

Generation Y in the Workforce: Managerial Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes a look at the next generation, Generation Y, as it enters the workforce. Nearly all Gen Y research to date focused on characteristics and features drawn from a population still in the midst of the educational system. This research specifically targets Gen Y'ers that have been in the workforce for a few years. Data collection incorporated current technologies such as the social networking website Facebook to invite age-appropriate respondents to participate in this study. Participants completed the survey instrument on-line using a link to Survey Monkey. The data analysis focuses on those workplace issues that act as motivators or de-motivators for this generation.

GENERATION Y IN THE WORKFORCE: MANAGERIAL CHALLENGES

Toward Understanding Gen Y. What defines a generation? Through the years a number of different things such as wars, discoveries, politics, beliefs, and popular culture have all helped shape and define generations. The characteristics attributed to an age-bound demographic are often reflections of the events occurring in the world around them. While agreement on a definition may be lacking, through a combination of thoughts and ideas, educators can agree on certain aspects of each generation. A generation can influence styles and trends in business, while learning from the mistakes and successes of the previous generations.

There have been numerous studies on Generation Y and the impact that they may have in the business world, yet the thoughts and experiences of this generation as they have entered the work force are scarce. Now that Gen Ys are entering the workforce, the impact of their presence can actually be studied. This study collected data from Gen Ys who are currently in the workforce. The conclusions drawn from this data include suggestions to help manage Generation Ys based upon the likes and dislikes this group has experienced in the work place. This information will be beneficial as managers strive to lead, motivate, and understand Gen Ys and which in turn should help minimize conflict and maximize individual and corporate success in the workplace.

Generations X and Y. To better understand Gen Y, we first look at the preceding age group, Generation X, to determine how the two generations differ from one another and how these differences affect the work atmosphere. Generation X is usually described as the generation following the baby boomers and born between 1961 and 1979. The term is based on a novel by Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991), a book about young adults trying to discover themselves in society. Terri Nagle (1999) describes Generation X as, "the most ignored, misunderstood, and disheartened generation that our country has seen in a long time." This generation grew up during the beginning of the technology era. Home computers and the internet became widely used by households

everywhere. The “MTV” generation began growing up in unstructured households, dealing with new issues of disease and trying to make it through the Cold War. Generation X learned how to avoid the mistakes of their parents and grow into a generation who values education, hard work, and the power of money. These characteristics are quite different than Generation Y.

Generation Y is widely known as the generation born between 1980 and 2000. This generation is confident, independent, and goal-oriented. Although, technology advances began in the Gen X era, Generation Y was born into technology and often knows more about the digital world than their teachers and parents. The enhanced technological knowledge has launched this generation into an era that is accessible everywhere to anyone. Gen Y has high self-esteem; they are the trophy generation that allows every child to get a medal or praise, leaving no one behind.

The values and beliefs of these two generations suggest different ideals in the workplace. Generation X believes, “work is a thing you do to have a life (work doesn’t define their life),” (Nagle, 1999). Gen Y on the other hand seems to want a work-life balance with flexibility to define who they are in their job. Generation Y presents a challenge to managers who must train and motivate this next generation of employees so that their strengths become a benefit to the company. Being able to understand new generations as they move into the work force will continue to be an adjustment for managers for years to come. To be successful in the future, it will be important for companies and managers to understand these new employees.

Data Collection. The purpose of this research is to better understand Gen Y now that they have entered the workforce. To this end we incorporated technologies we believe this demographic is comfortable using. The survey questionnaire was developed and administered online through a website dedicated strictly to the data collection process, SurveyMonkey.com. Demographic data included age, race, gender, education level, length of time at current job, number of employers since entering the work force, and salary range. Open ended questions were employed to solicit respondent work-related experiences. Each question allowed space for five responses. The two open-ended questions were: (1) “Which job characteristics do you feel have been the most important or motivating to you as an employee who has recently entered the work force? Please give detail if possible.” and (2) “Which characteristics do you feel have been negative or un-motivating? Please give detail.” It was important get each of their thoughts without giving them a predetermined list of answers. By gathering the data with these questions we were able to get a general understanding of Gen Y’s expectations, desires, likes, and dislikes.

To reach our target market, we incorporated another technological feature used by Generation Ys, the social networking sites Facebook and MySpace. These social networking sites link people through common interests and provide a medium to invite users to participate in our research. Operating on the belief that the friends of a working member of Gen Y will likely be other Gen Ys, we employed the “friends list” from three sources to initiate the invitation. We created an invitation to participate in our research and a link to the questionnaire at Surveymonkey.com. We also encouraged each participant to invite other Gen Ys by passing along our invitation.

