

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
MANAGING THE GENERATION MIX 2007**
**An update on the generational workplace research conducted by
RainmakerThinking since 1993.**

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By Carolyn Martin PhD & Bruce Tugan

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INTRODUCTION Page 3

PART I: WHO'S IN YOUR GENERATION MIX TODAY? Pages 4-18

- THE SCHWARZKOPF GENERATION
- THE BABY BOOMERS
- GENERATION X
- GENERATION Y

PART II: TWENTY FOUR BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GEN MIX MANAGER Pages 19-22

- FOCUS: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WORK
- COMMUNICATE JUST-IN-TIME ALL THE TIME
- CUSTOMIZE! CUSTOMIZE! CUSTOMIZE!

PART III: TARGETING FOUR KEY OPPORTUNITIES Pages 23-29

- TURNING GRAY INTO GOLD
- HEADING OFF THE MID-LEVEL LEADERSHIP CRISIS
- MANAGING YOUR PARENTS' OR GRANDPARENTS' PEERS
- TEACHING TEENS TO SERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES Pages 30-31

INTRODUCTION

Since 1993, we at RainmakerThinking, Inc.® have been studying the impact of generational difference in the workplace through thousands of workplace interviews, hundreds of focus groups, polls, and questionnaires, and through hundreds of intensive seminars with hundreds of thousands of participants. Here we provide our end of the year update on MANAGING THE GENERATION MIX.

ESTIMATED U.S.A. CIVILIAN NONINSTITUTIONAL WORKFORCE BY GENERATION *END OF YEAR 2006 RainmakerThinking, Inc. Analysis*

	PERCENTAGE
TOTAL 150 million	
Generation Y (born 1978-1990)	22.5%
Generation X (1965-77)	29.5%
Baby Boomers (1946-64)	41.5%
Schwarzkopf Generation (born before 1946)	6.5%

Together, Generation X and Generation Y now make up a majority of the workforce and that majority will grow. While the percentage of Gen Xers in the workforce has remained constant since 2001 at 29.5%, Generation Y is, of course, the fastest growing segment. Over the next three years, between six and seven million more Gen Yers will join the workforce, not including immigration. By 2010, Generation Y will likely outnumber Generation X in the workplace. And, of course, by then, the next new "young generation" will be nipping at the heels of Generation Y.

In the United States alone, between eight and ten thousand Baby Boomers turn 60 every day. Even as aging Boomers remain dominant players in the workforce, millions have also left the workforce and millions more will leave, long before traditional retirement age. Many are redefining aging and retirement in ways that will challenge organizations for the next decade.

Again, in the United States alone, more than one million Americans, 75 years of age or older, are still active in the workforce. Millions more are between the ages of 65 and 74 and they collectively represent an incredible store of skill, knowledge, wisdom, institutional memory, relationships, and the last vestiges of the old fashioned work ethic. At the same time, as those in this cohort continue streaming out of the workforce, they will virtually disappear from the workplace by 2011. Right now, roughly two experienced workers will leave the workforce for every one inexperienced worker who enters.

By 2010 the number of prime age workers—the 35-45 year-olds from whom organizations draw the majority of their mid-level managers—will decrease by 10%. That will leave organizations with a shrinking pool of leadership candidates. Because of slow population growth between 1966 and 1985, there aren't enough Gen Xers and Gen Yers to take the place of the members of older generations who will retire during the next five years. Every skilled worker of every age will be needed in every successful enterprise.

PART I: WHO IS IN YOUR GENERATIONAL MIX TODAY?

THE SCHWARZKOPF GENERATION: "Take charge and do what's right!" (6.5% of the workforce, born before 1946)

Perceptions of the Schwarzkopf Generation

Most Schwarzkopfers see their strengths as loyalty, dependability, responsibility, altruism, and a strong work ethic. They are proud of their accomplishments and their commitment to their organizations. Other generations agree that they can count on these seasoned workers for everything from historical perspective to an important document. As one Xer said, "They're pack rats all right. I needed a 1995 memo and Marge had it on file. She knew just where it was just-in-time. I really appreciated that."

Other generations usually express a sense of gratitude to this generation, many of whom have dedicated 30-plus years to an organization. As one senior manager, listening to this conversation, said, "I'm sitting here trying to figure out how I can keep you from retiring! You are valuable to all of us."

Where is the Schwarzkopf Generation coming from?

Born too late to participate in the mettle-testing event of World War II and too early to become full-blown flower children, they found themselves stuck between "can do" Veterans and "I gotta be me" Boomers. Always one step out of sync with the times, Schwarzkopfers were young adults when it was hip to be teenagers. They were in their thirties when you couldn't trust anyone over thirty. They were in their forties when flower children proclaimed, "Make love, not war." Some experimented with free love—and found it wasn't so "free." (Divorce rates among their cohort began to soar in the 70s.) Some discovered mind-expanding drugs. ("[It was a time of] better living through chemistry," chuckles a sixty-something.) Most embraced the Ozzie-and-Harriet, Father-Knows-Best, conformist, homogenized world of the 50s.

Schwarzkopfers were awed by the sacrifices the "Greatest Generation" made to ensure a world "safe for democracy." They adopted their elders' values of loyalty, dedication, and commitment to command/control leadership within hierarchical organizations. With their outer-focused "we" attitude, they helped rebuild the American economy in the 50s and looked forward to the ultimate rewards: status as an all-American family owning its own home, lifetime employment in a solid organization, and a comfortable retirement. They had their own war—Korea.

Having started their working lives in the 1950s and 1960s, Schwarzkopfers built their careers during an era when the belief in job security made sense. Many followed the old-fashioned career path, making lots of short-term sacrifices in exchange for promised rewards that vested in the long-term. They embodied the loyalty, commitment, and "an honest day's work for an honest day's pay" ethic they inherited from the Veterans. And they thought others should, too.

Although they initially emulated their elders' "command-and-control" leadership style, many Schwarzkopfer managers eventually softened the more rigid model of "When I

say jump, you ask, 'How high?'" They were more likely to make room for participation in problem solving and decision making than their elders were, and many Schwarzkopfer workers wanted to participate.

Schwarzkopfers are also more patient with mediating conflicts through "processing" and gathering opinions than their "give me the bottom line fast" Gen X colleagues. This "process" versus "product" approach often causes conflict when, for example, they try to train Gen Xers and Yers.

"Guiding principles," standardized policies, procedures, templates. Years of experience have taught Schwarzkopfers to rely on those tried and true ways of doing things, and many would still agree, "If it's not broken, don't fix it." In fact, they still thrive on standard operating procedures, both written and verbal.

Paradoxically, despite their reputation as change resisters, many members of this generation became true change masters of the workforce. If they seemed skeptical about a new idea, it might be because they were remembering when it was a "new idea" thirty years ago... and then again twenty years ago... and then again ten years ago. Their institutional memory remains an invaluable compass to steer your organization, your team, and your career through today's minefield of constant change. While their "Been there, done that" attitude may initially rankle, remember this: To understand the new, you must study the old.

Today, Schwarzkopfers find it vaguely insulting, but mostly inconvenient, that their young colleagues won't happily do all the grunt work, be last in line for every perk, and make no demands. On the other hand, they know that today's young workers would be fools to pay their dues and climb the ladder the old-fashioned way. This realization makes most Schwarzkopfers feel a little sad, but not as sad as they feel as they watch their hard-earned pensions and healthcare benefits dwindle or disappear.

Some will be severely disappointed by—and outraged at— organizations to which they dedicated their lives. A T-shirt worn by a retired airlines employee proclaimed his generation's life-long expectation: "Pensions are promises that cannot be broken." However, for many Schwarzkopfers, what they thought was money in the bank has been reduced to a broken promise. Maybe that's what this generation means today when they say, "Loyalty is dead."

How to Manage Schwarzkopfers

Schwarzkopfers tell us two things stand out as most important in their working lives: the work itself and the people they work with. Their work must be satisfying in and of itself, make a contribution to the organization, and reflect their skills and expertise.

Schwarzkopfers will learn new skills to be more effective and valued in their present jobs. They want to keep contributing to the companies for which many of them have worked 25-plus years.

