

## WORKING WITH THE NEW GENERATION

I've heard them called by many names as of late: Generation Y, Gen Y, The Plug-and-Play Generation, The Gotta-Feel-Good Generation. What they're all referring to is the new young generation - our current 20-somethings. Every generation "deals" with the generation who comes after them. Their different views, their different ways of doing things, and so on; this generation is no exception.

Why is everyone talking about this new generation now though? They've been coming along for years. They're in their 20's now, after all! Because now they're starting to impact the workforce and because we couldn't predict their group characteristics until we saw them in action. In some ways they're changing the landscape for the better, in some ways we oldies would say for the worse.

Regardless of the nostalgia we feel for the "old days" this generation is plunging headlong into the workforce and will impact you and your business at some point. There's really no sense fighting it. No generation has ever changed the generation which came after it; not once that generation reached its 20's anyway. These are the kids we raised and we did raise them this way, so let's figure out how to work with them. To work with them we first need to understand them.

What makes this generation tick (or turn off) and what is the impact on businesses looking to hire them?

**Problem:** They're not called The Plug-and-Play Generation for nothing. This generation grew up on video games and television while their parents were out working and making (what they viewed as) better lives for their families. This led to a whole generation of children, now entering the workforce, who need instant gratification in whatever it is they do. Whether its work or play, the satisfaction must be immediate.

**Solution:** What this means to the business owner looking to hire qualified workers is that you need to be diligent in assigning tasks to (or rather asking the worker if they'd be happy to do the tasks) that they enjoy doing. You must challenge this generation to the capacity in which they want to be challenged.

**Problem:** This generation waits for nothing and no one. If they don't like the game, they find a new game to play and new people to play it with - now - not tomorrow or next week. Simple as that. Think pulling the PS2 game out of the player and inserting one they think they may like better.

**Solution:** This goes back to speed again. They're used to moving at the speed of the internet, not the speed of the horseless carriage. You're going to have to give this generation what it's looking for or prepare to lose them. Regular check-ins individually to gauge their interest and excitement is critical to keeping this generation happy and working for you.

**Problem:** The Generation Y's demand that they feel good about what they're doing. If they don't feel good about it, they're not going to do it. Again, simple as that and no amount of money will convince them otherwise. Remember: they watched their parents work and work and work to earn a few extra bucks and what did it get them? Absentee parents who were rich. This generation wants quality, not necessarily quantity.

**Solution:** Sometimes the work just isn't all that gratifying. However, you can combat that by showing your gratitude in the work being done. Often the sheer pleasure of helping someone else and that person being grateful is enough for the worker to receive the gratification they need.

**Problem:** The generation of ADD. Oh yes, this is where ADD became popular. The Gen Y's are not going to pay attention for long. They want their information fast and to the point.

**Solution:** Don't waste time with long drawn out memos and information. Just shoot it straight and fast!

**Problem:** A recent study suggested that the average tenure in a job for Generation Y's is 18 months. Wow, what happened to life, or even a few years? Unfortunately those days are but a memory. As older workers retire and leave the workforce, we're left with the generation we raised and we need to count on them to fill the open positions within our companies. Remember again that this generation watched their parents stick in jobs for life, only to be spat out by the very corporations and unions who claimed they'd protect them - when they were juuuuuuusst about to collect that pension. The Generation Y's aren't going to hang around to let that happen to them.

**Solution:** There's no changing this generation's stick ability. So as a business owner you have two options: 1) Make the work enjoyable or 2) Prepare in advance for every single worker's eventual departure. If you opt with number 1, you need to figure out what it is that makes each and every one of your workers happy. They must be regarded as the individuals they are and with their own set of needs and instructions. Prepare to meet those needs or move on to number 2: The most crucial thing any business owner can do is to have instructions written for every task that is performed within their company. Put all those instructions in a safe place and hang on to them so you can pass them on to the worker's successor. In staffing, one of the biggest complaints we hear from clients is the need to retrain the next person. I'm sorry - that's the way it is nowadays. We train and we retrain and we need to be ready for it.

**Problem:** Lack of office etiquette. Check out this recent article on Yahoo! News about modern office etiquette (and lack of it) <http://finance.yahoo.com/expert/article/careerist/40342>. Unfortunately, as the article suggests, the new generation may not even know they're breaking the rules! Etiquette in their world is far different than that of other generations.

**Solution:** As my husband and business partner says, "But wrong is still wrong and right is still right". However, with the internet and a new generation, is this perhaps the new "right". Maybe, maybe not. If most families are dysfunctional, doesn't dysfunction become the new "normal"? Unfortunately I think the new generation has us beat in sheer numbers folks. In this writer's opinion there's not much we can do but learn to deal.

**Problem:** As another article <http://finance.yahoo.com/expert/article/careerist/38889> on Gen Y's by Penelope Trunk suggests: "They won't play the face-time game." That means they're not going to sit in the office just to make you happy. They know that work can be done from home (or from the beach) just as well as it can be done sitting in the office.

**Solution:** Let 'em work from home! Why not!? Working from home offers the ultimate in flexibility (something this generation demands) and helps keep this generation of workers happy and working for you.

As a virtual staffing agency, we deal with the same things as you do day in and day out. We're not immune to the caveats of Generation Y. We deal with the unique issues of this generation through increased back end staff which checks in with and coaches our virtual assistants regularly. We also take great pains to make good matches between clients and virtual assistants and quickly offer to change assignments if it doesn't "feel right" for the virtual assistant.

Yes, this (generation's issues) results in a higher turnover of virtual assistants but no higher than what you'd experience in the bricks and mortar world. In many respects we shield our clients from the impacts of turnover by quickly locating new help, interviewing and screening for the right skills and attitude. But even as a virtual staffing agency, we still can't change a generation or their attitudes so we can't stop the turnover - we can help our clients get through the turnover.

Even with a high-turnover generation, companies can still benefit from all of the pluses of virtual assistance and virtual staffing. The cost savings over hourly in-office staff still exist; office politics is still absent; the speed of bringing in additional help is still present; the benefits of not having someone sitting in your office holds ground; start up capitol needed (desks, computers, phone lines) of hiring help is not a concern; and ultimate flexibility still exists.

In many ways, hiring virtually is a great way to deal with the issues businesses must face with this generation. This generation wants flexibility. Working virtually offers the ultimate in flexibility, which helps keep the generation happy. Virtual staffing fits this generation like a glove and is one of the best ways to put them to work for you.

If you'd like more information on how to set up a virtual office, please check our article at [http://teamdoubleclick.com/news/free\\_articles/SetupYourVirtOffice.html](http://teamdoubleclick.com/news/free_articles/SetupYourVirtOffice.html).