Research Results. An accurate count of the number of invited participants was impossible to calculate. The three sources used to solicit participants were summed and rounded up to arrive at the estimate of 500 participants. We had no way of determining how many actual participants invited others and there was also a number of over-lapping of friends among the three sources. Tracking data indicate that 123 persons started the survey but only 85 submitted completed questionnaires, a 17% response rate. The demographics of the respondents were 64% female and 36% were male. The key variable of interest, the age of the participants, indicated 98.8% were between the ages 22 to 28. The other 1.2% was 19 years

old. This captures the portion of Generation Y that has been in the workforce the longest and has been able to form their own opinions from experiences. Race distribution was 89.4% Caucasian, 2.4% African-American, 2.4% Hispanic, and 5.9% other. Educational distribution showed 4.7% with High School diploma or GED equivalent, 70.6% with a college degree, and 24.7% with a Graduate degree. With regard to employment history, 27.1% had been on their current job between 1-2 years, 22.4% between 6 months to 1 year, 20.0% between 2-3 years, 20.1% more than 3 years and 10.6% less than 6 months. The number of different employers showed that 47.1% are with their initial employer, 24.7% are on their 2nd job, 12.9% are on their 3rd job, 7.1% are on their 4th job, and 8.2% have had five or more jobs. Salary distributions show that 19.0% earn less than \$30,000 per year, 52.3% earn \$30,000 - \$50,000 per year, and 28.6% earn more than \$50,000 per year.

The last two questions of the survey dealt with motivating/un-motivating factors at work. The questions were open-ended to give the participant the freedom to answer in his/her own words. The responses were categorized by commonality and resulted in seventeen classes as shown in figure 1.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Description</u>
atmosphere	work environment attitudes or culture
autonomy	freedom to make decisions
feedback	job-related communications
growth	opportunities to learn, training & development
interesting work	work-related issues that are task-oriented
leadership	issues relating to management style or effectiveness
location	geographical site
mobility	travel opportunities/obligations
policy	rules & regulations
promotion	opportunities to advance, career development
relationships	issues that target co-worker relationships
respect	feelings of being valued
responsibility	obligations to perform
salary	any issues regarding pay or benefits
schedule	work hour issues, flexibility of hours
stability	long-term career, continuity of work & earnings
support	help & encouragement from company, manager, or co-workers

Figure 1

The responses within each category were tallied and divided by the total number of respondents with the resulting measure reflecting the percentage of respondents commenting on each particular category. The process was repeated for each open-ended question. The percent of responses for each question were summed and then sorted from greatest to least. The results (shown in Table 1) created an array that can be interpreted to reflect the relative importance of each category among the respondent population.

Table 1

<u>Category</u>	<i>Motivating</i>		<i>Unmotivating</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
leadership	46	54%	39	46%	85	100%
salary	29	34%	56	66%	85	100%
interesting work	30	35%	37	44%	67	79%
atmosphere	31	36%	30	35%	61	72%

schedule	11	13%	25	29%	36	42%
relationships	15	18%	18	21%	33	39%
feedback	16	19%	16	19%	32	38%
growth	5	6%	18	21%	23	27%
promotion	7	8%	14	16%	21	25%
respect	11	13%	9	11%	20	24%
stability	13	15%	4	5%	17	20%
responsibility	5	6%	9	11%	14	16%
autonomy	0	0%	12	14%	12	14%
support	8	9%	3	4%	11	13%
policy	9	11%	0	0%	9	11%
mobility	2	2%	6	7%	8	9%
location	1	1%	5	6%	6	7%

The categories of “Leadership” and “Salary” were mentioned by each of the respondents. As such, these two factors may be considered the two most influential factors and may have the greatest impact on Gen Y employees. The “Leadership” category captured all responses relating to management style, supervisory practices, and supervisor/employee relationships. In the “leadership” category, 54% of the respondents asserted that leadership was a motivating component of their work environment. Statements reflecting these positive comments included: “fantastic mentors and supervisors,” “good boss,” “doesn’t micro-manage,” “easy to work with,” “enthusiastic,” “ethical,” and “admitting mistakes and not blaming others.”

The 46% of the respondents that characterized leadership as a negative work component used descriptors such as: “micro-manager,” “authoritarian ‘one-way or highway,” “bad boss,” “boss whose mood fluctuates,” “disorganized,” “very rude and demeaning,” “lack of honesty,” and “doesn’t practice what he preaches.”

