

Gen Trends

January 2009

Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!

IT Policy? What IT Policy?

Nearly half of Millennial employees in Canada routinely bypass the IT usage policies set by their employers according to a survey conducted by IT World Canada and Harris/Decima. Thirteen percent say they do so daily. The most commonly used applications are instant messaging, music downloads and viewing videos online.

As one would imagine, everyone is pointing fingers. The IT managers argue that the proper systems are in place and that managers should enforce them. The managers argue that they don't have the time and the policies are impossible to enforce. The Millennials keep asking, "What's the big deal?" Then there is the dilemma of retention. For a generation that already views most jobs as contracts, applying draconian rules to their use of technology is more likely to scare them away than to get them to tow the line.

So where is the balance between retention and internet security? In this super-connected world, neither employers nor employees can have their cake and eat it too. A complete ban on social networking as some organizations have done, for instance, is not the answer. After all, sites like Linked-In are increasingly seen as a source of business and customer contacts. That said, complete permissiveness is also a bad idea.

As much as we assume that most

Millennials are savvy to the threats posed online, there is a percentage for which these threats have not registered. More than anything, the key is education. Sure, outlining the rules on internet use is important. But getting them truly knowledgeable and invested in protecting themselves and the organization is a more effective means for increasing overall security. Every employer needs to find its own balance between trust and enforcement. What's the answer for you?

Upcoming Center audiences include:

Louisiana Travel Promotion Association
Westwood Primary School
Dole, Inc.
National MS Society
Arapahoe County, CO
STNOC Women In Nuclear
Millikin-Decatur Business Association
Home City Ice

Letters From Our Readers

In last month's newsletter, I discussed the issue of dealing with workers at inappropriate times. Here's one creative suggestion that a reader offered in response.

I have a suggestion that you might consider concerning younger people and technology interruptions on the job as mentioned in [last month's] case study.

When interviewing one for employment, might it be a good idea to have another person get their cell number from their application, then call that person during the interview to see how they handle it?

"GenTistics"

As their most important employee benefit, 33% of recent college grads chose training and development over salary and 98% felt that working with strong mentors is also important.

-PricewaterhouseCoopers 2008

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



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4 Snuggies™ Please!

by Marjii Middleton

My five-year-old son has been captivated by the proliferation of infomercials for Snuggies™, the fleece blankets with sleeves. At his age, Marcus takes things literally, so their pitch compelled him to believe that our regular fleece blankets weren't good enough – we needed the blankets that wouldn't slide around. For days he hounded me to pick up the phone or go online to order the product. “And you need to hurry because they'll send you a free blanket and a book light if you order today!” It took him a few attempts to finally realize that I was not convinced that we needed the blankets.

He awoke before the rest of the family one morning and sat down to watch his cartoons. When Marcus saw the Snuggies™ commercial again, he paused the DVR and proceeded calling the 800 number to order the product himself. He was greeted by a cordial voice-activated robo-attendant that guided him through the ordering process. As a kindergartner who knows his numbers and colors, he had no difficulty getting all the way through the process to the shipment information. I didn't realize that something was amiss until he asked me for our postal code, which he didn't know was the same as the zip code.

I was in stitches as I hung up the phone. The company had no way of detecting that it was interacting with a small child. You have to love a system that is so easy that a five-year-old can do it. And you have to love a five-year-old who is convinced that the system couldn't be too hard for him to figure out.

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Case Study Corner

I am one of several Baby Boomers whose Boomer boss was replaced by someone in her early thirties a few months ago. While I'm sure she's perfectly competent, she seems to treat us as just one more function she has to deal with. She stays in her office most of the time and communicates by e-mail most of the time. Occasionally, one of us is “summoned” for a short conversation about something, no small talk, strictly business. Last week she gathered us all in her office to discuss a project for about 15 minutes. All of a sudden, she said, “Okay, that's it,” and wheeled around with her back to us and started checking her e-mail. This is so different from our previous supervisor who used to indulge in a few jokes and a little small talk at times. I guess she thinks we're more productive this way, but we're certainly not happy.

While age and comfort with technology might be an element of this, I don't think this is so much generations-related as it is a lack of training. Unfortunately, this individual has been placed in charge without much regard to her ability to manage people. She may be a whiz in other areas, but I can certainly understand your frustration. You might get your co-workers together for a few minutes, not to gripe, but to strategize about what needs to be said when you approach her. I would select two of the group to meet with her. That way she doesn't perceive that you're ganging up on her, and yet it's not just the complaints of one person. Whoever meets with her might begin with the phrase “We have a concern that. . .” or something similar. What you will be asking her to do is substantially alter her behavior. No matter how well this goes, it will take her time to adjust so be patient.

If this approach does not work, I would approach her supervisor with your concern. But make sure you have your facts straight. Identify the behaviors, not

Case Study Corner, continued

the attitudes, and specifically what you'd like to see as an outcome. If you are perceived as simply complaining, you will not be taken seriously. Recognize as well that once you begin this process it will need to be followed through to a conclusion, even if that means her eventual departure. Good luck.

Tweet Ya Later

Companies are embracing the use of Twitter, a free social network tool for microblogging. Unlike other tools, Twitter prompts users for a maximum 140-character response to the question “What are you doing right now?” The answer instantly transmits to their network of followers via their Twitter or other web page or mobile device. Hundreds of followers in a given network can read these “tweets” within seconds of transmission. This tool fuses the ease of texting and the interactive nature of blogging in one location.

The more than one million US users include professionals in a variety of industries who have embraced the new application. How are they using it? Here is a short list of ideas:

- Reporters gain instant feedback regarding recent headlines.
- Entertainers and politicians update fans about the location of their public appearances.
- Companies send messages about product launches or deals.
- Managers share meeting or research information with staff.
- Marketers conduct informal polls about a topic or product.

continued in the next column