Leading Future Employees

by Karen Bower

In the United States alone, the 2003 Census Bureau reported 73 million residents 18 years of age or younger (Barna, 2003). With these future employees graduating from high school in 2005 through 2010, how must supervisors with traditional business practices and expectations, communicate and relate to this latest talent pool, and what kind of work environment will attract, retain and motivate them to their full potential?

> *I want flexibility when it comes to 'who I am.' Out of respect to my*
> *company, I no longer dye my hair purple or expose my navel ring.*
> *However, discontent from older generations centers on tattoos,*
> *piercings, and very short hair on women..*
> > *-A 20-something employee*
>
> *They ask why about every assignment, want things now, and do not want to*
> *pay their dues. They are materialistic, have no respect for authority, and are more interested in*
> *things other than their jobs.*
> > *-The Manager of a 20-something employee*

Managing with Excellence

Consultant Claire Raines, in *Beyond Generation X: A Practical Guide for Managers,* states that managing with excellence is *mandatory* in today's highly competitive business environment (Crisp Publications, 1997). Organization design must include participatory structures such as work teams and menu-type benefits packages. Time-pressed, convenience-oriented employees warmly receive concierge services to plan a weekend getaway or to pick up a relative from the airport. In their book, G*enerations at Work,* Zemke, Raines and Filipczak warn that the culture of paying dues is obsolete. Those managers who believe young workers must experience what they themselves experienced, (nearly abusive behavior, seventy/eighty-hour workweeks and limited business involvement) will find *themselves* out of a job. Managers must:

1. Set clear expectations and long-term goals while simultaneously tying employee personal goals to job performance.
2. Delete traditional gender roles when related to job opportunities. As Susan Mitchell forecasts in *The Official Guide to the Generations,* gender roles will continue to "blur as men take on more household tasks and women...take on more traditional male tasks" (New Strategist, 1995).
3. Grow training departments to accommodate continued education and skill set development.
4. Establish mentorship programs, matching young workers to seasoned people with "whom they resonate" (AMA Publications, 2000).

Mentoring and Technology
In *Miracles of Mentoring: How to Encourage and Lead Future Generations,* author Thomas Dortch reports ten mentoring keys:

1. Mentoring builds relationship.
2. Be a role model.
3. Discuss right and wrong.
4. Project wholesome values.
5. Take satisfaction from mentoring.
6. Develop trust.
7. Tell your mentee that you care.
8. Discuss right behaviors for specific situations.
9. Help your mentee develop goals.
10. Listen to whatever your mentee wants to discuss (Broadway Books, 2001).

Likely, graduating teens and young adults will view these actions as routine. Further, e-mail connection works well for mentoring relationships and allows frequent and convenient communication from around the globe. Hewlett Packer director David Neils runs HP's International Telementor Center that serves thousands of students. He states that telementoring is a one of the best investments in the future.

Harvard researcher Sharon Parks in *Big Questions: Worthy Dreams*, explains the importance of mentoring upcoming generations. During the "twenty-something" years, most people make formative life decisions, for good and for ill. Finding one's place and purpose in a changing world asks new questions of meaning and faith. Further, young adults [and late teens] reexamine earlier beliefs and assumptions as they encounter new experiences with complex choices. "Too many wander through this challenging time alone, without the presence of mentoring voices" (Jossey-Bass, 2000, p. 3). Fewer than 10% of parents who regularly attend church with their kids read the Bible, pray or serve together (Barna, 2003, p. 78). Mentoring is critical.

Generational Differences
Despite adaptability of emerging workers, there will likely be clashes between generational differences in worldview, philosophy and values. Veteran leaders tend toward a directive style of by-the-book standard operating procedures they personally experienced in the 1950's workplace. Command-and-control leadership and executive decision making was simple, clear and evident, without "getting the masses involved." However, leadership theories changed in the 1960's with T-groups, theory X/Y, job satisfaction concerns and failed attempts at employee involvement. Core values for Baby-Boomers, born 1943-1960, include personal gratification, health and wellness and personal growth. Vietnam caused a huge gap between generations as leadership integrity via Watergate swept across the evening news. The Millenials, born 1981-2000, brought global thinking, diversity, techno-literacy, self-reliance and workplace informality. Double-income families created latchkey kids who grew up alone. Abandonment feelings shaped their psyches. The youngest generation experienced "9 -11" and media wars between capitalism, religious fundamentalism, suicide bombers and school shootings. In 1999, childcare agency, KidsPeace, found that 54% of all preteens fear they will contract AIDS and 45% worry they may be physically or sexually abused.

Conclusion
However challenged, this generation "will not get left behind" – they will work hard so that everyone can move forward into the future together. Researcher George Barna believes that excellence will come from experience and relationships. Managers who appreciate the changing workforce will be sure to provide these opportunities for growth – opportunities that will not only benefit employees and managers, but the organization as a whole**.**

About the Author

Karen Bower is CEO/Owner of KB Consulting and Coaching with over 19 years experience in leadership development, executive coaching, career management, process improvement and training. Prior to KB Consulting, Karen gained experience in several industries including aerospace, computer, power generation and wastewater management, call centers and finance.

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