The “salary” category is constructed of all issues regarding pay and benefits. Two-thirds of the respondents described salary as a positive and/or important work component. Many respondents simply wrote “pay” or “benefits” in response to the motivating factors question. Others used more explicit descriptions, some of which included: “decent and fair pay,” “affordable and full range of benefits,” “rewards for good performance,” and “small perks... tickets, memorabilia, etc.”

The one-third of the respondents who noted salary issues as negative work components commonly cited low pay and no benefits. Others used statements such as: “Salary freeze due to economy,” “no paid time off in the first year,” “working extra hours without compensation,” and “low pay compared to area wages”

Task-oriented work issues were grouped in the category labeled “Interesting Work.” These issues were noted by a total of 79% of the respondents, with 35% stating it as a positive influence and 44% reflecting it as a negative work component. Favorable responses were echoed in adjectives such as exciting, challenging, engaging, rewarding, and helping. Others described their work as fun, different, and giving them a sense of accomplishment and of making a difference. Those who responded unfavorably used adjectives such as boring, distracting, disliking, pointless, and lacking. They also noted work situations such as dealing with complaints, unhappy employees, monotony, overload, and busy work as contributing negative work influences.

The work environment, normative attitudes, and work culture were compiled in the category labeled “Atmosphere.” This category was alluded to by 72% of the respondents with 36% quoting favorable statements and 35% citing unfavorable experiences. Favorable response statements included

descriptors such as fun, positive, friendly, team-oriented, casual, and relaxed. These positive statements generally reflected a work environment where the employees were friendly toward one another and employees enjoyed coming to work. The negative responses included terms like apathy, hostile, fear, fraternization, laziness, negativity, and unprofessional to describe the work venue. These negative responses paint a dismal picture of the work environment, one which may aptly be described as dog-eat-dog and not a place you look forward to returning to each working day.

Work hours & schedules, co-worker relationships, and job-related communications comprise three categories that seem to have a moderate impact on the study respondents (see Table 1). Positive comments regarding scheduling typically used flexible, normal, and regular to denote apparent satisfaction with work schedules. Negative statements typically included an absence of lack of flexibility or regularity in work schedules. Positive relationship responses note friendly and helpful co-workers whereas negative relationship responses focus on rude, lazy, and unreliable co-workers. The positive acknowledgements of feedback reflect a general like for timely, specific, and encouraging recognition. Negative reflective statements of feedback typically denote an absence of communication, direction, praise and recognition.

The categories of growth, promotion, respect, and stability appear to have a mild influence on this respondent group. Positive reflections direct attention to opportunities for learning and advancement in a stable and respected position. The negative assertions denote a lack of training and development, a lack of advancement opportunities, lack of respect and very little job security.

The last six categories could be considered minor work factors that deal with job responsibility, decision-making freedom, work-related support mechanisms, rules & regulations, travel opportunities/obligations, and the geographical location of the place of employment. The typical gist of these categories follows a similar vein, positive statements reflect an adequate dose where the negative statements indicate an absence of, or too much, or an abuse of these work-related themes. The only exception to this is the “policy” category, in which the only references to rules and regulations were of a negative nature.

In summary of the categorized work-related reflections, each category appears to be opposite ends of a continuum, with positive assessments on one end and negative assessments on the other. The relative value of each category as a work motivator or work discourager is measured by the total number of responses within each category. Leadership and salary, along with interesting work and atmosphere appear to be hold the greatest influence in the work arena.

Applying What We Have Learned. Some aspects Generation Y are not much different from any other generation at their age: Desires for real world experience and eagerness to step into a job and begin living and working in “the real world.” As Gen Y enters the work force, they have higher expectations and radically different goals than Generation X. The main difference is that the education levels and experiences of Generation Y are unmatched by any other generation. More students are entering college after high school, completing their undergraduate degree, and in many cases moving forward with a Masters or Doctorate degree. The expectation levels of companies are also rising due to this, which is causing the structure of the workforce to change every day. For Gen X, they have gone through many changes as their younger partner, Gen Y, steps into the business community. Gen Y requires continuing education, responsibility, flexibility, and personal goals from their employer. A few ways for managers to motivate Generation Y workers is through management style, work relationships, work flexibility, and compensation. The next sections will focus on each of categories and attempt to give some insight on managing Gen Y in the workplace.

