

Explaining "Why" to Generation Y

Younger Workers Bring Unique Talents and Challenges

Demographic trends are shaping employment in Michigan, according to recent Labor Market Research that identified major forces that will drive the state's economy for years to come.

"We are leaving an era where labor markets were characterized by more workers looking for employment than there were available jobs to a period where, except during recessions, employers will have more jobs available than there are workers to fill them," said Lou Glazer, the president of Michigan Future Inc.

Glazer and Donald R. Grimes of the University of Michigan Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations co-authored the *Michigan Boom Years Report* that can be found on the Web at www.ilir.umich.edu. Despite widespread layoffs in the past two years, they noted that the pool of unemployed workers in the state is still considerably smaller than a decade ago. What's more, the greatest number of new workers in the next several years will come from the two slowest-growing age groups in Michigan: 16-to-24-year-olds and those 15 and younger.

When the economy starts to move, businesses will be challenged to find the young talent they'll need, from a demographic and geographic perspective, agreed Leah Reynolds, a consultant from Farmington Hills, who is working

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— CYNTHIA D'AMOUR, AUTHOR

in the workplace. "The majority of their senior people are older (Baby Boomers) but, increasingly (just in the last year) many of their customers and clients are Xers and (to a lesser extent) Yers," she said. "It is creating some frustration as they are seeing that their "normal" way of doing things just isn't flying with this new contingent."

Maria W. Grant, principal with Deloitte & Touche's Great Lakes Human Capital Practice, said talent management is the hottest issue right now, especially in health care. "The biggest issue for Gen X and Y employees is keeping themselves marketable," said Grant. "I've seen people who have quit jobs even in this economy if they didn't believe their companies were keeping up with technology."

"I believe this group of young workers (Gen Yers) will challenge Corporate USA to "rethink" itself . . . the way it organizes, communicates and shares both explicit (book knowledge), tacit (in the heads of people), and gained (through experience) information," Reynolds added. "The payoff will be greater productivity and increased innovation."

Similarly, an Ann Arbor author, Cynthia D'Amour, offers advice in several of her books to help organizations understand the "What's In It For Me?" attitude that she explains has become more preva-




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with a Michigan services firm to 'retool' itself and its services to be in line with the changing demographics

WHERE DO YOU FIT?


GENERATION	BIRTH YEARS	FAMOUS MEN	FAMOUS WOMEN
Silent	1925-1942	Colin Powell	Gloria Steinem
Boomer	1943-1960	Steven Spielberg	Oprah Winfrey
Generation X	1961-1981	Michael Jordan	Jodie Foster
Generation Y or Millennials	1982-2002?	Frankie Muniz	Mandy Moore

From *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation*, Neil Howe and William Strauss, New York: Vintage, 2000




SILENT OR VETERANS
(1925 to 1942)

- Dedicated
- Respect authority
- Accept sacrifice
- Patient
- Willing to delay reward
- Reluctant to "buck the system"
- Conformity
- Struggle with ambiguity & change




BOOMERS
(1943 to 1960)

- Personal growth
- Personal gratification
- Optimistic
- Health & wellness
- Driven; like to "win"
- Value affiliation & team building
- Judgmental of differing opinion
- Political



THE GEN X-ERS
(1961-1981)

- Think globally
- Diversity-minded
- Balance-oriented
- Technoliterate
- Adaptable
- Informal; value fun
- Self-reliant
- Pragmatic
- Cynical



THE GEN Y-ERS
(1982+)

- Optimistic
- Civic and global minded
- Technologically savvy
- Achievement-oriented
- Sociable; work with "friends"
- Moral
- Street smart
- Diverse

Leah Reynolds Associates

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lent due to the influence of Gen X and Y and "because people have a plethora of choices constantly dangled in front of them — especially with the decline of the 30-year job commitment."

Ironically, some of the changes in generational culture are due in part to business's influence in the educational system, observed D'Amour.

"Boomers grew up in an era of rote learning; they memo-

rized information for tests and were trained to do as they were told," D'Amour explained. "When Generation X came through the school system, businesses were demanding the schools teach more critical thinking skills. Students were taught to ask 'why,' to not necessarily accept things at face value, and to join in the solution process."

So managers had better get used to explaining "why" to Generation X and Y... ■

—BY CINDY ORLANDI