

August 2009

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution

Simon Boag

Abstract

There has been an increasing trend in recent times to categorise people into generations based on their year of birth. The logic is that people born in certain periods of time have been similarly shaped by their environment and are therefore more likely to display similar behaviours. A great deal of literature now exists on the character traits that are thought to typify each generation and there has been a particular focus on the traits of Generation Y (Gen Y), the most recent age group to enter the workforce. Much has been written about Gen Y with regard to recruiting, retaining and marketing. There has also been comment on managing Gen Y, but much of this has come from the angle of how to cope with or control Gen Y. This paper takes the approach that since Gen Y are here to stay, let us try to work out how best to lead them in order to maximise their contribution in the workplace as soon as possible.

Key Words: Y generation, human resource management, employee motivation

Introduction

The term 'generation gap' is hardly new. It should not come as a surprise that young people are different to older people. Younger people have grown up in a different environment and, as a generalisation, are quite likely to have different behaviours, beliefs and philosophies to the preceding generations. It should not come as a revelation that, as technology increases at an exponential rate, young people have different skill sets to their parents and they use different tools to problem solve. Yet each generation seems surprised by how different the younger people are.

It is a relatively recent construct to segment people into different 'generations' of approximately 15 years duration each, such as Baby Boomers, Generation X (Gen X), Generation Y and now Generation Z (Gen Z). It seems a random and not necessarily logical framework with no agreement as to the boundaries of the generations and no strong argument as to why the borders are placed where they are.

Despite the dearth of empirical support for these categorisations, there has been a proliferation of literature regarding the generations, with a particular focus on the newest generation to enter adulthood and the workforce; Gen Y. Generalisations have developed regarding each generation and lists have been developed to describe the pros and cons of

Simon Boag is a member of the executive team of Adelaide Community Healthcare Alliance Incorporated and is the General Manager of the Ashford Hospital

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

each group, perhaps not be concentrating enough on the positive attributes of Gen Y, or not focusing our efforts on how best to motivate or develop them and therefore are not leveraging off their strengths.

As an analogy, a football team recruits a group of young players who can run faster and further than their predecessors. We would hope the coaching staff recognise their talents and leading to unfair pre-conceptions of individuals within generations, particularly in the case of Gen Y. Whilst it has been argued that these categorisations assist in understanding and managing our workforce (Sheahan 2005), there is a risk we are focusing on the negative aspects of the generations and allowing this to affect our decisions, plans and actions. We may consider changing the team's game plan to maximise the competitive advantage gained by recruiting these fit young players. In our workplaces, are we appropriately assessing the young recruits of Gen Y to determine their positive attributes for our workplace and are we leading our Gen Y staff in a manner that maximises their performance and therefore the performance of our companies?

This case study looks at Gribbles Pathology, a high-technology company that faces the challenges of an ageing workforce in times of low unemployment rates and a skills shortage. The study investigates what can be done to maximise the contribution of Gen Y to the workplace. Surveys were used to establish which leadership styles Gen Y staff at Gribbles believe they will respond to, whether Gribbles is adequately identifying their strengths, whether Gribbles are appropriately training and developing Gen Y staff and what Gen Y staff at Gribbles believes needs to be done to maximise their contribution. In addition to this collection of primary data, a review of the literature was undertaken regarding Gen Y in the workplace.

Following this collection of information, this paper will explore management principles and theories that are relevant to this subject. There is a wide range of management theory that is relevant to this discussion, however, this paper will be limited to how leadership management theory can be used to help understand how to get the most from Gen Y. Whilst this will include a brief exploration of motivation theories and the training and development of Gen Y; the broader human resources issues that could be discussed have been omitted as they are beyond the scope of this paper.

After the results of primary and secondary data collection have been analysed with regards to leadership management principles, recommendations will be made that are applicable not only to Gribbles Pathology, but to businesses in general. A conclusion will summarise the author's findings and thoughts on leadership of Gen Y to maximise the immediate contribution they can make within the workplace.

The Generations

The underlying rationale for the categorisation into generations is based on the idea that behaviours vary as a result of issues that were occurring in the environment in different periods of time. For example, the Baby Boomers period commenced immediately after the end of the Second World War and they were therefore in a very different environment to those living during the war years. However, the logic for other boundaries between categories is less obvious and not as consistently identified as the beginning of the Baby

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Boomer generation. The Hudson 20:20 report (Levy, Carroll, Francoeur and Logue 2007) entitled “*The Generational Mirage?*” quotes a number of authors who harbour significant reservations regarding the validity of the categorisation into generations. In 1999, Sax (Levy et al 2007) claimed that most indicators of the values and attitudes of youth changed gradually, if at all, rather than in a clear step-wise fashion as the generational categorisations would have us believe. However, Henry (2007) argues that whilst there are many individual exceptions to the assigned characteristics of each generation, the categorisations and generalisations are still helpful in decision-making with regard to activities such as managing organisations or in advertising to different target groups.