Management Style. In our survey of Generation Y employees, management style was among the top motivational characteristics that Gen Y was interested in from an employer. They wish to be treated on an individual basis and acknowledged, whether it is positive or negative. As one respondent stated, "Acknowledgement is important. You are less likely to be motivated to do well if you are not acknowledged, whether you do well or not."

A classic example of this is from the movie, *Office Space* (1999). The employees are all treated the same and when Peter Gibbons decides to change things in the office and do things his way. Instead of getting fired, he gets a promotion. Peter stepped out of the monotonous workforce and decided to create a motivating work environment. Another way for managers to increase the motivation on Gen Y workers is to challenge them at their daily tasks. Work can easily become boring and un-motivating to an employee who is constantly doing the same thing every day. To combat this, managers can assign different tasks to the employee; allow them to work on different projects and to keep an open mind to how the employee can bring new and motivating ideas to the company. As another study participant noted, "When an off the wall idea isn't immediately shot down, I am more encouraged!"

Gen Y employees are motivated when given the freedom to work as they please. These employees do not want a manager telling them what to do at every second, but they do desire regular feedback. They prefer a guiding hand to a micromanager. Employees want to know if they are doing the job well and if they're not, it is up to the manager to help train and motivate them to be the best they can. Gen Y needs to be motivated through constant reward and recognition. "Because of their short attention span, recognition and rewards must arrive quickly," (Nagle, 1999).

Employers must also understand that Gen Y is coming into the workforce with high expectations of their managers. They expect their managers to have all the answers and be as educated as themselves. Many of the respondents to our survey stressed how important it is for their managers to be on the cutting edge of efficiency. One respondent stressed frustration with his manager and the "refusal to implement time saving technological advances despite having the capability and infrastructure to do so." Gen Y expects their managers adapt with them and leave the "old school" practices behind. They believe they should be learning new practices and not having to teach them to their managers.

A very important role for managers is to create mentorships within the company. This allows the senior employees to reach out to the Gen Y employees and offer them advice and counseling in a new environment. This is a very successful way for Gen Y to learn about the values of the company, as well as gain insightful knowledge in an industry that is foreign to them. One of the respondents gave an example of this by stating: "Direction is important. You want to have a good mentor that will give you a sense of direction rather than having you aimlessly reaching." Gen Y is not a generation that can remain happy without seeing the significance of their work. Wandering "aimlessly" and never seeing the end results of their work leaves them frustrated and unmotivated. As one respondent stated, "Why work on something if you have no idea what the benefit will be from efforts." This is why communication is one of the most important aspects of dealing with Gen Y. If they feel their job has a sense of purpose, they stay motivated and open to direction and leadership from mentors. Employees who are open-minded are more apt to grow and develop in their industry. Ideas and knowledge can be transferred successfully through generations as long as everyone is open to new and old ideas and can find a way to build them into the daily office routine.

It is crucial for managers to understand that Gen Y craves continued education from their colleagues. They seek challenging tasks and have a desire to gain knowledge by working with the employees around them. Gen Ys are not afraid to join group discussions and will take the lead to create

resources that can help improve the transfer of knowledge within the company. One respondent highlighted a motivational factor in his workplace as, “The fact that I work with executive level individuals, and get a great amount of exposure to various aspects of the finance/business world.”

Gen Y grew up multi-tasking in multiple aspects of life. From school, to sports, to internet, they are able to complete tasks without hesitation. They crave goals that allow them to complete and job quickly and move on to the next. Every goal accomplished is a small step to a larger goal they have in life. Along with goals, upon entering the workforce, Gen Y is ready for responsibility. They don’t want to sit back and wait for a manager to give them a task; instead they look to how they can better themselves, by constantly asking for more work and completing the job well.

Work Environment. A company’s work environment has risen to the top of many lists as a reason for choosing a company to work for. It is important for different generations to understand realities of today’s working environment. In our survey among 85 Gen Y employees, 72% of them listed work environment as a motivational characteristic that they look are looking for in the workplace, as one respondent stated. “Camaraderie, friendship with co-workers, and being around people I enjoy is what keeps me coming back every day.” Generation Y is not looking for a company where they sit in a cubicle everyday from 8-5 and have no communication with fellow employees. Gen Y is looking for a place where they will be successful, while having a good time. Many companies have taken advantage of this by reaching out to Gen Y employees and making them feel comfortable in a working environment. They have multiple company paid happy hours, free trips to the movie theater, and summer half days every Friday. Not only do they get small perks in the office, but they hold large company outings that bring workers together. This could include a baseball game, lake days, and themed company parties. Who could imagine that for a holiday party, the theme would actually be the movie *Animal House* (1978), and togas were the preferred costume? This may seem unusual, but many companies are starting to realize that environments like this are just what this new generation is looking for. Managers are finding that small perks such as these are attributes that are needed to keep Gen Y employees fresh and motivated.

