



HR MANAGEMENT, TALENT MANAGEMENT

Gen iY: They're Expecting Change, Amusement, and Immediate Feedback

by [Dr. Tim Elmore](#) on Jun 28, 2011, 7:40 AM

Part two of three.

Companies across the U.S. are grappling with the complexities of employing Generation iY (so called because of the impact iTunes, iPhones, iPods, iMacs and the Internet has had on them) and transitioning them from backpack to briefcase.

Generation iY simply doesn't subscribe to the standard assumptions about work, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Smart organizations will leverage what this confident, paradoxical group has to offer, while at the same time, teaching them how to be collaborative, well-adjusted future leaders.

As the second part of a three part series, I share the third, fourth and fifth of eight Generation iY traits and how to manage them in the workplace.

3. Innovative new rules for technology

Generation iY constantly looks for new ways to do things. They challenge past practices. These professionals will redefine technology and how it's used in the workplace. Their scope will be larger than our current one and they will freely suggest new ideas to a team that might be stuck on one methodology. Companies will greatly benefit from this perspective.

Communication via technology is a vivid example. Young professionals define "email" as old school — they prefer text and instant message. Research tells us 95 percent of this generation has mobile phones, but they use them to send text messages more than phone calls. They are in constant communication with peers and parents. Look for this generation to be bold about technology and just how they can use it for their good and the benefit of the team.

What can we do? Welcome their input when someone challenges the technology status quo; inquire about their thought process. Create a team to do some innovative brainstorming and ask them to present ideas to senior leadership for consideration.

According to our focus groups, they love employers who value what they have to say from Day One. Stay open to change and be ready to embrace new ideas — young people are highly engaged in what they help create.

4. Parent involvement in interviews & salary negotiations

Students often say their parents are the number one influence in their lives, and this appears to continue after college graduation. Some 90 percent of young adults surveyed say they are "very close" to their parents, and 45 percent of 18-25 year olds say they communicate with their parents every day.

Parents are all too happy to remain in this choice spot and many have removed the opportunity for their child to fail and learn from it. These parents actually become involved in the hiring process as their son or daughter interviews for their first job. Unlike 40 percent of Baby Boomers who said they are “better off without their parents,” Generation iY wants to or feels they must include Mom or Dad in their first job selection.

What can we do? First, communicate your respect for their parents’ desire to be involved and let them know you see the value in their mentorship. Then turn this into a learning opportunity for the potential employee. Share with them the value of standing alone and assuming responsibility, offering them specific examples of how that applies in the workplace.

Communicate the significance of failure as an important life lesson and, again, be specific. Persist that you want to know their opinion and their preferences about an issue, not someone else’s. Use the interaction to learn whether they are even ready to stand alone on the job and to take initiative and responsibility.

5. Expectation of change, amusement and immediate feedback

Generation iY can multi-task and handle a variety of projects on any given day — just don’t make them sit still for long. The Internet world they grew up in allowed these young people to stay entertained or move on with a single click.

This mindset is a mixed blessing. They want, even need, many challenges at work, but understand they may not finish a project because of its waning novelty. They simply don’t understand that sometimes you have to endure the more mundane tasks and put in time to earn a promotion.

There perhaps is an unrealistic expectation on their part as to how fun or exciting a job should be. Their teachers discovered this at school, now employers will do the same.

Case in point, in 2000, 90 percent of Generation iY planned to go to college. By 2007, 30 percent of them didn’t even finish high school. They are not stupid, they are bored and want change. Certainly, supervisors can fire their young employees who do not follow through. Many young adults, however, will simply sell their services to the company down the street who needs a multi-tasking, energetic worker. Then you are back to square one.

What can we do? Managers must do more coaching than bossing. These young employees are hungry for mentors and if they find it in the workplace, those mentors will elicit great loyalty. This requires supervisors to hone their interpersonal skills and be patient.

Make “getting the task accomplished” more important than “the time spent doing it.” Provide constant feedback. One manager suggested that he must be half diplomat and half shrink in order to connect with his young team.

Bottom line: Managers can get the most out of Generation iY if they explain the “why,” and share how it plays a part in the company’s larger goals.

Next up: the final three traits companies face employing Generation iY. For more information on leading Generation iY, visit www.generationiY.com.

Did you miss the first part of this series on “Men are from Mars, Women from Venus, but Gen iY is from Another System?” [You can find it here.](#)

About the Author:

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