There is no consensus within the literature as to the definitions of the generations. The generations are always defined based on year of birth, but with variation of up to six years on the start and end dates. For example, Sheahan (2005) defines Gen Y as being born from 1978 to 1994, whereas Kunreuther defines Gen Y as 1981 to 2000 (Walker 2007). For the purposes of this paper the same definitions as Avril Henry (2007) are used:

- 1929 to 1945: Veterans
- 1946 to 1964: Baby Boomers
- 1965 to 1979: Generation X
- 1980 to 1995: Generation Y
- 1996 onwards: Generation Z

About Gen Y

Gen Y are currently between 12 and 28 years of age and the characteristics that are thought to define them have been well-described in the literature reviewed. Avril Henry (Walker 2007, p.3), a Human Resources consultant who has written two textbooks on Gen Y, described them as “self-confident, outspoken, passionate, opinionated, loyal and impatient”. Levy et al (2007) described Gen Y as being self-reliant and independent, media and technology savvy, comfortable with change, entrepreneurial, interested in training and development, seeking meaningful roles and desiring collaboration with colleagues. Sheahan (2006) sees Gen Y as being street smart, impatient, informal, stimulus junkies and lifestyle centered. As noted by Heath (2004), Gen Y have received more formal education than any other generation, are more socially responsible and excel at communicating through networks. Streeter (2007) refers to a talk by Penelope Trunk listing ten things that Gen Y are seeking. The full list created by Trunk is included in Appendix 1 and includes that Gen Y care about time and lifestyle rather than just money, that they like to be productive, their friends are particularly important to them and they like to be managed by performance not by the number of hours they are present at work. Streeter also notes that Gen Y like to be managed with “kindness”. Other authors reinforce that it is important to Gen Y that they are respected by their colleagues and managers (Tso 2006).

Those Gen Y characteristics do not comprise an exhaustive list but are indicative of the descriptors in the literature. It should be noted that few of the sources provided any evidence of original sources for determining the characteristics and therefore validity is questionable. In addition, there was no research evident that could determine the character traits of older generations at the same age to determine whether traits were age

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

related or generation dependent. It should also be noted that the use of the generational categories was mainly evident in Western countries, with the vast majority of the literature sourced being from Australia. This is logical given the categories are environment dependent and therefore different countries and regions would have had different events shaping generational categories and character traits.

Orientation of Gribbles Pathology

Gribbles Pathology was founded in South Australia in 1936 and is now South Australia's largest private pathology provider. Gribbles Pathology expanded into other States, becoming Australia's third largest pathology company and then expanded to Malaysia, Singapore, India and New Zealand. In December 2004 Gribbles Pathology was acquired by Healthscope Limited, Australia's second largest private hospital operator and one of the Australian Stock Exchange's 200 largest companies by market capitalisation.

This paper will be focusing on the Gribbles South Australia (Gribbles) business, which employs over 600 people, consisting of fourteen laboratories and fifty-one collection centres. Gribbles provides human pathology tests to patients that have been referred for testing by their general practitioner or specialist. It is a high-technology business that has become increasingly automated and is now very dependent on information technology and communication systems. Gribbles employs a range of staff including pathologists, nurses, collection staff, scientists, laboratory technicians, couriers, stores people, finance, IT, sales and marketing staff and administration personnel.

Gen Y Issues at Gribbles Pathology

Whilst Gen Y staff occupy positions in most departments of the company, this case study focuses on scientific officers as these tertiary qualified officers represent the core of the Gribbles service and are more difficult to recruit and retain given the skills shortage in this area. The other job category where these issues exist is with Pathologists (doctors who have specialised in pathology) but Gen Y are too young to have graduated as Pathologists at this time.

Gribbles has a high proportion of scientific staff that have been in senior roles for long periods of time. The low turnover rate of the senior staff reflects well on their loyalty and on the culture of the business. One potential downside, however, is that the staff occupying senior roles are blocking potential career paths for younger workers. In addition, the senior staff has been in the same environment for a long time and may be blinkered as to alternative ways of problem solving, management and leadership. There is a risk that older managers may see the new staff as lacking experience and not involve them in decision-making processes due to their youth.

