

Gen Trends

September 2008

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

Feedback and the Different Generations

by Patie B. Jansen

I teach and practice that feedback to our employees needs to be both positive and constructive in order to be effective. It should also be regular. When I interviewed David, a 30-year-old Generation X supervisor for an engineering organization, he shared an approach that echoed my beliefs. He meets with each employee monthly where he reviews performance, gives positive feedback to reinforce good performance, and addresses any other concerns. He also asks for their feedback.

David has noticed that his Millennial employees have short attention spans, get bored quickly, and expect things sooner. He is constantly addressing what's next for these Millennials - for example, after eight months on the job they seem to feel entitled to a promotion. In David's regular meetings with them, he helps those younger employees to manage their expectations by collaborating on a strategic plan to help them reach their goals.

As a Gen Xer, David would personally like to receive feedback once a month not only to find out what he's doing well, but also on what needs improvement. He doesn't want to avoid problem areas; he wants to grow his skills. He has to insist that his manager meet with him regularly, however, because his manager does not see the value in regular feedback like David does.

There is a distinct difference in how each generation likes to give and receive feedback. Matures have had the view that if they don't hear from the supervisor they must be doing a good job, so they tend not provide enough feedback to subordinates. Boomers entered the workplace and wanted more feedback so they embraced regular performance evaluations. Gen Xers prefer to work independently with periodic check-ins. Xers often tell me they don't receive enough honest evaluations, positive or negative. Millennials want frequent and immediate feedback and desire more praise from management and colleagues. They grew up with praise and expect it in the workplace. It is a good way to reinforce good performance and good behavior. Without this praise and regular feedback, the younger generation may become disgruntled and not stay on the job.

I had a manager arrive late for one of my seminars. He had stopped by the clinic he manages only to discover that his new Millennial employee had put her keys and a note under the door saying she was quitting. She had been there less than two months. The manager admitted that he hadn't met individually with this new person during those 60 days, and was not aware that she was unhappy in the job. I find that an effective way to reduce turnover is simply for managers to meet individually and regularly with all employees, give them honest performance feedback, find out how the new position is going, and uncover any concerns they may have.



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"GenTistics"

55% of Boomers feel that their income will not keep up with the cost of living next year.

-The Pew Research Center

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Comics Books Give Career Advice

The Japanese-style graphic novel known as manga has grown up. Daniel H. Pink, an established author of workplace strategy, has released his first business comic book titled *The Adventures of Johnny Bunko: The Last Career Guide You'll Ever Need*, making Business Week's top seller list for two consecutive months.

The book targets workers in their early 20's who are already familiar with the sardonic nature of manga. It establishes a niche in the US for shorter, more portable business books to address readers' lack of time and attention for longer publications.

Other major publications are soon to follow. The Harvard Business Press has shortened their works on management to 125-page books in a series called *Memo to the CEO*. This trend does not apply strictly to career advice and work management strategies. Google introduced its new web browser, Google Chrome, with a 38-page manga explaining the project's strategy, vision and features in conversational style.

Manga even proliferates the lives of the population after the Millennials. The Comic Book Project, a non-profit organization that enables students to create and publish original comic books, has spread to more than 850 US schools. This project is part of the ongoing conversation between academia and the public on whether to use comics as literary tools in the classroom. Proponents claim that it encourages the literacy process and supplements learning. Educators argue that the writing used in comic books dumbs-down the English language and that it doesn't allow a child to think critically or develop a rich vocabulary.

Case Study Corner

Why do those in the Millennial generation seem to have such a sense of entitlement?

Millennials sometimes receive a bad rap about this issue. As this generation has come of age over the past 20 years, they have been immersed in a non-stop world that seems to focus on convenience and entitlement. They hear it from advertisers. The media preaches it endlessly. Some have also grown up with over-protective parents.

Then there is society in general. Rather than enforcing existing rules and policies, many institutions allow themselves to be manipulated by young people who are determined to get their way. This is sometimes enabled by parents who ask those in authority to bend the rules rather than allowing their children to learn about the consequences of their actions. It is only natural then that when these individuals go to work that they would expect the same kind of treatment.

