

# Generation Y: You don't pick them, they pick you

Their expectations are high. Experts say they're worth the trouble.

By **KIM SHEPHERD**  
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

We baby boomers have a tendency to think Generation Y workers (those born between 1977 and 1995) are fly-by-night, spoiled and hedonistic. But Fortune magazine's May 15 issue predicts Gen Y may be the "most high-performing workforce" ever. Isn't this a workforce that you would like to retain for your business's future success?

Hiring managers and small-business owners, who are predominantly baby boomers, need to rewire their thinking. A common reaction from our generation is, "Why do we need to adjust to them? They should be adjusting to us."



Kim Shepherd

We tend to look at younger people as being less qualified, less dedicated, and less everything - a bad thing. But flip it - it is actually a good thing.

Gen Y will bring new thinking into your company. Baby boomers are just now accepting work-life balance, green planet and technology. Gen Yers are already wired that way - they were born with it. They have been called the "My Pod Generation" for their penchant for social-networking sites and being surgically attached to their iPods.

Work-life balance is especially important for Gen Y. According to the 2007 Volunteer IMPACT survey by Deloitte & Touche, Gen Yers "prefer to work for companies that give them opportunities to contribute their talents to non-profit organizations." This generation expects to make a difference, and they want their employers to help them contribute as well.

So when managing or interviewing Generation Y workers, talk to them like a human being - "I know you have a choice - I know you have options. What would you like to know about me?" Take a proactive lead; this sets you apart from the competition.

And keep in mind when you are interviewing Generation Yers for jobs that they believe by choosing you, it is an honor. Welcome it. You don't give them the job; they accept the job.

Here are eight tips to hiring a Gen Y worker:

**Relationship recruiting.** Recruiting is still a people business. This generation expects interface, contact, respect, consideration and prompt response.

**Employment branding.** A quality employment brand should demonstrate its compelling employment value proposition and give candidates an opportunity to self-select based on the notion that their skill set, education and experience are the right fit for your organization.

**Offer.** The employment offer should be competitive and compelling. The offer should be about more than money. It should also be about their ability to have work-life balance and do meaningful work.

**Onboarding.** Make sure there is a program that extends beyond orientation and includes relevant training, multiple touch points, consistent communication and the opportunity to offer opinions about what could be improved.

**Mentoring.** Pairing candidates with someone who cares about their success but who is from a different generation



MICHELLE KUMATA, THE SEATTLE TIMES

or another segment of the business is a great way to bridge gaps and build understanding throughout the workplace.

**Feedback.** This generation expects feedback and validation often.

**Flexibility.** They want to be held accountable but also want to have flexibility in their lives, including work schedules, telecommuting, home-office arrangements and dress code.

**Career-pathing.** This is a free-agent generation. They are willing to pay their dues if they're learning and advancing, but they will not be held back. Don't be surprised if they are working for your competitor tomorrow.

With the eldest batch of baby boomers in retirement and the rest to follow shortly, the Generation Y worker is more important than ever. Just remember they are already outnumber us (only 78.5 million of us and 79.8 million of them), so embrace it and be like me - a 50-year-old Gen Yer!

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