The table below indicates that Gen Y staff is turning over at a greater rate than other generations. It shows the average length of employment for all staff members in each generation who voluntarily left Gribbles over the nine months from July 2007 to March 2008.

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Table 1 Average length of employment of different generations

	Average length of employment (yrs)
Gen Y	2.24
Gen X	3.44
Boomers	6.95
Veterans	14.35

(Source: Healthscope Human Resources Payroll extract – see Appendix 2 for full extract)

It is difficult to compare the data on this measure for Gen Y versus Veterans, as the Veterans result is skewed by some individuals who had a length of tenure greater than is possible for any Gen Y member. In addition, the Gen Y employees who did not leave during this period may make a significant difference to the results of terminated staff. However, the comparison between Gen Y and Gen X is more valid and shows a trend that is of concern and worthy of further detailed assessment at Gribbles.

Research Methodology

In order to assess how Gen Y is contributing and how they are being managed by the leadership group at Gribbles, a case study was conducted that included written surveys and direct observation. A case study allows us to investigate a current issue in a context that is real (Rowley 2002). Although lacking the empirical integrity of some other forms of research, case study is an appropriate method of research for this small research project by a student (Patton and Appelbaum 2003). The research design, which included multiple sources of data, allowed for triangulation to corroborate findings (Rowley 2002).

Sources of information utilised in this case study were:

- Operational knowledge of the author. The author works within Gribbles Pathology at executive management level and is involved in both strategic and operational aspects of the business, including those being discussed in this paper;
- Primary data via written surveys; and
- Secondary data through a review of journal articles, textbooks and newspaper articles.

Primary Data Collection

The method chosen for collection of primary data was written surveys (Appendix 3), with fifteen surveys distributed. The use of surveys allowed for collection of a larger number of responses than some other forms of data collection, thereby increasing the ability to assess reliability of the findings as well as assisting with validity. The staff surveyed were not selected by the researcher but nominated by the Gribbles Wayville Laboratory Heads of Department of the Haematology, Microbiology and Histology Departments, and by the Biochemistry Quality Control Officer. All Gen Y staff in these departments on the day of the survey distribution were included; no staff were intentionally selected or excluded, thereby increasing the likelihood of a representative sample. The surveys were paper based and distributed in the workplace, with each individual asked to complete and return

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

the survey within 48 hours. Individuals were requested not to discuss the survey with their colleagues until after the final survey had been completed in an effort to ensure original and honest responses from each respondent. The results were anonymous thereby increasing validity of the results with less concern by the respondents that negative responses may be viewed unfavourably by the researcher.

Primary Data Results

Of the fifteen surveys distributed, eleven were returned. This represents a pleasing 73.3% rate of return.

To follow is an overview of the results of the survey: *1) Rate the importance of the following characteristics of a manager who would motivate you to maximise your contribution at work:*

	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Sub-Total	High	Very High	Sub-al
SURGENCY							
Dynamic			3	3	7	1	8
Dominant		4	6	10	1		1
Self-confident			6	6	4	1	5
				19			14
Surgency importance				57.6%			42.4%
AGREEABLENESS							
Approachable			1	1		10	10
Empathetic			2	2	7	2	9
Interacts well with others				0	6	5	11
				3			30
Agreeableness importance				9.1%			90.9%
DEPENDABILITY							
Hard-working			1	1	6	4	10
Follows through on completing commitments				0	5	6	11
				1			21
Dependability importance				4.5%			95.5%
ADJUSTMENT							
In control of emotions			3	3	4	4	8
Copes well with criticism			1	1	6	4	10
Copes well with stress			1	1	3	7	10
				5			28
Adjustment importance				15.2%			84.8%
OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE							
Seeks and embraces change			2	2	6	3	9
Curious	1	2	6	9	1	1	2
				11			11
Openness to experience importance				50.0%			50.0%
CHARISMA V. CHARACTER							
Solid ethical character			1	1	5	5	10
- importance				9.1%			90.9%
Charismatic		1	4	5	6		6
- importance				45.5%			54.5%

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

- 2) *What aspects of the workplace motivate you to work productively and contribute to the best of your abilities?*

The most consistent responses to this question were good team-mates and a good manager. Other responses included being busy or productive, the work itself being interesting and positive feedback or recognition.

- 3) *Should remuneration be based on years of experience or competency? Why?*

The most popular response to this question was that both are important. Many noted that a degree of competency usually comes with time and a majority leant towards competency being the more important factor in determining remuneration. One response suggested an experience based system but with bonuses for early achievement of competencies.

