



## Randy's Work *and You*

May Edition

Dear clients and colleagues,

We are well into Q2. There is some hiring with light at the end of the tunnel. Small businesses are gearing up (especially high tech).

In this issue, we examine the current rise of contingency staffing (just like the movie business). Also, a very well written article reviews the questions that simply cannot be asked in interviewing and filling out an application. And, in Boomer Corner, we read how the different generations really do have similar objectives.

Copies of all past E-zines are archived on my website. Feel free to pass this E-zine on.

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This month's topics:

1. **2010, The Rise of Contingent Staffing**
2. **Can They Ask That On An Application?**
3. **Boomer Corner: Different generations, same objectives**
4. **Success Story**
5. **Humor Department: Actual Performance Review Quotes**
6. **Words that Inspire:**

### 1. 2010, The Rise of Contingent Staffing

Companies are likely to make wider use of staffing methods similar to those practiced by the film industry. Indeed, in a recent study 73 percent of employers said they anticipate some level of increase in their contingent workforce by late 2010, with nearly 35 percent planning increases of 50 percent or more. Still reeling from massive and disruptive layoffs in the latest recession, companies are starting to rethink the way they get work done. This has brought a renewed focus on contingent workers, who can be quickly added or cut to meet demands. That's the conclusion of a recent report by labor law firm Littler Mendelson. It predicts that contingent labor could rise to as much as 30 to 50

percent of the entire U.S. workforce, triple the average of 13 percent that a Staffing Industry Analysts survey estimated it to be in 2008.

Garry Mathiason, vice chairman of Littler Mendelson in San Francisco, stated "The world is starting to change." In the future, he says, companies will likely make wider use of staffing methods similar to those practiced by the film industry. There, entire crews of contingent production workers are assembled for a movie, then disbanded once it is finished.

According to The American Staffing Association, which tracks trends among staffing companies that provide contingent and temporary workers to others, in the second quarter of 2009, the number of people placed by staffing firms fell by a third, dropping from about 3 million in 2007 to about 1.9 million.

That number has been rising since the end of June 2009 and was up by more than 8 percent by early September.

Source: Workforce Management "Special Report on Contingent Staffing? The Future of Contingent Staffing Could Be Like Something Out of a Movie?" (free membership available to access surveys and reports at [www.workforce.com](http://www.workforce.com) <<http://www.workforce.com>> )

## **2. They Can Ask That on an Application?**

Age Bias, Careers — By Bill Ryan

There are some questions that just shouldn't be asked in an interview. In fact, Human

Resource professionals know that legal complications can occur if questions that are

too probing crop up during that check-out-the-potential-employee event. Of course,

an employer wants to know who they are getting. Why should they hand the keys to

the castle to someone who is incompetent, a self-aggrandizer, or worse? The drive to

mine as deeply as possible into every aspect of the job candidate is intense when what is at stake is spending cherished company resources onboarding and training in

hopes a value added asset has been acquired.

However, there are rules as to how far an interviewer can go.

Specifically, interviewers should stay away from the following:

- Are you a U.S. citizen? (Of course, the employer can ask for proof of eligibility after the candidate has been hired.)
- What is your native language?
- Are you married?
- Do you have kids?
- How long have you lived here?

- What religion do you practice?
- Do you plan on becoming pregnant?
- How old are you?
- What clubs do you belong to?
- When do you plan to retire?
- Do you have a disability or chronic illness?

And this isn't the complete list of no-no questions. Clearly, privacy rights are being weighted in favor of the job candidate. Or are they?

Filled out a job application lately...especially for a professional position??

Questions asking the applicant's age, ethnicity, race, Social Security number, driver's license number, whether or not they have a disability or are just some of the intrusive inquiries made on this application. This begs the question, why can employers examine so closely a job seeker's past on an application, but not in an interview?