The three critical keys to dealing successfully with this attitude are selection, clear expectations and consistent enforcement of established practices. In this age of the detached worker, employers are finding that choosing the right people in the first place can add thousands of dollars to the bottom line. Develop assessments that reveal the work beliefs of applicants of all ages. Once on board, set clear and specific expectations that provide young people with a clear understanding of their responsibilities as well as their rights on the job. Finally, enforce these expectations consistently. Without this, selection efforts and clear expectations become meaningless.

Our website is filled with strategies for accomplishing all three of these goals. Check out our [FAQs](#), back issues of our [GenTrends](#) newsletter, the [free articles](#) page and browse through the many resources available for purchase in the Center's [on-line store](#).

Mindset of Millennials

For more than a decade, Beloit College has posted their annual Mindset List which pinpoints cultural trends shaping the paradigms of college freshmen. This year's class was born in 1990 and will graduate in 2012. They have grown up in an environment where computers, wireless information, and instant communication are the norm. Most of them have never shared a bedroom so they screen future roommates on social networking sites and connect to them via texting before setting foot on campus. Our top 5 picks from the list are:

- Gas stations have never fixed flats, but most serve fast food.
- Most students wouldn't know that IBM made typewriters.
- They've always screened their calls using Caller ID.
- They will never have to file a paper tax return.
- Employers have always conducted credit checks on employees.

Tech Pop?

Tech pop stands for "technology populism, a term recently coined by the Forrester Research Group. The phrase describes the emerging business trend of individuals functioning as their own IT unit at work. Forrester attributes the phenomenon to the proliferation of techno-savvy employees in the work-place, the standardization of broadband, and the increase in social networking and online collaboration.

While enterprise companies provide new employees with computing tools, emerging workers no longer settle for the basics and prefer the learn-as-you-click features of web applications to perform their tasks more efficiently. But IT managers feel that employees will compromise the company's privacy, intellectual property and security if they allow liberal use of these applications.

SPECIAL RELEASE

The Center for Generational Studies Celebrates 20 Years!

On the fifteenth of this past month, The Center for Generational Studies reached a milestone in its existence – 20 years of assisting organizations, large and small, with the challenges related to talent management and transition. We've come a long way.

"I can still remember sitting at an empty desk with a newly published book in my hand plotting how to begin," said Robert W. Wendover, founder and director. That first book, *Smart Hiring*, is now in its 7th edition and has been followed by a wide variety of other resources on topics ranging from age diversity and leadership to succession planning and the psychographics of the emerging consumer.

Originally named Leadership Resources, Inc., the organization was renamed The Center for Generational Studies in 1998 as the new generations began to make their presence felt in the marketplace and workplace. "I had clients calling me and asking, 'What do I do with the kid with the green hair and body piercings who wants to work behind my retail counter?'" said Wendover. "We knew the world of work was going to change dramatically." From this, came one of the Center's signature programs – *From Ricky & Lucy to Beavis & Butthead: Managing the New Workforce*, which has been presented to tens of thousands of people in the past decade.

To celebrate this milestone . . .

we are reducing the price on every one of our resources by **20% thru September 30th**. We want to thank the thousands who have supported us through the years and introduce those who have gotten to know us recently to the wide array of solutions and resources we offer.

- You might pick up a copy of the Center's electronic training game, **I Remember When**. Trainers nationwide have found it to be a great tool for stimulating interaction and adding a bit of humor.
- You might grab a copy of **Putting Age Diversity to Work**, a collection of more than 100 case studies about work with those in different generations.
- Then there's **Leadership and the Emerging Generations**, the Center's authoritative video program on how the emerging generation of professionals will impact organizational strategy and direction.
- This offer even includes our turn-key curriculum, **Generations: Understanding Age Diversity in Today's Workplace**. That's a whopping **\$1000.00** off of the most comprehensive and easy-to-use resource available today on managing those of different ages.

To take advantage of this one-time offer . . .

go to www.gentrends.com and click on the on-line store button. When you're ready to check out, use **198820** as your coupon code and receive an immediate 20% off everything you order. Remember, this offer ends at midnight on September 30th. So **ACT NOW** before you forget!