Don't allow them—or anyone on your team, for that matter—to "coast." Hold every Schwarzkopfer accountable for ambitious goals—as you would any other employee.

You need to be the manager who challenges the coasting culture by finding out what's underneath Schwarzkopfer's lethargy.

Convince this generation that the new standard in the twenty-first century workplace is customization. The one-size-fits-all paradigm of solutions and strategies that worked so well in the past is gone. Customization of everything, from products and services to working arrangements is in, and that requires more fluid, flexible policies and procedures as well as the willingness of everyone on the team to use his or her best judgment, day to day, moment to moment.

SPECIAL FOCAL POINT: Knowledge transfer

Engage them in a process of reviewing the procedures, policies, and guidelines that impact their work. Ask them to determine which remain valid today and which need updating. Ask your Schwarzkopfers to make a list of all the tasks and responsibilities they are charged with accomplishing and have direct experience with. Have them prioritize their tasks and responsibilities according to importance and frequency. Beginning with their top priority, ask them to create standard operating procedures for each task and responsibility. Tell them you are looking for clear, concise, step-by-step explanations for what they do and how they achieve the best results. Review each SOP to ensure that processes are up-to-date, given new technology and the latest policies and procedures.

Obviously, this process may take weeks or months to accomplish, but don't let that deter you or them. Make the case to Schwarzkopfers that they are significantly contributing to the department by updating and documenting work models both for training new hires and for ongoing learning opportunities for their teammates. And, of course, find ways to recognize and reward them for their contributions.

As one million Schwarzkopfers leave the workplace every year, the greatest legacy they can leave an organization is their experience, knowledge, and wisdom. They are bone fide knowledge workers and you can't afford to have them walk out the door with what they've learned during their tenure with your organization.

SPECIAL FOCUS: More knowledge transfer.

Create a "go-to" list of Schwarzkopfer experts younger workers can contact when they need immediate information on a customer, client, process, project, or procedure. This list will also give Schwarzkopfers recognition for their experience and knowledge.

Engage teams of Schwarzkopfers who do similar work in generating answers to the most frequently-asked questions they receive about the organization's products, services, or policies. Make these FAQs part of the training materials new hires receive.

Engage Schwarzkopfers who have experience handling difficult customers in role plays—or, at least, in creating real-life scripts others can dramatize—and video tape these conversations. These video clips become vignettes in your training library for teaching younger employees what to say and how to say it. One of the most valuable lessons older workers can share with younger workers is how to deal with all types of people respectfully and professionally.

Engage Schwarzkopfers in coaching new hires on how to get up to speed more quickly on skills acquired through years of experience, not textbook or classroom learning. Other areas for coaching may include intangibles like how to best navigate through red tape by finding the best allies in HR; how to determine which processes and procedures are non-negotiable and which are open to work-arounds; how to communicate more effectively with certain clients or coworkers.

Formalize job shadowing, cross training, and job sharing opportunities so younger workers can experience the work Schwarzkopfers do up-close and personal.

Engage interested Schwarzkopfers in becoming trainers of the skill sets they have mastered. Before they get up in front of a group, however, make sure they have the teaching skills they need to be successful. Find a master teacher who can offer "train the trainer" programs to get them up to speed.

Whatever routes you take to ensure knowledge transfer, set a precedent for recognizing, honoring and rewarding Schwarzkopfers for sharing their experience and wisdom. Then, make knowledge transfer part of how you do business with members of all generations as you go through the Generational Shift™.

BABY BOOMERS: Trendsetters to the end... or just getting started? (41.5%, born 1946-64)

Most researchers define the huge Baby Boom generation as those born between 1946 and 1964. However, everyday we meet people born after 1953 who tell us they can't identify with the "old rock and rollers" and feel like proverbial fish out of water. Their voices have become too loud for us to ignore. While all Baby Boomers share much in common—namely, a child-centered upbringing, a focus on individuality and youth, and a distrust of anyone in authority—there are enough differences between the first and second waves to make them distinct cohorts: older and younger.

Perceptions of older Boomers

When older Boomers start to reminisce about their "Turn on; tune in; drop out" days, Xers and Yers usually sit there drop-jawed. These older professionals suddenly seem to be wearing bell-bottoms and tie-dyed shirts, holding hands, and singing, "All we are saying is give peace a chance."

Proud of their social rebellion and open about the "hits" and "trips" they took in the 60s and 70s, they still proclaim, "We are cool!" As a fifty-something administrator in a police department said: "We made a positive change. We questioned assumptions. We liberated society for the arts, movies, women, and people of color."

Older Boomers also admit they're still competitive and self-centered, but have a strong commitment to the mission of their organizations. Now they add "family" to their list of values dating from youth: peace, love, and freedom. Many older Boomer work addicts have learned from their own adult children and younger colleagues that there's much more to life than work. And that some of the time, at least, work should be fun.

Interestingly, Older Boomers' perceptions of themselves are often at odds with those of other generations. These Boomers see themselves as creative mold-breakers who are willing to experiment; younger generations see them as stuck in the rut. They pride themselves on being great change leaders; others see them holding on to the status quo.

Boomers explain the "why" of when, where and how they have to hold the line (their institutional memory and years of experience give them credibility). Younger generations should try to understand the frustration these seasoned pros have experienced while trying to move often stodgy organizational cultures into the 21st century.

Where are older Boomers coming from?

Older Boomers: Raised by doting, outer-focused World War II Veteran parents, they became "The New Breed": a spoiled, self-indulgent, entitled "Now" generation demanding immediate gratification. In contrast to previous generations, they enjoyed a particularly child-focused upbringing and, in retrospect, they claim to have invented "youth culture."

The older Boomers were always in the right historical place at the right time. They were kids when it was cool to be a kid, teens when it was cool to be a teen. They were in their twenties when you couldn't trust anyone over thirty. By the time the oldest reached college in the mid-60s, they were ready to rebel against the safe, secure, "ticky-tacky," rule-bound world their traditional parents had created. Not content to live in black and white "Pleasantville," where the parental imperative was "Get a good job and settle down," many set out not merely to define their individuality, but to create a more open, free society. As a 50-something fire chief put it, "We did not rebel just because we could. We wanted something better—more real."

By the time they emerged from three major assassinations (those of Veteran John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Schwarzkopfers Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr.), the Summer of Love, Kent State, and Vietnam, these older boomers were becoming the "over-thirties" they said they'd never trust. They cut their hair, donned business suits, and slipped into the very Establishment they had railed against the decade before. With their dreams of a social revolution shattered, many channeled their energies into their work and a dual search for material goods and spirituality as a way to affirm their self-worth. For many, work became their identity, competition their driving force, and self-improvement a way of life.

Perceptions of young Boomers

This cohort breathes a collective sigh of relief when they hear that we don't place them in the Age of Aquarius. They've always felt disconnected from their older Boomer colleagues, but didn't know precisely what that meant. For the first time, they have the opportunity to define themselves, and they energetically seize it.

Like Older Boomers and Xers, Young Boomers claim to be a bridge between older and younger workforces. As one manager explained, "We bring both an

understanding of future goals and the experience of the past 25+ years to a developing workplace. We are a bridge between the soon-to-retire owners and operators and the still-inexperienced younger workers."

In contrast to Xers' strong suspicions about organizations, these Young Boomers see themselves as cautiously loyal and much more realistic about life and work than the idealistic Older Boomers. They're proud of their strong work ethic, dependability, commitment, knowledge, and experience. They claim they're rarely out sick; are not only willing to take on additional work, but actively seek it; and want to mentor others. They also see themselves as empathetic supervisors and coworkers who are dedicated to their jobs and take pride in doing them well.

Finally, they also realize that, unless they gain a voice for themselves distinct from their older siblings, no magazine will cover their sixtieth birthday in the year 2014.

Where are young Boomers coming from?