- 4) *Do you produce your best work when you are left to work as an individual or do you prefer to work on tasks as part of a team? Why?*

The vast majority of responses stated that this was dependent on the situation. Of those that chose either working as an individual or part of a team, the split was half each way. One comment was a preference to work as an individual on tasks where they felt confident but as part of a team when they felt unsure.

- 5) *How important are the following in maximising your contribution at work:*

	No Response	Very Low	Low	Moderate	Sub-Total	%	High	Very High	Sub Total	%
Leadership style of manager	1				0	0.0	7	3	10	100.0%
Training and development					0	0.0	2	9	11	100.0%
Pay rates				2	2	18.2	5	4	9	81.8%
Security of ongoing employment				1	1	9.1	6	4	10	90.9%
Flexibility of hours worked				3	3	27.3	8		8	72.7%
Shown respect by colleagues	1		1		1	10.0	5	4	9	90.0%
Relationship with workmates				1	1	9.1	6	4	10	90.9%
Involvement in decisions that affect your work			1	1	2	18.2	5	4	9	81.8%
Physical facilities			1	4	5	45.5	5	1	6	54.5%
Involvement in team meetings			1	4	5	45.5	4	2	6	54.5%
Dynamic environment				4	4	36.4	5	2	7	63.6%
Social events by employer		1		5	6	54.5	3	2	5	45.5%

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

The most popular answers to this question supported the answers to other questions, with leadership and relationships with colleagues being seen as important factors. Once again, training and development was thought to be important. The relatively strong showing for security of employment was not anticipated and the low result for involvement in team meetings was somewhat of a surprise.

6) *Has Gribbles adequately assessed your training and development needs?*

This question generally seemed poorly analysed and answered, thereby suggesting low validity of responses. The responses often discussed actual training and development rather than whether there had been adequate assessment of training and development needs. Nearly all respondents acknowledged training and development does take place and is encouraged at Gribbles but nearly half suggested there was inadequate training and development. One response indicated that formal assessment of needs had not been extensive but recognised that this was occurring effectively throughout day-to-day work.

7) *Has Gribbles appropriately assessed the contributions you could immediately make to the workplace?*

The majority responded that Gribbles had appropriately assessed the contributions that they could make. Most respondents seemed to take this question to mean that they had been placed in appropriate roles within the laboratory or within their department and that their skill set and potential was appropriate to their duties. There was one mention of a lack of appropriate assessment causing a delay in promotion.

8) *Do you believe you have knowledge or skills that could be leveraged to improve the skills and knowledge of older generations at Gribbles? If so, in what areas?*

All but one respondent answered that there are skills or knowledge that they could pass to older generations. The most common example was in relation to information technology. Other suggestions were bringing new and fresh ideas, demonstrating adaptability to new situations and a different approach to problem solving.

9) *How should Gribbles go about maximising your contribution to the workplace in the short term?*

Ongoing and increased training was the most popular response to this question, followed by encouragement. The third most popular response was improved remuneration. An interesting response suggested encouragement, goal setting and rewarding those people who are also taking the initiative to drive self-development.

Discussion

In order to discuss maximising the current contribution of Gen Y, we will start by looking at leadership styles and assessing whether the characteristics described as being typically Gen Y are likely to respond more favourably to certain styles of leadership. Management

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

theories regarding leadership styles will be explored to assist in this analysis and discussion, as will results from the Gribbles Gen Y survey.

Leadership Personality Types

Transformational leadership qualities include visionary thinking, empowering others, inspiring others and delivering with high impact (Hughes, Ginnett and Curphy 2006). So what types of personality traits are capable of delivery such behaviour? Over the years there has been a considerable amount of literature supporting the categorisation of leadership personality types into five groups. The Five Factor Model, as it has become known, supports the notion that the vast array of possible personality traits can be categorized into five dimensions of personality (Hughes et al 2006). The Five Factors are:

- *surgency* (dynamic, dominant and self-confident)
- *agreeableness* (approachable, empathetic and interact well with others)
- *dependability* (hard-working and following through with completing commitments)
- *adjustment* (in control of one's emotions, reactions to criticism and stress)
- *openness to experience* (curiosity and how one reacts to new situations)
(Hughes et al 2006).

