

GENERATION WHY?

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- 80M KIDS OF BABY-BOOMERS, referred to as GEN-Yers born between 1977 and 1995, are the “most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world. The good news is they’re also going to be the most high-performing workforce. They walk in with more information in their heads and at their fingertips – and sure, they have high expectations, but first and foremost for themselves.” With some 64M skilled workers retiring in the next few years, “companies will have no choice but to accommodate these curious Gen Y creatures... needy, entitled... really not that *into* work... For some, the concept of ‘work ethic’ needs rethinking.... They’re demanding, and they question everything, so if there isn’t a good reason for that long commute or late night, don’t expect them to do it. When it comes to loyalty, the companies they work for are last on the list – behind families, friends, communities, co-workers and, of course, themselves.” Their mantra: “If we don’t like a job, we quit, because the worst thing that can happen is that we move back home... The most significant characteristic of the Gen Y bird is that they are unapologetic – from how they look, to how spoiled they are, to what they demand of work, they simply think they’re special.” [FORTUNE – May 28, 07]
- GENERATION ‘Y’ aka MILLENNIALS, refers to the wave of kids born after 1980 who have grown up with very differing attitudes about work ethic, work-life flexibility, and teamwork – having “little respect for authority that is not earned by merit and personal relationships” versus seniority or appointed position. Armed with laptops, i-pods and i-phones, their world is mobile and literally “in the palms of their hands” 24/7; “they rely on technology and feel more comfortable communicating through email, text and instant messaging than in person... Raised by doting parents who told them they were ‘special,’ ...they have high levels of optimism,” expecting they’re entitled to be successful. These kids view life and work independent of one another, with priority on life/work over work/life balance – thus content with lower pay for a flexible schedule and, having been raised in a consumer economy, simply expecting and demanding to “influence the terms and conditions of their own careers – believing employers should understand the importance of their personal lives and be flexible in allowing them to take care of personal issues during work hours.” As disconcerting as their evident lack of drive and discipline is to baby boomers, Generation ‘Why?’ is the future of our country and needs as much mentoring as can be mustered by the Boomers. [LEGAL MANAGEMENT – Dec 07]
- UNDERSTANDING ‘GENERATIONAL’ EMPLOYEES is among the toughest management challenges, particularly when as many as four very different groups – each motivated by very different priorities – are trying to work together. “Baby boomers grew up in times where people worked for the same company their whole career; generation X in times of corporate downsizing and watched their parents being laid off during the recessions... Boomers find reward in money or a corner office, Xers in independence, Millennials find theirs in meaningful work.” [PRACTICAL ACCOUNTANT – Sep 04]

	GREW UP WITH	DESCRIPTORS	MANAGEMENT STYLE
Traditionalists – born 1900-45	scarce resources	loyal, patriotic, frugal	top down, hierarchical
Baby Boomers – born 1945-65	TV, consumerism	optimistic, competitive, “Me”	challenge, authority
Generation X – born 1965-80	computers, electronics	independent, skeptical	entrepreneur, work-to-live
Millenials – born 1981-99	internet, instant data	realistic, embrace diversity	collaboration, negotiation

- “IN TODAY’S WORKPLACE, YOUNG PEOPLE REQUIRE CONSTANT PRAISE... Certainly there are benefits to building confidence and showing attention,” but research suggests that inappropriate kudos – often given for little more than showing up – “are turning too many into narcissistic praise junkies...leaving a lot of today’s young adults feeling insecure if they’re not regularly complimented... Childhood in recent decades has been defined by ‘stroking’ – by parents who see their job as building self-esteem, by soccer coaches who give every player a trophy, by schools that used to name one ‘student of the month’ and these days name forty. Now the culture of praise is reaching deeply into the adult world.” At the same time that the 20-somethings want and need near-constant feedback, “bosses, professors and mates are feeling the need to lavish praise... or else see them wither under an unfamiliar compliment deficit... This praise fixation has economic, labor and social ramifications. Adults who were over-praised as children are apt to be narcissistic at work and in personal relationships – not good at basking in other people’s glory, which makes for problematic marriages and work relationships.” [THE WEEK – May 11, 07]

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