Younger members of the Boomer cohort are now trying to establish themselves as another "betweenner" generation. Too young to participate in more than the "feel" of Woodstock and the social rebellion of the 60s, they were nurtured on the high expectations of their hardworking Schwarzkopfer parents and their older Boomer siblings. What they reaped, instead, was the high disappointments of the 70s: Watergate, gas lines, the Iranian hostage crisis, the economy. They learned early on that, of course, you can't trust politicians; that, of course, ideals don't easily translate into action; that, of course, you have to struggle to realize your dreams; that, of course burning bras or violently protesting war doesn't get you what you want. In essence, harsh realities tempered any idealism their elders offered. But it also taught them that real change unfolds from the inside, not the outside.

As a forty-something educator explained, "Martin Luther King, Jr. became our hero and taught us that we could make things better, not by becoming 'boat shakers,' but by building a better boat. Many of us learned to make our voices heard through voting, through being 'politely political.' We have a sense of fairness, justice, and loyalty, but we're willing to be political if pushed."

Unlike the other generations surrounding them, however, Young Boomers never had a war of their own. They were too young for Vietnam and too old for Desert Storm.

Reflecting on their generation, a group of 40-something HR professionals concluded: "We think we should call our generation the 'Bridgers' or the 'Seekers'. We are the bridge between older and younger generations, and we are seeking ambitious goals and dreams as we strive for work/life balance."

Boomers at work

After their youthful rebellion, many older Boomers grew up and settled down in the early- to mid- 70s. Although Young Boomers were just graduating from high school or college at that time, both cohorts ultimately followed the same workplace path: They hitched their wagons to the star of an established organization and started paying their dues. Their bosses were real grown-ups who, like their parents, had standard operating

procedures for everything. Command-and-control leadership was the norm, and, while Boomers secretly mistrusted anyone in authority, they kept their heads down and worked hard. Most of the time, work was 'sink or swim,' so they had to figure out what to do and then do it. They didn't make demands. They waited for their bosses to notice their hard work and reward them in due course. They believed in job security and figured the system would take care of them through retirement.

But, then, just as they started to earn seniority and move into positions of authority, they were hit by the downsizing daze of the late 80s to early 90s. Shell-shocked Boomers watched organizational hierarchies flatten, hundreds of thousands of jobs disappear, and the lifetime employment bubble burst. While some were strongly entrenched in secure positions, others were forced into the job-hopping mode Xers would see as "business as usual." A record number of them flatly rejected corporate America once and for all and set out to create their own businesses. Others stayed on board, struggling to do more with less, and championed teamwork and consensus as the way to meet their goals. Still others were cut adrift and spent months, even years, trying to re-establish themselves in their careers.

Whatever their situation, Boomers, whose personal identity was often defined by their work ("I am what I do" was a Boomer anthem-), took a punch in the stomach of self-worth and self-esteem. Like Schwarzkopfers, they gradually realized that the loyalty they had given to their organizations was not reciprocal. Like Gen Xers, they finally "got it." A new HR director in a large Midwestern bank explained, "I understood what Gen X was all about when the company I worked with for 17 years let me go. I love my job right now, but I'm not sure I'll be retiring from it. I'm keeping my options open." By necessity, the most savvy Boomers became free agents whether they wanted to be or not.

In the early 2000s, we found some Boomers were understandably conflicted over the many changes in the workplace. The rules were changing, nifty Xers were making demands these seasoned pros would never have dreamed of making, and those pesky Gen Yers were just arriving, expecting big league jobs with little league experience.

In reaction, some dug in their heels, resisting the changes and defining work as something they had to do in order to survive. Priding themselves on their ability to survive "sink or swim" management, these loyal, cynical "dinosaurs" complained about bosses who spent too much time with young hires, and were angry about incentives and training opportunities they offered new staffers.

Many have realized that they needed to find ways to make themselves powerful in order to take care of themselves and their families. They started taking responsibility for their own careers, realizing that they were free agents whether they wanted to be or not.

Fewer and fewer Boomers of all ages today are willing to keep up the frenetic pace that made them ideal foot soldiers in the 70s and 80s. Young Boomers, in particular, have been lobbying for family-friendly workplaces and work/life balance initiatives for a decade.

How to Manage Boomers

Honor their historical memory. Boomers can put a contextual spin on why certain approaches, policies, procedures, or innovations just won't work. We've heard them remind younger generations that faster is not always better. Taking the time to think things through rather than being the first one out of the gate often provides a strategic advantage.

Honor their opinions, skills, knowledge, potential and contributions. Recognition has always been a Boomer imperative but, managed by old style leaders who thought a salary was all the recognition anyone ever needed or deserved, many infrequently received the most basic "thank you's" or "atta-boys."

Offer them the flexibility and authority to try new ideas, and support them if they fail. Tap into the Boomer entrepreneurial impulse. Having been in the trenches for years, they have perspectives that can lead to important innovations.

Listen to them, individually and as a team, and genuinely factor their ideas into your decision-making process. Understand that many Boomers are driven by conflicting impulses: The competition to get ahead of the pack and the desire to lead or participate on a productive team. You make have to help them decide if distinguishing themselves or doing what's best for the team is a priority. Perhaps, your best strategy will be to convince them that doing what's best for the team in the short-term is the best way to distinguish themselves in the long-term.

Become a coach who facilitates, not dictates, goals and who challenges them to grow. Remember, self-improvement is a major Boomer aspiration. Discuss new projects they'd like to explore, new skills they want to learn, and leadership opportunities they'd like to pursue. Keep challenging them and then challenge them some more. Challenge is high on Boomers' motivation list.

Offer coaching-style feedback, so they know what they're doing well and what they need to fix or improve upon. Offers guidelines for improvement with specific goals and deadlines.

GENERATION X "I have to keep my options open" (29.5%, born 1965-1977)

Perceptions of Gen X

Gen X has arrived. They proudly tell other generations about their strong work ethic, their ability to use technology to streamline processes, and their flexible, innovative, risk-taking spirits that make them valuable to their organizations. Like Older Boomers, they care about issues like the environment, crime, and social equality. Like Young Boomers, they demand work/life balance.

Older managers often want to know if Xers feel left out or overlooked now that now Gen Yers seem to be getting all the attention. These independent, ambitious "go getters" seem amused by the question; they've always been accustomed to taking

care of themselves. Now they are confident enough in their experience and contributions not to allow themselves to be overlooked. Not obsessed with climbing the corporate ladder, these free agents are as energetic, creative, and adaptable as ever as they make lifestyle choices that contribute to their wellness, happiness and health. Since they have a solid track record of valuable contributions to an organization, and they are seen as the next generation of leaders, Xers proclaim themselves change agents, bridging the values gap between older and younger generations.

Where is Generation X coming from?

A generation of latchkey kids, Xers were born during one of the most blatantly anti-child phases in U.S. history. Their Schwarzkopfer and Older Boomer parents had the highest divorce and abortion rates, highest number of dual-income families, and most permissive parenting habits in our history. Viewed as intrusive obstacles to their parents' self-exploration, Xers found themselves in a faltering economy that plunged them into the highest child-poverty rates—and, later in their lives, the lowest wage and homeownership rates—since the Great Depression. In fact, they were the first generation of Americans to be told that they would not be as well off financially as their parents.

Having grown up in the aftermath of their parents' social rebellion, many Xers never developed strong connections to the traditional institutions (churches, schools, corporations, political parties) that had anchored their parents' coming of age. As a result, they became wary of institutions and learned early on that the only real security in a scary world lay within their own resourcefulness. And, indeed, during their formative years, the world was a terrifying place, even without a major war. Milk-carton kids became their MIAs. The AIDS epidemic put the lid on sexuality. Headlines screamed not of terrors abroad, but of those lurking down the street: Son of Sam, sexual abuse at home and in daycare centers, police brutality.

The most unsupervised generation, Xers were left to take care of themselves and developed a fierce "I've got to fend for myself" attitude. They grew into independent, goal-oriented, entrepreneurial thinkers whose ease with information and technology became one of their most important survival skills.