Using the Five Factor Model as a framework, it is interesting to assess which dimensions of personality would inspire Gen Y to maximum performance. With regard to surgency, Gen Y themselves are said to be social and self-confident and it would be logical to expect that Gen Y would respond well to a leader with self-confidence. The Gribbles survey did not rate surgency as an important factor when compared with the rest of the Five Factors, although being dynamic was rated as important by 73% of respondents. Gen Y are used to a fast-paced environment, suggesting they would respond to a dynamic leader. In isolation, surgency is still seen as a positive attribute of a manager at Gribbles, with only 12% of respondents rating surgency traits in the low or very low categories. But are Gen Y different to other generations with regard to seeking reasonably high levels of surgency in their leader? A potential difference with Gen Y is they seem less likely to respond to high levels of dominant behaviour as they are said to prefer teamwork, like to be involved in decision making with issues that affect them and they do not accept traditional authority. This was supported by Gribbles scientists as the 12% of low results for surgency traits were ratings for dominant behaviour. With regard to dynamism, previous generations may well have responded well to a busy, dynamic leader who lead by example working long hours and cramming a great deal of work into the day. It seems more likely that Gen Y is seeking the type of dynamic leader who works smarter rather than harder. Gen Y is seeking a work-life balance with adequate time for leisure and may therefore be less inspired by a busy boss working long hours.

Agreeableness is a trait in a leader that seems likely to be more important to Gen Y than previous generations. Gribbles scientists supported this notion with 91% indicating that agreeableness traits were important in a manager. In particular, approachability received the highest number of "very high" responses of any of the thirteen traits. Gen Y is not used to being excluded from decision making in their family-life (Sheahan 2005) and expect similar involvement at work. They want to be able to interact with their leaders as

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

team members not just as subordinates. This notion was supported by the Gribbles case study where 82% of respondents rated involvement in decisions that affect them as high or very high importance in maximising their contribution at work.

Based on the literature reviewed, it is difficult to predict the importance Gen Y place on dependability in a leader. It may rank as a less important leadership factor with Gen Y than with older generations as Gen Y are said to be more relaxed and are perhaps more forgiving. On the other hand, Gen Y appreciate high productivity, like to achieve goals and have high ethical standards. The Gribbles scientists' response was emphatic, with dependability in a manager being the trait ranked most highly of the Five Factors, with 96% of the responses rating it as high or very high. In particular, Gen Y seeks managers who follow through on completing their commitments.

It is also difficult to assess whether adjustment is a particularly important trait required in leaders by Gen Y when compared to previous generations. It seems likely that all generations would respond to leaders who are in control of their emotions and can cope with stress and criticism. However, Gen Y appear to respond to leaders who are more open with their emotions. Perhaps older generations have more of an expectation of their leaders being stoic, whereas Gen Y are used to more open discussion about emotions. The Gribbles scientists saw adjustment as desirable, with 85% of respondents rating it as high or very high. In particular, managers who cope well with stress were rated highly.

Openness to experience is a trait in a leader that may be more important to Gen Y than previous generations. With the exponential development rate of technology and with increasing globalisation, business is moving at a fast pace and Gen Y expect to be part of an organisation that is keeping pace with change. This was supported by the Gribbles case study. Whilst the Gen Y scientists did not specifically rank openness to experience highly in the questions on the Five Factors, several respondents suggested they wanted managers to give Gen Y enough space and support to explore new opportunities for themselves. They also suggested that Gen Y could assist older staff members in embracing new solutions for old challenges. So perhaps it is not the leader that needs to seek new experiences and drive change, but it is important to Gen Y that their managers help create an environment that allows and encourages change and curiosity.

Whilst the Five Factor Model is a useful framework for analysing leadership traits required for managing Gen Y, there are other thoughts and issues in the literature relevant to the discussion. For example, Sankar (2003) argues that character is more critical to leadership than charisma and this would fit well with the descriptors of Gen Y. Whilst leaders with charisma may have flawed values, character is based more on core ethics and this is what young people today seem more interested in. Gribbles' scientists supported this notion, with 91% saying character is important in a leader and 45% rating it as being of "very high" importance. Charisma was seen as less important, with 55% rating it as being important and none rating it as "very important".

Macgregor (Hughes et al 2006) developed the Theory X and Theory Y model, using different outlooks to differentiate different leadership styles. Theory X leaders have a pessimistic view of people, assuming they are not motivated to work or attain goals.

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

These managers assume that disciplinary techniques or coercive tactics are required in order to stimulate people to achieve goals. Theory Y leaders take a more positive view of the world and assume that people are intrinsically motivated to achieve as they take pride in their work and enjoy the sense of achievement when goals are achieved. (Hughes et al 2006).