Work Flexibility. Flexibility in the workplace is also very important to Gen Y. They expect flexible summer hours, to be able to work from home, and paid time off if they were forced to work beyond their normal hours. This generation is one that is more open to working anywhere at any time compared to any generation we have seen before. Business travel has become a normal part of their lives with all the technological advances in the 21st century. They have no problem working away from home where previous generations have always hesitated. However, while they easily accept traveling and being away, they also expect to be compensated for it. If traveling on the weekends they expect to get compensated. As one respondent stated, “Nothing is more frustrating than working all weekend in another city, then having to return to the office on Monday morning. It wears you out and very un-motivating.”

Generation Y wants even more flexibility in the work/life balance, compared to Gen X. Gen Y craves their relationships with friends and family and “are more interested in making their jobs accommodate their family and personal lives,” (Spiro, 2006). Not only are they seeking a good work/life balance, but they enjoy company outings that benefit both the business and social side of work. Building on the lifestyle benefits, managers can reach out to Generation Y, understanding that with new technology work can be mobile. The office environment has changed and many people opt to work at home to maintain their work/life balance. Technology has been the key to making work/life balance more acceptable and easier to attain. Managers that allow their employees to think freely and work as they please, may get better results, than if they were to lay a firm hand on the employees.

COMPENSATIONS

Generation Y employees don't want to be stuck at one level for a long time. They want to learn how to grow within the company and to develop into a well-rounded individual, which is no different than their predecessors. The difference in Gen Y is that they not only expect to move up through a company quickly, they demand it. They prefer a job that recognizes performance and not tenure. One of our respondents says it is an un-motivating characteristic to have a job that requires "having to meet benchmarks before given a raise that have nothing to do with job performance (i.e. having to work for a company for 1 year)." Nearly 60% percent of Gen Y employees surveyed listed high salary, good benefits, and other compensation as a motivational characteristic of their job. They expect to receive medical insurance, paid holidays, ample paid vacation, and other perks from their employers. This explains the on-going trend of more companies now offering these benefits. Companies that don't offer these perks will have a hard time attracting these younger employees which could hurt them long term. Gen Y will also do whatever it takes to find these traits in a job, because they expect it. They have no problem moving on somewhere that will offer them what they want. Dedication to one company is fast becoming an idea of the past with Gen Y. This may explain why almost 30% of them have had at least 3 employers in their short careers. "Employees under the age of 29 expect their employers to provide more benefits and other perks than their older counterparts," (Balderrama, 2007). However, this "want it all" attitude doesn't mean they are not willing to work for it. Gen Y jumps at the chance of opportunity and will do whatever it takes to make self-improvements. Some managers actually criticize the Gen Y crowd because they feel the young employees demand too much at work.

Conflicts in the Workplace. Multiple generations in the office can often cause clashes among colleagues. For the first time, there are four generations in the workplace: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. Four generations, each with different traits, values, and goals creates a challenge for many managers that have to create unity in the workplace among such a broad age group. Understanding how to manage the different traits of each generation is the most important step for managers to create a positive working environment for every employee. There will probably always be problems as new generations enter the workforce. Each generation seems to have their own way of doing things, each thinking their way is the best. The most foreseeable problem that Gen Y will continue to encounter for the years to come is the technology differences.

In today's society, a company must continue to embrace new changes in technology. Emails, conference calls and Blackberry's, all have their place in the office, and without them, businesses would not run as efficiently as they do today. Gen Y prefers to email or call, instead of face to face meetings. Although, technology makes things simple, sometimes the best way to establish B2B relationships is through the old fashioned face to face meeting. Technology has created a large barrier between many of the workers in today's society. Baby boomers are on the slow end of a movement that is only becoming more useful and effective on the working environment. Generation X grew up with the beginnings of today's technology; the first lap top, Nintendo, Pong. The difference with Generation Y is that they were born into the technology era and the use of technology is an integrated part of their lives. "This digital generation has never experienced life without computers. In fact, many of them were booting up computers long before they were hopping on bikes," (Martin & Tulgan, 2001).