In the late 80s, when Gen Xers first arrived in the workplace, things were already radically changing. With globalization and technology driving businesses into erratic markets and staffing practices, they quickly learned that job security was a relic from the past. When "lean and mean" employers told Schwarzkopfers and Boomers who had dedicated their lives to these enterprises, "Go take care of yourselves; we're not responsible for you," Xers took that message to heart. They understood from day one of their working lives that large institutions couldn't be trusted to make good on long-term promises. So, for short-term sacrifices, they demanded immediate gratification. They turned away from the traditional career path and its norms of success, acting like free agents. They began asking, "What's the deal around here today? What do you want from me today? What do I get in return today?"

At first, this free agency attitude was seen as a youthful aberration. Older managers assured one another, "They'll get over it soon and grow up." But then, the tech boom

took off and turned into the dot.com craze. All of a sudden, Xers were viewed as super-workers who could leap tall buildings in a single keystroke and create magical business models that needed neither products, services, nor customers.

By the late 1990s, when unemployment stood at record lows and the war for talent raged on, this cohort became the most sought-after workforce. Independent, techno-savvy, entrepreneurial, adaptable, results-oriented: Xers had all the characteristics that made them attractive to organizations fast-forwarding into a global, technological, fiercely competitive marketplace.

But the tables turned again. By April 2000, good business news turned into bad business news; September 11, 2001 exacerbated the downward economic spiral; and it was déjà vu all over again for Xers.

At this moment in history, many older business leaders and managers expected the free agency trend to disappear, especially since those pesky Gen Xers were growing up and needed work. "They have more adult responsibilities now; surely Xers must be seeking more security," these sage leaders assured one another.

And, of course, Gen Xers were seeking security, but that security was still found where Xers always knew it must reside: in themselves, in their own self-building career security. In fact, the free agency mindset didn't disappear in the bad news years; it went mainstream. As we pointed out earlier, as the 2000s began to unfold, members of all generations learned that they must be true free agents in the great tradition of self-reliance, not because they wanted to, but because they had to. They had to take care of themselves and their families. Organizations weren't going to do it for them.

Today, Gen Xers are no longer the new kids on the block. More than 22% of the workforce is younger than the youngest 29-year old Xer. Meanwhile, the oldest Xers reached a milestone in 2005: They turned forty. Xers may be frustrated by the newest upstarts, Generation Y, but they are now the "adults" who become wistful when thinking about their own youthful rebellion.

Coming of age during the mythic new economy, Xers are the first generation to reach mature adulthood in the real new economy of highly interconnected, rapidly changing, fiercely competitive, knowledge-driven global markets. They are having the peculiar experience of watching their youthful indiscretions prove correct and become mainstream. It was not their idealistic belief in magical business models and foosball tables in the teaming space that proved precocious. Rather, it was their cynical mistrust of institutions and resolve to fend for themselves that was so prescient.

Xers today are still understandably cautious as they navigate the unpredictable world of work. They expect little from established institutions, but now they know how to squeeze out learning opportunities, relationship opportunities, creative challenges, financial rewards, and work-life balance by selling their time, energy, and creativity. In essence, they remain the consummate free agents who continue to test organizational waters: "Are my talents being used? Am I learning new skills I can leverage wherever I go? Am I being recognized and rewarded for my contributions today, not five years

from now? Do I receive the feedback today that I need to stay on track and improve?"

Xers realize that what you know is less important than how quickly you learn new things and put them into action. Xers still don't care for "the way we do things around here," and continue to push their innovative spirit and entrepreneurial ideas. In fact, they remain great entrepreneurs and will start businesses like wildfire in the next ten years. They perceive themselves as hardworking, open-minded and independent. They want to be productive at work, working smarter not harder, and have fun in the process.

However, true to their youthful impulses, Xers will sidestep rules and procedures that slow them down as they push for results. They're willing to take risks and innovate—even when it drives their older bosses crazy. Given that Xers comprise the majority of untapped bench strength for mid-level leadership talent, managers will need to learn how to harness their innovative spirit and create customized career paths to keep this talented cohort engaged for years to come.

How to Manage Generation X

Extend opportunities to amass marketable skills and experience that would make them valuable contributors to any workplace. Tune in to their obsession with training.

Draw the best Xers closer to your core group by offering them career development opportunities. Give them opportunities to learn transferable skills, knowledge and wisdom that is broadly applicable from task to task, responsibility to responsibility, role to role, and are unlikely to become obsolete any time soon. Since Generation Xers make up the plurality of prime age workers today, they are ready for development opportunities that will advance their careers, whether it's on a technical track, a management track, or any number of professional expertise tracks you have to offer. Offering high producing Xers opportunities to advance their careers in ways that make sense to them is a key retention strategy.

If you can offer flexible work arrangements ---including schedules, assignments, locations, coworkers---you can hook Xers into a long-term employment relationship. But you have to offer clear quid pro quos for every custom work arrangement. Let Xers know they have control: If they meet their clearly spelled out obligations, they can have the flexibility they demand. But it has to be earned every step of the way.

Provide access to coaching-style managers and wise mentors. Xers place a high value on opportunities to build lasting relationships with those in the workplace who have grown wise through experience.

Provide access to decision makers. Not only do Xers want to participate in decision-making like Schwarzkopfers and Boomers, they want access to the people making those decisions.

Let them earn larger spheres of responsibility. Responsibility is the proving ground that you trust them, have confidence in them, and recognize their growth and

development. In fact, for these cohorts, increasing responsibility is what makes them feel empowered.

Understand that Xers are the perfect lateral recruiting pool and will become mid-career job switchers as they seek increased status, authority, prestige, and rewards. Many Xers would gladly by-pass more time-intensive vertical moves if they were offered the option to continue amassing marketable skills and experience with a lateral opportunity. What this demands is nothing less than a re-definition of traditional career paths that required climbing the ladder in a logical, sequential manner. These look neat and tidy on paper, but they're simply not the reality in many organizations.

Let Xers eat what they kill. Grown-up Gen Xers now have to support families as well as themselves. Not wanting to appear crassly materialistic, many Gen Xers with adult responsibilities tell us that money is important to them.

Gen Xers are focused on keeping their options open, focusing on the short-term, and asking all the time, "What's the deal around here today?" Managers who can help Xers define and achieve success on their own terms within their organizations will have access to the best talent of a generation who is already becoming our next generation of leaders.

GENERATION Y High maintenance equals high performance. (22.5%, born 1978-1990)

Perceptions of Gen Y

Since they are the new kids on the block and, in most cases, haven't had the opportunity to engage in this kind of open exchange with their colleagues, Gen Yers usually get the most attention. Older generations are frequently interested in knowing three things about them: How do they want to be managed, why they feel so entitled, and what do they mean when they say they want respect.

The Yers we've met have been very vocal in their responses—in fact, they're often the most outspoken of all the generations in the room. They tell their older colleagues they're constantly looking for "work-arounds" and often don't know the background history that makes current policies and procedures necessary. Without that knowledge, their perception is limited to: "These older people are entrenched in old ways of doing things. They don't want to change."

Older managers learn that they can't take for granted that Yers know the historical context of any thing, or that this young cohort will do as they're told without knowing "Why?" Rather than being insulted by Yers' "push-backs," managers realize they can use those challenges as an opportunity to one, re-examine "the way we do things around here" to make updates; and, two, to tap the energy and innovative spirit of young workers who may have some fresh approaches to old processes.

Conversely, Yers tell their older colleagues they need to learn patience and persistence. They're often not aware that "don't just do something; stand there" may

be the best strategy when answers to problems aren't clear. As older managers assure Yers, "Faster is not always better or smarter."

Where is Generation Y coming from?

Coming of age during the most expansive economy in the twentieth century, Gen Yers are the children of Baby Boomers and the optimistic, upbeat younger siblings of Gen Xers. The first true cohort of "Global Citizens," they have been told by parents, teachers, and counselors that they can make a difference in the world, and they have already started to prove it. The most socially conscious generation since the Sixties, Yers are out in record numbers working for social causes from the environment to poverty, from local community programs to breast cancer research. Local newspapers in 2005 were filled with stories about students collecting food, clothing, and money for tsunami and hurricane victims just as they did in the aftermath of 9/11.