The descriptions of Gen Y seem a very poor match with Theory X style management. Gen Y do not like being told what to do; they like to be involved in decision-making processes and they like to have an understanding of the reasons why they are performing particular tasks. The majority of the research on this subject supports the notion that people in general do not respond well to Theory X leadership (Hughes et al 2006). However, most of the research on this topic was performed prior to Gen Y entering the workforce. Based on the descriptions of Gen Y it seems that Gen Y would be less motivated by Theory X management than previous generations. In this case study, the traits that have been assessed that are consistent with Theory X management include dominance and dependability. Dominance was not rated highly by Gribbles' Gen Y whereas dependability was. The Theory Y traits that were included in the case study include agreeableness, adjustment and openness to experience, without excluding dependability, self-confidence or dynamism. The Gribble's scientists also clearly rated positive teamwork, positive feedback, being shown respect by colleagues and involvement in decisions that affect them as being important motivators. The case study results therefore provide support to Gen Y responding better in the Gribbles environment to Theory Y leadership.

Burns believed that there were two styles of leadership; transactional and transformational (Hughes et al 2006). Transactional leadership is based on an exchange between the leader and the follower, such as exchanging money for work performed. The second type of leadership is transformational, whereby the leader appeals to a sense of higher purpose within the followers in order to create change. (Hughes et al 2006). The vision of the change that is being sought needs to be valued by both the leader and the follower. It is said that transformational leaders help followers to learn to lead and assist the followers in becoming involved in initiating change. This description of transformational leadership is consistent with some of the descriptions of traits that Gen Y are seeking from their leaders; they want to be led not just told, they want to understand what they are trying to achieve and they are comfortable with change. They are seeking to be involved in creating the change and in being respected for their involvement in the change, not just in being paid for the job. This has been reinforced with the Gribbles case study where 82% of respondents rated seeking and embracing change highly as desirable attributes of a manager. Dominant behaviour is consistent with a transactional management style and only 9% of respondents rated this trait as being highly desirable in a manager.

The Situational Leadership Model

The Situational Leadership Model (Hughes et al 2006) is a type of Normative Decision Model that is useful as a tool to assist choosing the most appropriate leadership style based on the follower's readiness in a specific situation. There are four stages of follower readiness in the model: R1 (unable, and unwilling or Insecure), R2 (unable, but willing or

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

confident), R3 (able, but unwilling or insecure) and R4 (able, and willing or confident). It is interesting to consider this model and how it would apply to a stereotypical member of Gen Y. In the literature, Gen Y are described as eager to learn, eager to contribute and be productive, are confident and dislike being told what to do. Based on this it would seem more likely that Gen Y will move more quickly from stage R1 to stage R2; even if they don't have the base ability or skill to perform a task they are likely to be willing and confident. In this scenario, the Situational Leadership Model would suggest a leadership style that moves quickly from being very task oriented (Telling leadership style) to a style that is supportive and includes encouraging, clarifying, facilitating and explaining the underlying reasons for performing the task in a certain way (Selling leadership style) (Hughes et al 2006).

Similarly, Gen Y seem unlikely to want to spend significant time in stage R3; once they are able to perform a task they are more likely to rapidly develop confidence than previous generations. They would like to be left to their own devices and given autonomy. The Situation Leadership Model recommends a Delegation leadership style when followers are in this R4 stage. However, Gen Y is also known to become easily bored and once they are able to perform a task, their motivation level may not be sustained. The leader would therefore need to monitor this situation to determine when the Gen Y follower regresses to the R3 stage where they are able but unwilling, therefore requiring a Participative leadership style with ongoing explanation, encouragement and support.

The potential use of the Situational Leadership Model is reinforced by the Gribbles Case study where several survey responses noted the need for more direct training and support when in the early stages of performing new tasks. The support of managers and senior colleagues was also frequently noted. Other responses reinforced the desire of some Gen Ys to be given responsibility and autonomy when they have developed confidence in performing tasks. The Situational Leadership Model could be used as a training tool for more experienced and more senior staff. This model may help to provide a framework for developing and mentoring Gen Y staff with the appropriate levels of direction or support.

Development

The development and training of Gen Y could be developed into a broad and detailed human resources discussion. This is not possible within the scope of this paper. However, staff development is a vital part of leadership and the topic has repeatedly been reinforced as a major issue for management of Gen Y in the workplace. The need for training and development was a consistent message from Gribbles scientists and they believe they would be more productive if training and development were improved.