Generation Y has far surpassed their parents and teachers in the technology world, in fact, teachers often become students, when dealing with technology. Advancements in technology are coming quicker than ever before and Generation Y is already on the forefront of the advancements. Companies can create

environments where technology is welcomed. By teaching employees how to use the new advancements and keeping everyone involved with the changing digital environment, a company can make leaps and bounds ahead of a company that is running away from new technology. Generation Y will be the first generation to enter the workforce with a full knowledge and understanding of the technology around them.

Another difference that seems to be clashing more often in the workplace is work attire. Gen Y feels an overwhelming urge to feel comfortable at work. Today's society is a laid back society which translates into the look of the Gen Y employee. For a Gen Y employee, jeans and flip flops may be suitable to wear to work, but an older generation still believes that a suit and tie is the appropriate attire for the office. Many companies are dealing with this issue by offering casual Friday's, or making the dress code less restrictive.

Not all managers find clashes between Generation X and Y in the workplace, some have found that both generations actually work very well together. Generation X can appreciate the incoming Gen Y employees because it reminds them of who they once were. At one point, everyone started a job as a clueless professional, believing that they knew everything about the industry. Looking back, Generation X understands their mistakes and wants to help alleviate Y's stress by teaching them from the start how a company is run. Understanding the perspective of Gen Y entering the workforce is a key to a successful relationship between X and Y. Many Gen X employees appreciate the strengths and knowledge of Gen Y. Not only is Gen Y bringing in a great amount of technological knowledge, but they are ready to work hard and learn from the expertise of Generation X. If Generation Y is ready and willing to work, then Gen X sees no reason not to hire them. Gen Y is outgoing, confident and goal oriented and does not want anything to stop them from getting the perfect job. Generation X has a huge advantage to train Gen Y as they see fit which will allow the two generations to learn and grow on each other's knowledge and become a force to be reckoned with.

Getting Gen Y to Work for You. For many companies, understanding Generation Y is the first step to create an environment that is open to new ideas and where all employees, no matter their age, can enjoy the working environment. The first step is to understand how to recruit Gen Y employees that fit your company. "In a competitive recruiting environment, employers must understand and adapt to these trends to ensure that they are perceived as a desirable place to pursue a career," (Yeaton, 2008).

Trends that employees continue to see Gen Y seek out in a company are that it is goal oriented, values education, embraces multi-tasking and group work, and allows for a well rounded work/life balance. To combat the needs of Gen Y, managers can clearly define expectations, provide constant feedback, embrace the value of technology and consider flexible schedules.

Companies are in search of the best candidates for a position, but experiences can be just as important as education. Student in the Generation Y era have unprecedented amounts of opportunities before they even graduate. Internships have become critical for most students to gain experience during their college years. Major companies are adapting to this need by hiring college students for the summer, then allowing them to apply for a job upon graduation. Generation Y has raised the expectations and awareness of employers. Some companies prefer to hire, and then train the new employee according to the standards of the company. This is a useful tool for Generation Y because they are in constant need of new knowledge and training. A handful of college graduates are taking matters into their own hands and becoming entrepreneurs. By creating a business, Gen Y is giving themselves the opportunities that they have dreamed of: work/life balance, open-mindedness, continued education.

CONCLUSIONS

The information that we have gained from this study may just be a starting block, but we have learned some valuable information about Gen Y. Never has there been a generation like this one. Their potential is unmatched by any generation before them. We have learned that they are a generation that is motivated, educated, and have higher expectations than ever before. Technology is a second nature to them and their understanding of it will make them a valuable part of society. They are entering the workforce with ambition and they have the “whatever it takes” attitude that could potentially make them the most successful generation yet.

Even though we have learned much from our studies of Gen Y, we must keep in mind some of the limitations of our study. We sent the survey out to approximately 500 participants, but only received a 17 percent response rate. This left us with a somewhat smaller sample size than what we had hoped for. A key limitation was also the race demographic of the respondents, of which was almost 90 percent Caucasian. If we were able to obtain a larger sample of demographics it would be more encompassing and bring a higher accuracy to our results. Another limitation was the education level of the participants. Of the 85 that responded 98 percent of them had some form of higher education. We failed to capitalize on the opportunity to reach out to participants that have not received education beyond high school. This percentage of Gen Y could have different values and beliefs than the majority surveyed in this study.

There are many questions that still remain to be answered about Generation Y. They are still young and very new to the workforce. Hopefully the information that we have obtained can serve as building block for future studies. One thing is certain, this generation is now entering the workforce and others will have to find a way to work successfully with them. The focus of what Generation Y wants today may be different in 20 years, but for now they are bringing big changes into the working world.

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