Combine this "giving back" impulse with Yers' facility with technology, and you have a generation on fast-forward with self-esteem. When middle and high school students collaborate with teachers on how to use technology in the curriculum (thus shaping how and what they learn), when they easily create websites and blogs to share information and make their voices heard, when they gain instant access to people and information around the world, it all adds up to a sense of empowerment that still baffles less techno-savvy adults.

Like Xers, Yers have also grown up in a scary world. Even before the events of 9/11, terrorism had already become a national phenomenon in the 90s with the Oklahoma City, World Trade Center, and Atlanta Summer Olympics bombings. School shootings in suburban and rural America exacerbated the fears that urban Xers had always carried to class with them. Designer drugs, violence-packed video games, sexually-charged advertising, TV, music, and movies bombarded their everyday lives and still do. However, while the media would have you believe these young adults are hopelessly derelict, the evidence points quite clearly to the contrary. Teen arrests, pregnancies, abortions, and drunk-driving accidents are actually down. Overall, Gen Yers are doing much better than most adults realize or admit.

Influenced by education-minded Boomer parents, Gen Yers believe that education is the key to their success, and they're poised to be lifelong learners. Fueled by their facility with technology—a facility that makes even Xer skills look elementary—this "Digital Generation" is ready to learn anywhere, anytime. Add to that learning impulse Yers' ability to be great team players.

The oldest Gen Yers entered the workplace full time at the outer edge of the boom years and expected to meet three ambitious goals: find meaningful jobs within their professions of choice; work side by side with knowledgeable, dedicated coworkers; and earn very high salaries by the time they were 30.

Then came April 2000 and 9/11. Yers' dreams were not demolished, but certainly dampened by economic and global realities. Even those college graduates with solid job offers in 2001 saw those offers rescinded or put on hold. Yers suddenly found themselves facing what their Xer siblings did in the late 80s and early 90s: a tight job

market or no job market at all. Many followed the path Xers trekked a decade before: Some stayed in school to ride the economy out. Some moved back home with mom and dad to re-group. Some took lower paying jobs outside their field to pay bills and gain experience. Now, as the economy gains momentum, college campuses reported a 20% increase in on-campus recruiting in 2005 after a 5% increase in 2004. Things are looking up for Gen Y talent.

Yers are independent, entrepreneurial thinkers who relish responsibility, demand immediate feedback, and expect a sense of accomplishment hourly. They thrive on challenging work and creative expression and love freedom and flexibility. They're more than willing to tell you how to fix your team, department, and organization even before they're gone through your orientation program. And they'll do that with "attitude."

Yers are searching for organizations that have an obsession with training and development. According to Gen Y, "job security" means, "I'll learn all I can here and, as soon as opportunities to keep on learning disappear, I'll look for a better position with another organization. Of course, I'll negotiate the best deals for my expanded skills, experiences, and knowledge."

Everyday we meet Yers who tell us, "I would have loved to stay with this company for more than a year or two, but they just didn't have anything left to offer me."

Yers are also looking for employers who are not merely socially conscious, but socially responsible; that means, organizations who respect the environment, care about their employees, create meaningful products or services, and give back to the local community. In fact, we've met Yers who tell us they are accepting lower salaries to join organizations that have a solid track record for service.

Finally, this "nowest" of generations demands the immediate gratification of making an immediate impact by doing meaningful work immediately. In 2005, the media covered stories of college grads who rejected high-prestige positions to work on good causes. This trend has recruiters in high-profile companies pulling their hair out. Just when they're ready to hire new grads again, talented Yers are looking elsewhere for opportunities to contribute to important societal issues of the day.

How to Manage Generation Y

Take the time to get to know each one and his or her capabilities. Listen to them. Ask them about their dreams and aspirations. Show them you genuinely care about their success in your organization as well as care about them as persons.

Establish coaching relationships. Yers want managers who are teachers who can help them grow and improve. Since they're the "education is cool" generation, position yourself as a dynamic source of their learning. Provide the resources, tools, and learning goals they need to progress "just-in-time." Gen Yers learn best, as most people do, when they know they immediately need the knowledge or skill to succeed.

Treat Yers like value adders from day one, not as interns or “know-nothing kids.” They can’t stand condescending managers who are not approachable when they need their questions answered. They want to feel like a colleague or associate, not a subordinate. Treating them respectfully, as you ask for respect in return, is key to a great relationship.

Be flexible enough to customize schedules and work assignments. Since some Yers are still in school, they appreciate a manager’s attempts to balance work requirements with their other commitments. They also want to work faster and better than anyone else, so you need to coach them closely by identifying goals, deadlines and guidelines so your expectations are crystal clear. Position the best schedules and assignments as rewards for high performance.

Consistently provide constructive feedback. Don’t wait for performance evaluations to tell Yers what they’re doing right or wrong. Do it daily. Tell them what they’re doing well today; tell them how to improve today. That’s what the best coaches do: They observe and give immediate feedback. Avoid harping on the negative, make it a habit to accentuate the positive, and, most importantly, get them moving ahead on the right track immediately.

Tie rewards and incentives to one thing only: performance. And make sure to deliver praise, recognition, and rewards in close proximity to the contribution.

Facilitate helping Yers meet their high expectations of their coworkers. Create a database of “Go to” people that Yers can easily access when they need answers to questions, strategies for handling a project, just-in-time support and encouragement. Position every person on your team as a teacher who has something valuable to offer young people. Tap their talents and recognize and reward their efforts in getting Yers up to speed faster and more easily.

Facilitate helping Yers meet their high expectations of themselves. They want to make meaningful contributions immediately. This is an admirable goal, and it may take some investment of your time to teach them how to get there.

Teach basic self-management skills. Teach them how to break larger goals down into small benchmarks with intermediate deadlines. Teach basic time management, prioritizing, and planning as well as “work ethic” and “ethics” in general, and of course customer service skills.

PART II: TWENTY FOUR BEST PRACTICES FOR THE GEN MIX MANAGER

FOCUS: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WORK

Remember, Schwarzkopfers claim that work motivates them when it's satisfying; Boomers derive their identity from it and want to be respected for it; Xers find their security in amassing skills from it; Yers want to make a difference through it. And, every generation today is trying to balance it with their personal lives.

Your job as a Gen Mix manager is twofold: 1). To ensure that everyone understands that "the work" is what unites them and that collaborating to get lots of great work done every day is why they're here; 2) To help everyone understand that talented people of every age are unwilling to contribute their creativity to directionless organizations or teams where they produce less value and receive less credit.

Best Practice #1: Light the "fire in the belly": Focus on the meaning and purpose of the work you ask them to do everyday. What is the mission of the organization and where does each person fit?

Best Practice #2: Define your team/project mission: Each team, each project, each committee also has its own mission. How does the team's mission contribute to the larger organization's mission?

Best Practice #3: Clarify the team's work: Once the team has defined its mission, the focus turns to the work. The team must now clarify for itself its own goals, tasks, deadlines, and guidelines.

Best Practice #4: Define each team member's mission: Once you know who's remaining on your team, clarify each member's personal mission: his or her role or function on the team. Few things destroy a team faster than a manager not helping players define their roles or players not understanding those roles.

Best Practice #5: Maximize everyone's uniqueness NOW! Leverage as much of the knowledge and skill each person brings to work every day. Do an inventory by asking team members to respond to the following prompts: a. Here's what I have to offer the team in terms of experience, talents, skills, knowledge... b. Here's one area I want to improve on during the next quarter... c. I'd like support in terms of coaching, training, mentoring on this area...

Best Practice #6: Create learn/teach plans: Making teaching/learning part of every person's work. Everyone becomes a learner as well as a teacher. Ask team members to share three to five things they want to learn and to teach over the next three months. Then support a matching of learners and teachers accordingly.

Best Practice #7: Get beyond job descriptions: Facilitate a discussion based on these three questions: What work would you love to spend more time doing? Less time doing? Which of your talents are presently untapped and would benefit the team?

Which tasks and responsibilities that you're currently not accountable for would maximize your strengths? What opportunities are there to give people more of the work they love and less of the work they don't?

