

# Gen Trends

June 2008

## *Catching the Wave of the Generations to Come!*

### Young Workers and Instant Feedback

I was having lunch with a colleague whose kids, like mine, are 12 and 14. "Have you noticed," he asked, "that instant feedback has taught our kids that they don't have to wait for anything?" Over the past decade, technology, commerce, and society in general, has produced an everyday expectation of immediate results. Occasionally, for example, a prospective client will say, "FedEx me the information and I'll take a look at it in the next week or so." Huh? I've learned to clarify their expectations and have probably saved myself a few hundred dollars in shipping over the past several years.

While this insane pace can make those who have been around for a while frustrated, we possess a perspective that allows us to keep it somewhat in check. But picture the young professional who has grown up in a world that seems to demand and provide instant feedback for every decision, large and small. Has anyone taken time to help this generation to understand the value of thought before action? What these emerging workers have picked up in speed of manipulation, they may perhaps lack in skills of deliberation.

So how does one deal with the twenty-something who expects instant feedback for everything? Sure, point-and-click decisions are fine for many of the everyday tasks we undertake. But what about the projects and tasks that require time to consider all the angles, consequences and relationships? I've spoken with too many managers who say that young people seem to struggle with the more complex decisions they are handed. Is it deliberation skills? Is it the

confidence to make the decision? Is it impatience with not knowing the outcome for a long time?

Imagine a young project manager who is so intent on getting the job done, that she fails to wait for enough input to make a well-reasoned decision. Imagine a young clerk who tells a customer that a product's not available simply because it is not listed on the computer in his store. We all feel the increased pressure to produce results these days. Is it the natural path of youth to be impatient for results? Sure, but over time we learned the value of taking time to consider all ramifications of a decision before pulling the trigger. Those of us with experience have learned that certain decisions can't be rushed. We've been burned too many times by haste.

Has it become necessary to place more focus on the critical thinking skills of young professionals as they enter the workplace? Yes. Better still, focus on applicants' critical thinking skills before they are hired. Don't ask them to explain how they would make the decision. Create an environment where they have to make the decision and then watch what happens. Behavior always provides us with better insights than words. Will you refuse to hire anyone who doesn't demonstrate the deliberation skills you seek? Of course not. But at least you'll have a clear picture of the training and coaching to be done when the person comes aboard.

With an expectation of instant feedback ingrained in the Millennial generation, the need to teach patience, deliberation, methodical problem solving and confidence in making critical decisions is needed now more than ever. How can you go about meeting this challenge?

### Previews Now on the Web

After many requests, we are now posting video previews of the Center's programs on our website [www.gentrends.com](http://www.gentrends.com). Currently, previews are available for [\*Hey Dude!\*](#) [\*Managing Age Diversity in Today's Workplace\*](#) as well as [\*Leadership and the Emerging Generations\*](#). Look for us to add others in the coming months.

## "GenTistics"

Thirty-five percent of incoming college freshmen evaluated the quality or the reliability of information they received during their last year of high school.

-Higher Education Research Institute

Check out Bob's new blog.

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## To Ponder . . .

The ramifications for the United States are grave. We need a steady stream of rising men and women to replenish the institutions, to become strong military leaders, and wise political leaders, dedicated journalists and demanding teachers, judges, and muckrakers, scholars, critics and artists. We have the best schools to train them, but social and private environments have eroded. Some of the kids study hard for class, but what else do they learn when they're young? How do they spend the free hours of adolescence? They don't talk with their friends about books, and they don't read them when they are alone. Teachers try to impart knowledge, but students today remember only that which suits their careers or advantages their social lives. For the preparation of powerful officials, wise intellectuals, and responsible citizens, formal schooling and workplace training are not enough. Social life and leisure time play essential roles in the maturing process, and if the knowledge principle disappears, if books, artworks, historical facts, and civic debates—in a word, an intellectual forensic—vacate the scene, then the knowledge young people acquire later on never penetrates to their hearts. The forensic retreats into ever smaller cells, where nerds and bookworms nurture their loves cut off from the world. Democracy doesn't prosper that way.

Mark Bauerlein writing in  
*The Dumbest Generation*

## To Read . . .

***The Dumbest Generation: How the Digital Age Stupefies Young Americans and Jeopardizes Our Future.*** Mark Bauerlein. Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, New York, 2008. ISBN 978-158542-639-3. Author Bauerlein has written a well-researched clarion call to those who truly care about the degradation of intellectual argument among the so-called digital generation.

## Case Study Corner

*What can one do with older employees who continue to work after age 65, just for the benefits? They do not perform very well, but because of their long tenure, it is difficult to discipline or terminate them. What options are available?*

This situation comes up frequently, but is not necessarily an age-related issue. The best method I know of for dealing with this is to draw a line in the sand regarding their performance. Meet with each of the individuals involved and re-establish your expectations. This is assuming that you have developed a defined set of expectations in the first place.

As a supervisor, you might say something like "I realize that I have been less than conscientious in my supervision of expectations. But I need to correct that because we all need to be more productive." (You can blame it on greater scrutiny from above or maybe corporate belt-tightening.) "So let's review the expectations for your position to re-establish them and how they are being measured."

You might get resistance. You might get cooperation. You might even get a refreshing response that indicates they're becoming re-invested. In any event, you are essentially re-starting the clock on performance evaluation. I realize that this will extend the time they are with you since you will have to begin progressive discipline from the start if necessary.

Should these people not perform, you can only use their behavior from this point forward as a basis for corrective action/termination. It goes without saying that everyone with this person's job title should get the same treatment. This means meeting with everyone individually. Meet with every one of your direct reports, just to be consistent. Be prepared for some pushback from other employees who think you're being unfair without understanding the whole picture. Take time to hear them out, but do not allow yourself to be influenced by their pleadings. After all, you're the person in charge.

## Social Sites an Effective Recruitment Tool?

Enterprise giants like McDonald's, Microsoft, and Ernst & Young are making their presence known on Facebook, but hiring managers are getting increasingly frustrated with the use of social net-working sites as a recruitment tool. They feel that they aren't getting a good return on the time that they invest in connecting with potential candidates on these sites.

Persistence is the key into the vast pool of applicants on these networking portals. For higher level employees, it may take up to six months of communicating via e-mail, SMS text and telephone after the initial contact is made before you begin to see results. Blogging has proven to be an effective way to reach younger, entry-level applicants. All of these follow-up methods take time – devise a strategy to keep contacts engaged.

Workforce Management, a magazine of  
*Workforce.com*

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## What Are Millenials Watching?

Not as much TV as other mediums according to the results of a study conducted by The Solutions Research Group, a Canadian consulting firm.

Traditional TV, which includes live broadcasts, video-on-demand viewing, and DVR, accounts for less than half of what Millenials watch. The balance is time spent playing video games, watching web-based videos and DVDs.

Millenials watch less TV than the rest of the population – 42% of video-based entertainment among those ages 12-24 compared to 63.9% for the general population's average.

More interesting than the number of hours is the time of day allocated to their favorite medium. Web-based video watching achieved its highest viewing share mid-day during the week (12.3%) and lowest after 6PM on week-days and weekends. Video gaming peaked on Saturday mornings.