Here is part of the answer. Job applications become legal documents in that the applicant must sign that all information given is true. Notice that interviewees don't have to swear on a Bible. This is useful for screening out applicants with past criminal convictions or other unwanted behaviors. Companies can use the application to check for truthfulness and integrity, which protects their organization and the people who work there from disreputable people. Another issue is that employers are required to file U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports with the Federal government. Applications standardize the hiring process and can be used as documentation that shows employment discrimination is not occurring. This is much harder to prove in an interview.

Two additional points about the discrepancy between questioning on applications vs.

during interviews: Human Resource professionals should be the ones viewing completed applications, chock full as they are with private information. When a receptionist, for example, is the one handling the app, then that is evidence of a shoddy operation. And let's not assume that all applications are in perfect synch with EEOC guidelines. One Boston professor informs me that, "I have found many job applications with prohibited questions on them. If someone doesn't complain to the

EEOC then the practice will continue until someone does."

Job applications and interviews are governed by the same EEOC rules.

Unfortunately, it can't be safely assumed that all employers will follow those rules.

Like it or not, diligence and knowledge about what is appropriate and what is not is

yet another task falling to the already overburdened job seeker.

### **3. Boomer Corner: Different generations, same objectives**

#### **Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y all want the same things at work, a new study Says.**

*By Douglas Watt*

*\*This is an expanded version of a summary originally published in the March 2010*

*issue of CAmagazine.*

What do the generations in the workplace really think of each other? Increasingly, organizational leaders are becoming concerned with this very question. The age structure of today's workforce is changing, with baby boomers (aged 45-64) remaining in the workforce longer, Gen Xers (aged 30-44) taking on new roles and

responsibilities, and Gen Yers (aged 15-29) entering the workforce in rising numbers. At the same time, the move toward "flatter" organizational structures and more intense team-based collaboration has placed workers of all generations in closer interaction. If negative stereotypes prevail, the prospects for productivity damaging conflicts will increase.

The implications of intergenerational workplace conflict prompted The Conference

Board of Canada to investigate the similarities and differences among Baby Boom, Generation X, and Generation Y workers. Along with an extensive review of other studies, the board conducted its own survey of more than 900 Canadian workers (including at least 300 from each of the three generations). Respondents were asked what they thought about the workplace characteristics of their own and other generations (e.g., adaptability, manageability and loyalty), as well as the

respondents' own personal characteristics (e.g., personality, communication preferences and social interaction).

The research found some differences in how the generations see one another, many of which mirror popular—and often negative—generational stereotypes.

Yet

workers from all three generations share many preferences in the workplace. In short, many of the supposed differences between the boomer, Gen X, and Gen Y workers are based on perception, not reality. There is no one "type of worker" that

best describes any particular generation.

### **Generational differences: perceptions of other generations**

According to the Conference Boards' survey findings, there are several differences in the way generations regard themselves and each other.

*Adaptability.* All generations say their generation is adaptable, but Gen Xers and Gen Yers regard boomers as less adaptable than younger generations of workers.

In particular, Gen Xers and Gen Yers think boomers are less comfortable with technology, less open to change and less accepting of diversity.

*Manageability.* All generations feel that Gen Yers are more difficult to manage than other generations. Boomers and Gen Xers believe Gen Yers require more close supervision, are less likely to follow procedures and are less results-driven than other generations.

*Teamwork.* All generations see themselves as good team players, although there are some differences in how each generation perceives the work ethics of the others. While Gen Xers and Gen Yers view their generation as hard-working, some boomers and Gen Xers regard Gen Yers as less willing to give maximum effort.

*Balance.* All generations say they seek work-life balance. Gen Xers and Gen Yers feel they are slightly more likely to seek work-life balance than their boomer colleagues. As well, each generation perceives Gen Xers and Gen Yers to have a greater preference for informality in the workplace than boomers.

*Loyalty.* All generations see themselves as somewhat trusting in an organization, but boomers regard younger generations as less trusting than they are. Gen Xers and Gen Yers agree their generations are less likely to remain with an organization, but this tendency may be strongly influenced by their current, earlier Different generations, same objectives career stage.