COMMUNICATE JUST-IN-TIME, ALL THE TIME

Best Practice #8: Seize informal time-out times: Somehow informality facilitates significant sharing. These are opportunities to get out of the office to talk. Be as creative as you can in discovering venues and times that make each person feel comfortable with you.

Best Practice #9: Establish formal time-out times to focus on "the work": No what matter what generations you're managing, it's imperative to schedule one-on-one, work-related sessions with each team member on a consistent basis.

Best Practice #10: Begin retention planning on day one of employment: As part of your orientation program, talk with each new hire about his or her career planning, the various roles they might play in your organization over time, and what you might have to offer them at each stage of their career. Build this topic into your one-on-one meetings at least quarterly so you can address these issues in a timely way. For your current staffers, introduce retention planning during your next one-on-one meeting and let them know you want to ensure you're doing everything you can to facilitate their career development.

Best Practice #11: Circulate everyone's to-do lists and accomplishments: Ask team members to make to-do lists outlining their team commitments, and to email them to everyone working on a specific assignment or project. This can be done on a daily or weekly basis. The message is "This is what I'm working on today/this week. These are the deadlines and results to which I'm committing."

Best Practice #12: Re-think email as your communication tool of choice: Guidelines, for example: When is email the appropriate communication vehicle of choice? When is it not? If email is used, what are the guidelines for editing content for clarity? What are acceptable turn-around times for email? When are phone contacts (not merely voice messaging), face-to-face conversations, or instant messaging better choices? What about other new social media tools to replace some email?

Best Practice #13: Encourage members to ask for help: Make sure members know that whenever they, as individuals, find themselves stuck, off track, or out of focus, they should immediately ask for help. While some older workers who grew up with "sink or swim" managers may still regard asking for help as a show of weakness, it is the most intelligent approach to getting things done today. You'll find that Gen Yers will ask for help instinctively. While they want to appear independent—and they are to a great degree—they'll also want to know who's available to support them.

Best Practice #14: Create an experts database: Facilitate your team's just-in-time access to "the best in the business" by creating an experts database. Include names, contact information, areas of expertise, and experience (including projects successfully completed, innovations introduced or implemented, and customers served). In addition to acting as a valuable networking resource, this database advertises the accomplishments of the key contributors in your organization.

Best Practice #15: Create a shared-notes system: Each person with access keeps documentation on the salient points of communication with whoever is in the database---vendors, customers, other workers---including telephone conversations, email, and snail mail. This information is consistently shared with appropriate team members so everyone is up to speed. Consequently, any member can step in at a moment's notice, fully prepared to continue business without customers having to repeat information or explain previous agreements. Staffers feel prepared and professional; customers are impressed with the just-in-time service they receive.

Best Practice #16: Hit the ground running with action-packed meetings: Meet only when you have a compelling reason to pull people away from their work and can justify the cost of their hourly rate. Ensure that the meeting's purpose is clear to everyone by defining that purpose in your pre-meeting announcement and again at the start of the session itself. Assign "homework" beforehand. Determine beforehand who really needs to attend a particular session. Each person should walk away with a clear picture of what was left at the discussion level and what actions, accountabilities, and deadlines were agreed upon. End each meeting with a quick evaluation.

Best Practice #17: Evaluate the effectiveness of individual team members: Determine how well each team member is doing right now in light of your standards for successful team playership. Keep the standards in the forefront of everyone's mind by periodically asking members to do a self-evaluation. Use their responses as a topic in your next one-on-one meeting. Recognize successes and set up coaching opportunities for improvement.

Best Practice #18: Help teams create conflict-resolution guidelines: Since it's counterproductive to have staffers run to you over run-ins with others, help them establish guidelines to get themselves back on track quickly. What principles and guidelines will they follow so conflicts are resolved quickly and respectfully? Dedicate a team meeting to letting the team create their own conflict-resolution guidelines.

Best Practice #19: Call an innovation summit quarterly or biannually
This is an enjoyable, high-energy, high-visibility event that sparks creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. The purpose is to focus on one pressing issue (e.g., staffing, scheduling, benefits) or one area of the organization (e.g., marketing, operations, IT, HR) that needs immediate attention. Work together to identify actionable realistic actions that can be taken by each person.

Best Practice #20: Create an environment that encourages courtesy, kindness, and respect: Call people by their formal name when meeting them for the first time, unless you are introduced to them by their first name. Introduce all individuals---no matter who

they are—whenever they join your business or social circle. Be the first to offer a handshake. Say “please” and “thank you.” Ask others if you can get them something while you’re up or while you’re out. Pick up after yourself so others don’t have to. Keep gossip or hurtful information to yourself. Ask before you take someone’s time.

CUSTOMIZE! CUSTOMIZE! CUSTOMIZE!

Best Practice #21: Build a big stack of “bargaining chips”: What are all the financial and non-financial bargaining chips at our disposal right now to drive high performance? Are any hidden in the system that allies in HR or senior management can help us uncover?

Best Practice #22 Let everyone know what's on the table: Level the playing field for incentives, first of all, by ensuring each team member knows exactly what's expected of him or her to keep their jobs, their salary, and their benefits. Secondly, let them know how and when you'll expect them to meet more ambitious goals and, consequently, earn a more flexible schedule, a spot bonus, a choice assignment—whatever it is that engages them. Then work hard to keep this process is transparent.

Best Practice #23: Offer incentives that have “Three-F Appeal”: During our work with various industries, we have found that incentives and rewards based on the three F's—family, fun, and flexibility—are among the most popular of bargaining chips. Of these, flexibility is far and away the most important.

Best Practice #24: Set up career development accounts: Customize training to meet the needs of your age-diverse team. Along with your training department, you have to decide which modes fit which individuals and which content is appropriate for which learning vehicle.

PART III: TARGETING FOUR KEY OPPORTUNITIES

OPPORTUNITY 1: TURNING GRAY INTO GOLD

Some researchers predict that by 2010 the United States will face a labor shortage with 10 million more jobs than available workers to fill them. While the real extent of this shortage is still being debated, the fact remains you and your organization must not only create knowledge transfer programs immediately, but you must retain the experience and maturity of your older workers for as long as possible. We already know as of 2006, that two experienced workers are now leaving the workplace for every one inexperienced worker who arrives. Too many organizations haven't "gotten" the ramifications of that fact and are merely stumbling through this Generational Shift™, rather than taking decisive action. On one hand, they report that retaining skilled labor is one of their major priorities; on the other, they fail to recognize that successfully doing so requires addressing the needs of an aging workforce.

As the workforce continues to age—by 2010 almost one in three workers will be at least 50-- and knowledge and experience increasingly become value-added propositions, every organization will be scrambling to create a reputation as an age-friendly workplace.

Redefine retirement

Along with powerhouses in the Schwarzkopf Generation, Boomers are also redefining retirement in ways that will impact future generations. They're making the case that retirement is not a date on a calendar but a process—and organizations who can extend that process for as long as it's beneficial to both sides of the desk will have a competitive advantage for the next 10-20 years.

According to AARP, "70% of workers who have not retired reported that they plan to work into their retirement years or never retire; almost 50% expected never to retire." Why? They need the money and health benefits, they want to remain productive and useful, they enjoy interesting work, they want to stay mentally and physically fit, or all of the above (AARP Study, "Attitudes of Individuals 50 and Older Toward Phased Retirement," March 2005).

Find out from HR who on your team/department is slated to retire during the next one to three years. Set up a one-on-one meeting to discuss options with them. The key question you want to ask is: What would it take for you to stay with us beyond your retirement date?

Not surprisingly, high on older workers' wish lists are flexible work arrangements. These include flexible schedules, telecommuting, job sharing, new locations, new jobs, and new training opportunities.

In addition, consider offering short-term sabbaticals (two- three months) to give people the initial breather they need as they approach retirement age, and then, upon their return, continue the practice at periodic intervals. Even unpaid respites of a few weeks'

duration may be very attractive to some older workers and can reduce burn out while helping to retain them.

