

Gen Trends

March 2008

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

College Admissions Let's End the Madness

A couple of weeks ago, *The Wall Street Journal's* Work and Family columnist, Sue Shellenbarger, published some thoughts on the intensity of today's college admissions hysteria. She began with a mother who had quit her job as an HR manager to assist her daughter with applications, essays, school visits, and so on. She continued by citing a number of other examples, from parents ignoring pressing commitments to detouring on family vacations so they can take their kids to the schools of choice.

As a researcher of these issues, I can tell you first-hand that it's making employers and educators nuts. I spend my days interviewing and working with managers who are frustrated beyond belief with young people who fail to demonstrate what they consider common sense. I sit with admissions counselors who tell me stories of parents who will not shut up during meetings with their kids. A couple of courageous admissions deans have even given their counselors permission to throw the parents out of the room or refuse to continue the meeting.

My wife and I have two daughters, 11 and 13, and we feel some of the same daily trepidation about college, driving, and dating as most parents. But that doesn't mean that we will center our lives around protecting them from every emotional, financial, and physical risk. Life is about learning from failure and growing confidence from the ability to overcome obstacles. I wonder daily how much we, as a society, short-change this generation by providing this cocoon. Managers complain about indecisive young workers who

lack self-confidence. Yet some of these same individuals go home at night and become the over-protective parents they place the blame on all day. I've said this from the platform any number of times and the room gets really quiet. Are we turning some of our kids into neurotics? Yes! An over-protected child who gets into the over-protective environment offered by many of today's colleges simply postpones the rude awakenings of job search and professional employment. The result? Managers become surrogate parents.

A final example – The director of pharmacy for a large hospital recently told me that she was shocked when the newly-graduated Pharm. D. (that's Doctor of Pharmacy) she had hired showed up on the first day of work with Dad in tow. This new young professional asked if he might stay the morning to see what she did. The director, being caught off guard, reluctantly acquiesced and Dad watched from a corner and then left after taking his daughter to lunch. The director wanted to know if this was a harbinger of things to come. Based on what I'm seeing, I told her it was a distinct possibility. RWW

[Ask About the Generations.com](#)

Got a burning question about managing others of diverse ages? Check out our new monthly tele-seminar offering: [Ask About the Generations.com](#).

The next session airs April 22nd at 3:00PM EST and is hosted by the Center's own Jeff Vankooten. Get timely solutions ideas and resources that work.

Previews on the Web

After many requests, we are now posting video previews of the Center's programs on our website [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"

The annual number of high school graduates will peak in 2009 at 2.9 million after a 15 year climb.

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

Check out Bob's new blog.

[Click Here](#)



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To Ponder

Many employers struggle to get young employees over what we call the “three-year hump,” namely that point in an employee’s tenure when newness is gone, routines become stale, wanderlust increases, and defection becomes likely. Just when the organization is about to recoup its investment in recruiting and training young workers, a significant number of these individuals resign, leaving the employers short of long-term employees who will grow up in the business and learn it thoroughly.

According to the *Economist*, the breakdown of the social contract between companies and employees coincided with the growing mobility of workers and portability of their knowledge-worker skills. Many young people expect no loyalty from their employers nor intend to give it, and they abhor the seemingly overwhelming economic and political power of large corporations. No wonder their tenures are brief.

Twentysomethings are always experimenting with work and career, and, statistically, today’s young workers job-hop as much as their counterparts did twenty years ago. Today, however, they make no apologies for hopping. Even the highly desired young employees—recruited from college, put in fast-track development programs, and expected to stay—are less willing to “play the company way” and more ready to depart. Their relative scarcity only amplifies the perception of their constant churning.

Ken Dytchwald, Tamara J. Erickson and Robert Morrison writing in *Workforce Crisis: How to Beat the Coming Shortage of Skills and Talent*

Want to know how to foster ownership?

Check out the March 20th posting on Bob Wendover’s new blog. Go to generationsblog.com and discover how one manager has built a warm and productive atmosphere that ensures solid sales.

Case Study Corner

I am a recreation supervisor in my early thirties. One of my fifty-something associates struggles constantly with the computerized scheduling system for the center’s activities. I’ve trained her. Her colleagues have trained her. Yet she throws up her hands and pulls out one of the old schedule sheets she hides in the drawer. Last week, however, I had to settle a dispute between two parties who she had double scheduled. It seems she had built a paper schedule, lost it and recreated it from memory. The trouble was she forgot one party’s reservation. She has been an employee for 32 years and four months and gently reminds everyone of that fact on a regular basis. How do I resolve this once and for all?

Several options come to mind with regard to this situation. You might consider re-assigning her to a responsibility that is less computer-oriented. If this is not an option, you might meet with her and assess exactly what seems to be hanging her up. Is it attitude? Is it just the way she seems to think? Was it poor training in the first place? Understanding her mindset will help you tailor the assistance and also help you make a case if this tailored assistance does not work. I understand that she’s been there 32 years, but that cannot excuse a bad attitude or incompetence, especially in a non-profit environment where resources are so scarce.

You might also match her with a mentor her age who has a knack for technology. That way she has a better chance of developing a relationship with someone with whom she feels comfortable. At the same time, this mentor will serve as living proof that people her age can thrive in today’s world of technology. Promote the idea that she should not be afraid to ask questions. We all possess strengths and weaknesses. Bolster her spirits by identifying those things at which she excels. We all too often take these for granted and focus on our struggles.

Finally, remove the paper schedule sheets she keeps hidden in the drawer. While this may cause a stir, I can’t think of a better way to kick her out of the nest. She’ll probably surprise herself at how well she can fly.

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.

Feeding the World

Twenty Grains of Rice at a Time

More than one survey of Millennials has indicated that as a group they are socially conscious. Now someone has found a way to marry this desire to the need to learn vocabulary for the SATs.

John Breen 50, a computer programmer, created a web based computer game to help his son, Ben, 16, study for the SAT. Breen figured he had a hit as well as a tool for a cause he cared about - world hunger. He launched [FreeRice](#) in October of 2007. He placed 10,200 word-definition challenges online - rewarding each correct answer with 20 grains of rice to the UN World Food Program. His effort, funded by corporate advertising, has generated 20 billion grains of rice, enough to feed nearly a million people a day. He is still challenged to get Ben to study for the test this fall, but he's sure of one thing: "Ending hunger is doable. It's just the question of getting the word out."

Tips for Supervising Those Older than Yourself

Take time to establish a relationship with each person in the first 30 days.

Consider the way you communicate. Yours and theirs is not the same

Use veteran colleagues as resources. They’re a wealth of information if you can get them to share.

Consider carefully the source of “sage advice.” There may be an agenda.

Remember, you are not supervising your parents!