completed a task, they will already have something to begin work on. While this may seem a bit cumbersome, the managers we work with are finding it a proven solution to the endless bother of keeping everyone productive.

Bottom line? Clarity in both expectation and instruction will result in the common sense you perceive they are lacking.

Getting Paid to Volunteer?

A growing number of companies are lending out their skilled employees to nonprofits and start-up ventures worldwide. More businesses are allowing workers to volunteer during company time even at the expense of absorbing the cost of employee time off.

What’s the benefit to employers? The assignments usually tap into workers’ skill sets and allow them to broaden their business perspective in real time. They return with a global view that can be applicable to their work here in the United States.

Additionally, overseas corporate volunteer programs appeal to Millennials and are crucial in engaging this age group. According to a study conducted by Cone, Inc., 79% of employees ages 18-25 want to work for a socially responsible company, 69% feel more loyal to these companies, and more than half of the respondents would actively pursue working for them.

Skill-based volunteerism helps to enhance the careers of both new and experienced workers. The overseas assignments demand more autonomy, and allow employees to expand their network.

Where Grads Want to Work

The largest survey conducted of career expectations among US college kids revealed surprising results. More than one in six of the 43,000+ students polled ranked Google #1 as their ideal employer. Walt Disney comes in at a close second, followed by Apple Computer taking third. Ernst & Young edged the US Department of State out of the No. 4 position. Goldman Sachs, Deloitte, Peace Corps, NASA, and PricewaterhouseCoopers completed the top 10 list.

Universum Ideal survey, 2008