Also, study the possibility of “phased retirement.” A comparatively new concept, phased retirement will become an increasingly important option as the workforce continues to age. This arrangement allows people to leave the workplace gradually by “phasing down” their workload and hours. When valued employees want to leave, offer them the chance to continue adding value on a part-time basis, as flextimers, part-time floaters, periodic temps, or consultants. Or, you could offer them “bridge jobs”: work outside their former positions that continue to leverage their skills while giving them the opportunity for new experiences, assignments, and co-workers.

Make retaining your about-to-retire workforce a strategic imperative. If you position personalized work arrangements as the new status symbol awarded to highly-valued older contributors, you have a stack of powerful bargaining chips with which to negotiate with this invaluable workforce. Then, become very flexible in creating “customized deals” on a person-by-person basis so you can gracefully and effectively “hog tie” these experienced contributors for as long as possible.

Rehire former employees

Encourage departed employees to return: It is much less expensive to recruit ex-employees and far less expensive and time consuming to get them on board and up to speed. Pay attention to your ex-employees. Stay in touch with them, keep them informed about the organization, their coworkers, and opportunities for work.

Spearhead an initiative to create an alumni newsletter and alumni networking groups—based on those in academia-- to keep retirees in touch with you and with one another. Update them on what's happening within the organization, with their former co-workers, and with others who have left the organization. Advertise all the opportunities available to them for project work, consulting, and full-time/part-time work arrangements. In other words, turn your newsletter and networking groups into major recruiting tools.

Since this strategy works well with retirees, there's another inherent benefit in a talent network: It can expand to include anyone of any age who leaves your organization in good standing. Rather than considering them disloyal job hoppers, consider the time they spend outside your organization gathering skills and experience as a value-added proposition upon their return. The grass isn't always greener when people leave organizations and some recognize that sooner or later. Distinguish yourself as a manager and as an organization by letting good employees of all ages know that when they leave, a “Welcome Back” sign will be waiting for them whenever they want to return. Then, keep in touch, keep in touch, keep in touch.

Be an older-worker friendly employer

Many Boomers for whom work and identity are still synonymous, may retire from an organization, but they still want to work. But what that “work” will look like is currently open for discussion. A new trend is emerging among Boomers that some experts call

“unretirement,” “recareering” or “career shifting.” Whatever the term, some of the most highly-educated Boomers aren't merely going to job-hop; they're going to career-hop. Sounding like Gen Yers, they're seeking jobs with a greater sense of purpose that will allow them to give back to the community. Understandably, nonprofits are abuzz about the contributions even a small percentage of the huge Boomer population could make to their enterprises either as paid or unpaid volunteers.

A growing number of organizations are seizing the opportunity to hire highly-trained, skilled pros by actively recruiting older workers—those who have worked for the organization and those who have not. How is your organization creating a reputation in your region as an age-friendly “Featured Employer”? How are you making older workers part of your organizational “image” in the community?

OPPORTUNITY 2: HEADING OFF THE MIDDLE LEVEL LEADERSHIP CRISIS

There is already an urgent gap in mid-level leadership talent and a gap in those who would typically be the bench strength for mid-level leadership positions. The “prime-age” workforce—those 35- to 45-year olds who hold most mid-level manager positions—is shrinking. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, by 2010 their numbers will drop by 10 %. So you and your organization are facing a dual challenge: a labor shortage in general and a dearth of leadership candidates in particular. Among those who will be in that mid-level manager pool, a smaller percentage than in the past will have followed the traditional ladder climbing path to mid-level leadership roles. Among those in that mid-level manager pool, a surprising portion does not want leadership/supervisory/managerial roles. They do want more status, prestige, and rewards. But they don't supervisory/managerial/leadership responsibility. Fourth, among organizations, most are not developing new alternative paths to developing mid-level leaders. All this together is creating a mid-level leadership gap in organizations of all shapes and sizes in just about every industry.

Become leadership talent scout.

Scouting for leadership talent requires using a new lens through which to observe your employees' character, talents, skills, and motivation. Starting today, observe every person explicitly through the leadership lens, considering each one a possible candidate until that individual is ruled out. As you rule him or her out, don't be troubled. It is not fair to treat everybody the same if everybody is not the same. It is perfectly fair to identify high performers who meet certain leadership standards and reward them with special development efforts. Those whom you rule out are not being punished; they are simply not being selected for leadership development.

Become a leadership coach

If you gain their commitment, engage them in an initial self-assessment based on your green flags so the learning process can begin immediately. Create a tracking system that will document each candidate's on-going progress from current levels of expertise to desired levels of expertise.

Identify the development resources already available in your organization and provide guidance about using those resources. Formal external classroom and/or online training provided by colleges/universities, industry accreditation groups, or outside training vendors. Informal internal training in the form short-term projects, coaching, or mentoring from knowledgeable individuals. Informal external training received through volunteer work, research, membership in professional associations, and professional reading. Factor in any approvals you must obtain from HR or your manager before you proceed.

Ask recruited high potentials to create their own learning plans based on their strengths as well as their skill gaps. Be sure to identify all the training resources you've uncovered and time you're offering them to use those resources.

Help emerging leaders establish developmental relationships and you can help them

Encourage your new leaders to seek out other coaching-style managers and help them get assigned to challenging projects with that person to sharpen specific management skills.

Personal coaches help individuals work on specific personal or professional issues that interfere with their ability to grow and excel. Go to bat to get funds to hire a personal coach for a promising leadership candidate if you think it appropriate—and his or her worth to the organization is crystal clear.

It takes months or even years to develop a true mentoring relationship. How do you support mentorship? First, recruit would-be mentors and find ways to teach them the basics of mentoring. Second, teach would-be protégés the basics of building a relationship with a mentor and growing in that kind of relationship.

Who in your organization likes to get behind young leaders and build them up over time by steering toward them formal and informal learning opportunities, relationship opportunities, creative challenges, stretch goals, high profile assignments, and other support? How can you make those organizational supporters familiar with one or more emerging leaders? How can you make those organizational supporters committed to building up those emerging leaders?

Some of your emerging leaders may be willing to do the extensive work of recruiting and maintaining their own personal “board of directors,” a group of experienced people in a variety of disciplines who would be willing to help them speed up their learning curve. Based on your experience, who could you recommend for this board?

Propel emerging leaders into ad hoc roles

How do you consistently test, monitor, coach, and develop your emerging leaders' talents, skills, and traits?

The most practical way is engaging them in ad hoc leadership opportunities which give you real-time situations from which to develop these new leaders: Use their project management skills to identify goals, deadlines, parameters and guidelines. Sharpen their people management skills by recruiting the best people for the team, identifying

the role each will play, gaining commitment from each individual for specific goals, tasks and deadlines. Ensure the new leader has sufficient authority within the team to carry out her or his role effectively. Coach the new leader at regular intervals along the way. Require the new leader to keep a running list of lessons learned. Document your own list of lessons learned.

Finally, conduct a thorough debriefing after the project's completion. It is an opportunity to revisit the leadership skills analysis you conducted earlier and to assess the progress the new leader has made. It's also a primetime opportunity to examine the new leader's emerging leadership style and practices.

Let go

Once you have invested a substantial amount of time and energy in identifying and developing a new leader, one of the hardest things to do is let that person go. But having developed a valuable team member who now can share the burden of managing people, you need to resist the temptation to hoard his or her leadership talent as your own. Become known for your expertise in *exporting* new leaders from your charge. What's in it for the new leader? Career opportunities. What's in it for the organization? New leadership talent and bench strength. What's in it for you? Two invaluable benefits: A network of protégés with growing influence and authority whom you will likely call upon throughout the rest of your career. And a reputation for growing leaders.

OPPORTUNITY 3: MANAGING YOUR PARENTS' OR GRANDPARENTS' PEERS

As the age bubble grows in the workforce, so does the youth bubble. More young men and women are managing more older workers than ever before. For older workers, the prospect of being supervised by someone young enough to be their child (or grandchild) is as disconcerting as the prospect of managing someone as old as a parent (or grandparent) is daunting.

Our advice to young managers.

Remember that you are young and probably have much less experience than those you manage, so don't be insulted if your direct reports know that, too.