Gen Y are more educated than any previous generation (Eisner 2005), they value skill development and education, plus they have a desire to achieve (Sheahan 2005). This provides a very positive platform for improvement of young workers. However, whether as a result of Gen Y attitudes or a product of the environment of low unemployment and skills shortages, Gen Y workers tend not to have long periods of employment with the same employer. With training often being very expensive, this leads to a dilemma of whether or not it is worth investing in training schemes for Gen Y workers. Sheahan

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

(2005) raises this dilemma and argues that companies should be concentrating on training more so with Gen Y than in the past, but that employers should adopt the 80/20 rule and focus the training efforts on the high performers.

Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright (2006) suggest that the changing environment requires the philosophy of a Learning Organisation where there is an ongoing culture of learning and where employers provide the necessary resources for formal and informal learning. This requires managers to identify training needs, arrange training and ensure that the information or skills learned are applied in the work setting. This is consistent with suggestions made by Gibbles scientists who suggest improved training needs analysis, formal training and support from senior scientists in situations where they aren't confident with new tasks.

The method of development for Gen Y may be different than for previous generations. The literature raises three interesting points. Firstly, Gen Y does not like to be told, they like to be involved. Rather than relying purely on formal courses for teaching, methods such as mentoring and coaching are suggested as being appropriate ways to engage Gen Y.

Secondly, Gen Y likes working in teams. Development activities that involve teamwork may accelerate learning and deliver greater benefits than solo study can do.

Thirdly, Gen Y is technology savvy and this opens up increased opportunities for Gen Y to learn via different mechanisms than in the past. Unlike some Veteran and Baby Boomer staff, all Gen Y employees are likely to have the skills and resources required to use a range of computer software, expertly navigate internet resources and use communication media to quickly and efficiently source information through Gen Y's technology based social network.

Recommendations

There are many individual recommendations that could be made based on the large body of literature and the findings from the Gibbles case study. The following broad suggestions are proposed as recommendations:

1. Leadership styles and actions are important in influencing the contributions that Gen Y make in the workplace. It is important to recognise this and for the issue to be discussed amongst the leadership group. It is appropriate to assess the leadership styles of current managers and applicants for new management positions. Leaders should be approachable, dependable and emotionally intelligent.
2. Gen Y will respond to having a close team around them. This includes peers and mentors. Once again, the workplace should be assessed and if Gen Ys are in situations where there isn't team support, they are not likely to be maximising their workplace contribution.

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution

Simon Boag

3. Monitor and coach Gen Y as they are confronted by new tasks. Consider adopting the Situational Leadership Model or similar approach. Provide direction and support when required. Provide space and allow autonomy when the opportunity arises.
4. Training and development is vital. If we were focusing on retention of Gen Y staff, the recommendation would be to select the staff with the best potential and concentrate training on them. However, this discussion is focused on maximising short-term contribution and therefore training of all Gen Y staff is important. Whilst there still may be additional resources dedicated to extra development of the future stars, there needs to be a base level of ongoing training for all staff. To help develop the culture of a learning organisation, it is important that other generations are also involved in ongoing training and also important that Gen Y are asked to contribute to training others. Gen Y could be providing education to older generations in the use of various pieces of software or communications devices. Consideration should also be given to rewarding and encouraging self-initiated training.
5. Formally assess their range of skills and ask Gen Y how they can contribute. Maybe they have an idea as to how Facebook can be used to provide a competitive advantage to the business. Perhaps Gen Y would recognise an operations or sales and marketing need that could be solved using text messaging. If you don't ask you may not find out.
6. Conduct regular competency assessments and consider introducing remuneration categories based on these competencies rather than on length of tenure.
7. Provide encouragement and recognition.

It is acknowledged that there is much to be learned on this issue and the information provided in this paper has several limitations. The Gribbles case study involved a small sample size and only involved scientists, thereby limiting generalisability. The results were not statistically assessed using probability analysis prior to recommendations being made. In addition, only Gen Y staff was surveyed and although Gen Y have their ideas on the factors that would maximise their current contribution at work, they may be wrong. Giving Gen Y what they want will not necessarily lead to productivity and efficiency. It would be interesting to expand the research and see if the current managers agree and if team members from other generations agree with Gen Y's responses.

Conclusion

It is acknowledged that the categorisation of people into generations has severe limitations and that the generalisations made about each generation may lead to incorrect and unfair assumptions about individuals or particular groups. One of the generalisations that has appeared in popular media is that Generation Y have a number of attributes that make them undesirable employees. This paper has attempted to analyse the character

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

traits that are said to be consistent with Generation Y employees and has tried to determine, based on the experience of Gribbles Pathology, previous research and on management theory, how appropriate leadership can maximise the benefits of having Gen Y employees. Whilst further research is warranted, this paper has demonstrated that there is significant support from various sources that specific leadership styles and certain leadership actions can directly and positively impact the performance of Gen Y in the workplace.