### **Generational stereotypes: real consequences**

If left unchecked, such perceptions can lead to intergenerational misunderstandings, frustration and conflicts. Perceptions of boomers as inflexible, technological illiterates may leave them out of the loop in discussions of technological issues among younger workers. Similarly, the presumed lack of commitment and loyalty on the part of Gen Xers and Gen Yers can complicate the challenge of maintaining organizational cohesion and effectiveness.

### **Generational similarities: shared workplace preferences**

In spite of the stereotypes, respondents from each generation share similar

patterns of workplace preferences. The strongest similarities are in the areas of personality traits, workplace motivations and learning styles. Workers from all three generations are made up of roughly equal numbers of introverts and extroverts, those motivated by work and those motivated by personal goals, and those who like “hands-on” experiences versus those who prefer written instructions.

Individuals from the three generations prefer to communicate and interact in similar ways, although there are a key few differences. Boomers, for example, are less likely to find technology an acceptable medium of communication for dealing with difficult issues or workplace conflicts. They are also somewhat less likely to be interested in after-hours socializing with their workplace colleagues. In short, workers from all three generations desire many of the same things in the workplace, including respect, flexibility, fairness and the opportunity to do interesting and rewarding work.

**Implications: manage by principle, not by stereotype**

Maximizing the productivity and performance of a multigenerational workforce involves much more than knowing the profiles of the “typical” boomer, Gen Xer, and Gen Yer (e.g., age, presumed characteristics and preferences).

Today’s workforce is increasingly diverse—not only demographically, but also in lifestyles, cultures and circumstances. It should come as little surprise to employers that many workers do not “fit” within neat stereotypes based on large generational categories.

Generational perceptions, even if inaccurate, do influence organizational performance. Perceptions are an important dimension of workplace culture. How different groups of workers within an organization see one another—and themselves—can have a major impact on organizational effectiveness. Positive perceptions can promote workplace cohesion, teamwork, innovation and performance, just as negative views can hinder all of the above.

Employers, therefore, need to understand and manage the differences in perceptions across the generations, while also accommodating the cross generational similarities in workplace preferences. Employers can begin by fostering understanding and inclusion among the generations, and by providing flexible working arrangements that fit the differing needs of individual workers. By applying these principles of organizational effectiveness, employers can derive the full benefits of a multigenerational workforce.

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*Winning the Generation Wars: Making the Most of Generational Similarities and Differences in the Workforce* is published by The Conference Board of Canada, November 2009, and is available at [www.e-library.ca](http://www.e-library.ca).

#### **4. Success Story**

From Po Bronson's book "*What Should I Do With My Life?*" (Highly recommended)

Mike Jenzeh

He was a hustling real-estate broker in Silicon Valley in the early nineties when the market paused. He was your stereotypical pushy salesman. He couldn't close a deal to save his life. He always made it about him.

He simply stopped working and read book including religious one. He was particularly struck by a passage in Isaiah 58. In essence, it impressed him about not pointing fingers or blaming others.

He had a vague idea that a trip to might be good for him and he went to Costa Rica. He wondered what they manufactured. He met a craftsman of bags who wanted to sell his products in the United States. . He got a loan, bought some bags and started cold calling in the Bay Area. He met a woman who was doing a similar import business. She loaned him the money to buy a warehouse in Oakland and his business grew.

#### **5. Humor Department: Actual Performance Review Quotes**

"Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig."

"His men would follow him anywhere, but only out of morbid curiosity."

"I would not allow this employee to breed."

"This associate is really not so much of a has-been, but more of a definitely won't be."

"Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap."

"When she opens her mouth, it seems that this is only to change whichever foot was previously in there."

"He would be out of his depth in a parking lot puddle."

"This young lady has delusions of adequacy."

"He sets low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them."

"This employee should go far - and the sooner he starts, the better."

"This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot."

## 6. Words that Inspire:

*Old minds are like old horses; you must exercise them if you wish to keep them in working order.*

--- John Adams

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