Make management credibility your greatest asset: Take the time to get to know each person on your team—figure out where each person is coming from. Discover where each one is going in terms of their desire to learn new skills, have new experiences, try new tasks, advance their career, or plan for retirement. Learn as much as you can about each individual's working style and customize your approach. Become a take-charge leader who makes regular work-related conversations with each team member a management imperative. As you become knowledgeable about the work each person does, have the guts to intervene when anyone's performance slips below acceptable levels. Gain the reputation as the manager who rewards people for high performance, both as individuals as well as a team.

Become the worthy protégé of a worthy mentor: The key to getting a great mentor is being a great protégé. Will you know a possible mentor when you see him/her? Will you

be ready? Will you be a good enough protégé to get the relationship going? You have so much to learn.

Our advice to Schwarzkopfers or Boomers reporting to younger managers

Let go of your ego and accept your new young manager. Remember, your organization may have promoted the young upstart to try some new things. Don't be the one digging in your heels and refusing to go along.

Assess your young manager, but don't test. As with any manager, determine if he or she can help you contribute, succeed, and be rewarded. If not, you should plan your exit strategy, regardless of your manager's age.

If you must talk about "it," talk about it once. Then drop it. The last thing your new manager wants is a staffer who plays parent. What most young people in management roles value is to be taken seriously and earn your respect.

Be the wise sage. If you think your young manager lacks experience, context and wisdom, then be the one to offer some. But offer your advice in private and be careful not to overdo it.

Learn as much as you can about your young manager's management style, understanding that it is a work in progress. How does he or she like to communicate (email, face-to-face, daily, weekly, morning, afternoon)? How frequently will they discuss goals and deadlines with you and provide feedback?

Make sure you clearly communicate your needs and expectations. Even the most seasoned managers are not mind readers. Position yourself as someone who is there to help the entire team have satisfying, productive, fun experiences at work.

Be great at managing yourself. Get lots of work done very well, very fast one day after another. Position yourself as a creative problem-solver rather than a hard-nosed problem-creator.

Finally, enjoy the energy, eagerness, and freshness this young person has to offer you and your team. He or she may well be the very person who provides you with the flexible work arrangements, opportunities for new experiences, and the recognition and reward you deserve as you wind down your career with this organization and plan for the next stages of your life.

OPPORTUNITY 4: TEACHING TEENS TO SERVE YOUR CUSTOMERS

Young workers are disproportionately represented in front-line customer service positions and study after study shows that customers complain incessantly about this generation's service inability. Meanwhile, Yers give most managers very low grades when it comes to customer service training.

Stop setting teens up for customer service failure

One of the biggest mistakes companies make is to hire young workers, give them little or no training, and then reprimand them when they don't perform well. A 19-year-old

sales associate in a retail reported, "I actually started working the same day I was hired. They threw me out on the floor and said, 'Just watch and learn.' I didn't receive proper training until the fourth month I worked there. [In the meantime] I was written up three times for not assisting customers."

It's one thing to learn how to flip burgers, stock clothing racks, or bag groceries. It's another to deal professionally with people of all ages with different needs, demands, and emotional baggage: Young Gen Yers are often perceived as too young to have any authority or know very much about anything except video games, snow-boarding, or mall-hopping. They haven't been trained in the interpersonal skills necessary to deliver great customer service. Some adults assume that because young people are techno-savvy, they are business savvy. Consequently, initial expectations far exceed the realities of a teen's experience.

To expect young workers to arrive at your workplace with the wisdom, expertise and people-savvy that adults take years to learn is unrealistic and counter-productive. Expectations need to be tempered when new hires first walk in the door, and then accelerated as managers work with them everyday.

Teach teens to "see the big picture" of customer service.

What's in it for the employee? What's in it for the customer? What's in it for the manager?

Teach teens to be accountable for customer service.

Spell out expectations. Provide check-lists and other tools. Remind, remind, remind. Monitor, measure and document. Tie real rewards to real concrete actions.

Teach teens to tune in to customer service in ways that appeals to them.

Think one-on-one coaching as well as real video, im-ing, blogs, wikis, vlogs... Also think role-plays, frequent tests, and games/contests/prizes.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Additional RainmakerThinking, Inc. Resources

- Gibson, Donald, Ph.D., and Bruce Tulgan. *Managing Anger in the Workplace*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2002.
- Sormaz, Heidi, Ph.D., and Bruce Tulgan. *Performance Under Pressure: Managing Stress in the Workplace*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2003.
- Martin, Carolyn A., and Bruce Tulgan. *Managing Generation Y: Global Citizens Born in the Late Seventies and Early Eighties*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2001.
- Martin, Carolyn A., and Bruce Tulgan. *The Customer Service Intervention: Bottom Line Tactics for Front Line Managers*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2003.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *HOT Management*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2004.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *Career Skills for the New Economy*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2000.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *The Manager's Pocket Guide to Generation X*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1997.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *Managing Generation X: How to Bring Out the Best in Young Talent*. Revised and updated ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000; first ed, 1995.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *FAST Feedback®*. Second ed. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1999.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *JUSTinTIME Leadership*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2000.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *Recruiting the Workforce of the Future*. Second ed. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 2000.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *Winning the Talent Wars*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.
- Tulgan, Bruce. *Work This Way*. New York: Hyperion, 1998.
- Tulgan, Bruce, and Jeff Coombs. *Strategic Employee Polls*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1998.

Multi-Generational Resources

- Foot, David K., and Daniel Stoffman. *Boom, Bust & Echo 2000: Profiting from the Demographic Shift in the New Millennium*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 2000.
- Karp, Hank, Connie Fuller, and Danilo Sirias. *Bridging the Boomer-Xer Gap: Creating Authentic Teams for High Performance at Work*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing, 2002.
- Lancaster, Lynne, and David Stillman. *When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.
- Strauss, William, and Neil Howe. *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: William Morrow & Co, 1992.
- Strauss, William, and Neil Howe. *The Fourth Turning: What the Cycles of History Tell Us About America's Next Rendezvous with Destiny*. New York: Broadway Books, 1997.

Zemke, Ron, Claire Raines, and Bob Filipczak. *Generations at Work: Managing the Clash of Veterans, Boomers, Xers, and Nexters in Your Workplace*. New York: AMACOM, 1999.

Schwarzkopfer and Boomer Resources

DeLong, David. *Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of An Aging Workforce*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Dychtwald, Ken, and Daniel J. Kadlec. *The Power Years: A User's Guide to the Rest of Your Life*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2005.

Goldberg, Beverly. *Age Works: What Corporate America Must Do to Survive the Graying of the Workforce*. New York: Free Press, 2000.

Moses, Susan. [Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement](#). Harvard School of Public Health-MetLife Foundation, 2004. (Free report available online.)

Stone, Marika and Howard. *Too Young to Retire: 101 Ways to Start the Rest of Your Life*. New York: The Penguin Group, 2004.

For the latest trends and research on aging and retirement, go to:

www.aarp.org

www.go60.com

www.kiplinger.com/planning/retirement

www.retirementliving.com

www.reinventingaging.com

www.wiredseniors.com

www.2young2retire.com

Generation X and Generation Y Resources

Beck, John and Wade, Mitchell. *The Kids Are Alright: How the Gamer Generation is Changing the Workplace*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2006.

Chester, Eric. *Getting Them to Give A Damn: How to Get Your Front Line to Care About Your Bottom Line*. New York: Dearborn Publishing, 2005.

Draut, Tamara. *Strapped: Why America's 20- and 30- Somethings Can't Get Ahead*. New York: Doubleday, 2006.

Furman, Elina. *Boomerang Nation*. New York: Fireside Books/Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2005.

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

Kamenetz, Anya. *Generation Debt: Why Now Is A Terrible Time to Be Young*. New York: Riverhead, 2006.

Wilner, Abby and Cathy Stocker, *The Quarterlifer's Companion: How To Get On The Right Career Path, Control Your Finances, And Find The Support Network You Need To Thrive*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005.

Wilner, Abby and Cathy Stocker, *Quarterlife Crisis: the Unique Challenges of Life in Your Twenties*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam, 2001.