

## Welcoming the *Shadow Boom* to Work - by Anne Howard

This group is best known as GEN Y. They are also referred to as the Millennials. In Canada they are the group who was born between 1980 and 1995. (Canada's generations are slightly different than those in the US which is why there are differences in the birth dates attributed to the generations.)

If the Mantra of the Baby Boomers is (was) "Live to Work", that of their children is "Live, Then Work".

When a Boomer is asked "What do you do"? Their response is "I am a (doctor, lawyer, dietitian and soon)". When GEN Y is asked "What do you do"? They are likely to answer "I (snowboard, hike, play ball)". When asked "What work do you do"? they say "I work in (nutrition services, the land department, construction, education). Unlike their Boomer parents, they do not define themselves by their work.

GEN Y is attributed with the following characteristics:

- Optimistic
- "Connected"
- Entrepreneurial
- Street Smart
- Networking
- Confident
- Challenge Seeking
- Unwilling to commit

What They Want :

- Continuous Development of Skills
- Work/Life Balance
- Fun Workplace
- Structure & goals
- Mutual respect and relationship with boss

### What Drives Them: Distrust of Hierarchy and Authority

The Baby Boomers were considered hard to manage by the Silent Generation (Traditionalists) that preceded them. GEN Y shares that reputation. To the extent that it is possible to categorize a generation and create a playbook for managing them, following are some of the key aspects of creating workplaces where GEN Y members are likely to be most successful and satisfied.

#### 1. Their Work Has To Matter

Let GEN Y know why the work they are doing counts. Show them how their work contributes to organizational results, and the contribution the company makes to their community (environmentally, socially and economically). Make sure they see how their work contributes to achieving specific goals that are connected to their development and career progression.

#### 2. They Need Attention & Involvement

This generation grew up with continuous CONSTRUCTIVE positive and negative feedback. They expect to have their accomplishments recognized (publicly). Kudos for their accomplishments is the biggest statistical driver of workplace satisfaction for these workers, also known as millennials, according to a new survey from Leadership IQ.





Remember, they don't just celebrate their birthday – they celebrate their birth week and/or birth month. They expect to be the center of attention. GEN Y also grew up involved in the decisions that affected them. They expect to participate in decisions and they expect to know why things are being done.

### 3. They Demand Supportive, Visible, Trustworthy Leaders

GEN Y expects lots of face time with their supervisors and bosses. They expect to see and hear from them frequently (at least daily). They expect their bosses to be honest. They also expect their bosses to lead by example and if they don't, they have lost the respect of this generation. For example: If as the supervisor, you say you believe in work/life balance (important to GEN Y) and then work long hours yourself, you have undermined your credibility with them.

### 4. They Want To Be Challenged and To Learn New Skills

GEN Y has grown up in a world of rapid knowledge growth and changing skill requirements. Continuous learning and taking on new challenges is a way of life for them. They also like structure and want to see how their skills development is going to benefit them in their career progression.

### 5. Commitment

GEN Y has a reputation for being unwilling to commit. What they have is a different perspective on commitment. They will engage their heads and their hearts in an existing role, while at the same time marketing themselves. Their understanding of the employment contract between organizations and employees is "as long as this relationship provides each of us with what we need, it will continue."

*Sirota looked at the cross-generational attitudes of more than 300,000 workers in more than 50 organizations during 2006 and 2007, studying Generation Y, Gen X, Baby Boomers and "Traditionalists". The engagement levels of the other groups were all within a relatively narrow range of 77 per cent to 80 per cent, with Generation Y – at 80 per cent – actually more engaged than Generation X or Baby Boomers.*

Don't mistake engagement for the loyalty that once existed with employees (and employers). (GEN Y) Millennials never stop marketing themselves," said Tom Musbach, managing editor, Yahoo! HotJobs. "GEN Y is more likely to change jobs and careers more frequently than any other generation.

### 6. Connected

GEN Y lives on their tech toys and tools. They do not know a world without the internet and instant messaging. Social networking sites are a way of life. They have excellent networking skills. Organizations that arbitrarily cut-off their connection to the world are likely to lose their GEN Y employees.

### 7. Independence:

GEN Y isn't especially self-sufficient. They are accustomed to structure, specific goals and actions plans. They are also accustomed to working in groups rather than independently. Their need for continual reinforcement (feedback) coupled with their reliance on teamwork can limit their ability to get things done. Like every other generation, GEN Y has lots to learn about how to be successful in the workplace. Their unique talents and perspectives can and hopefully will change the world of work for the better.

- <http://www.management-issues.com/2008/4/2/research/the-kids-are-all-right--we-think.asp>
- <http://accounting.smartpros.com/x60280.xml>
- <http://www.worldatwork.org/waw/adimLink?id=22485>
- [Praise Goes Far To Motivate Gen Y](#)
- [Generation Y Rules The Flexible Workforce Revolution](#)
- ["What Gen Y Really Wants"](#) (Time Magazine)