References

Eisner, S. 2005, *S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal*, Cincinnati: Autumn 2005. Vol. 70, Iss. 4; pg.4, 12 pgs.

Henry, A 2007, *Inspiring Tomorrow's Leaders Today: Breaking Down Generational Barriers at Work*, Messenger Publishing, Australia.

Hughes, R.L. Ginnett, RC. & Curphy, G.L. 2006, *Leadership, Enhancing the Lessons of Experience*, (5th ed.) McGraw-Hill Inc New York, USA.

Levy, L., Carroll, B., Francoeur, J., Logue, M. 2007, Hudson 20:20 Report, *The Generational Mirage?*, sourced from www.au.hudson.com/documents/emp_au_whitepaper_generation_mirage.pdf, viewed 12 June 2008.

Patton, E., and Appelbaum, S. H. 2003, The Case for Case Studies in Management Research, *Management Research News*, pp. 60 – 71.

Rowley, J. 2002, Using Case Studies in Research, *Management Research News*, pp. 16 – 27.

Noe, R.A., Hollenbeck, J.R., Gerhart, B. Wright, P.M. 2006, *Human Resource Management: Gaining a Competitive Advantage* (5th ed.), McGraw-Hill/Irwin, New York, USA.

Sankar, Y. 2003, Character and not charisma is the critical measure of leadership excellence, *The Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies*, 9 (4), pp. 45 – 55.

Sheahan, P. 2005 *Generation Y: Thriving and Surviving with Generation Y at Work*, Hardie Grant Books, Australia.

Streeter, B. 2007, American Bankers Association, *ABA Banking Journal*: Dec 2007, Vol. 99, Iss. 12.

Thompson, A. A., Strickland, A.J., Gamble, J.E. 2007, *Crafting and Executing Strategy, The Quest fir Competitive Advantage, Concepts and Cases* (15th Edition), McGraw-Hill Irwin, New York, USA.

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Tso, K, 2006 *Y Me*, sourced from
www.businesssunday.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=105832, viewed 27 May
2008.

Walker, K 2007, Catching and keeping Generation Y in the nursing workforce,
Contemporary Nurse, a Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession. Maleney:
April 2007. Vol. 24, Iss. 2.

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Glossary

80/20 rule:	where eighty percent of the rewards arise from twenty percent of the market
Baby Boomers:	people born from 1946 to 1964
Facebook:	an interactive website popular with Gen Y
Generation X:	people born from 1965 to 1979
Generation Y:	people born from 1980 to 1995
Generation Z:	people born from 1996 onwards
Learning	where the culture encourages continual learning
Organisation:	
Pathology:	a medical specialty concerned with the cause and nature of disease
Scientific Officers:	have completed an undergraduate science degree, either a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science
Veterans :	people born from 1929 to 1945

Appendix 1

Penelope Trunk's Ten Things Young People Want at Work (Streeter 2007).

1. They care about time, not money.
2. Friends are real important.
3. Location is important to Gen Y.
4. Don't talk about "paying your dues".
5. Manage by results.
6. It's hip to be productive.
7. Generation Y loves training.
8. They love to network.
9. Provide stability.
10. Kindness.

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Appendix 2

Extract from Gribbles of all staff who were terminated during the period July 2007 to March 2008 inclusive. (Supplied by Phil Hoopman, Healthscope Head Office, St Kilda Road, Melbourne)

Employee Status Code	Termination Reason	Years of Service	Gender	Generation
PART	Resigned - Another Job	0.18	Female	Boomers
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.55	Female	Boomers
PART	Resigned - Moved O/S or State	0.77	Male	Boomers
FULL	Resigned - Moved O/S or State	0.80	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Another Job	0.82	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.86	Female	Gen Y
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.95	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Another Job	1.26	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.34	Female	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Moved O/S or State	1.40	Female	Gen X
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.45	Male	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.48	Male	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Another Job	1.50	Female	Gen X
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.51	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Another Job	1.72	Female	Gen Y
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	2.01	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	2.15	Female	Boomers
PART	Resigned - Another Job	2.20	Male	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	2.37	Female	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Moved O/S or State	2.64	Male	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Family Reasons	2.89	Female	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	2.94	Female	Boomers
FULL	Resigned - Another Job	3.23	Female	Gen Y
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	3.36	Female	Gen Y
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	3.54	Female	Gen Y
FULL	Resigned - Another Job	4.39	Female	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Another Job	5.11	Female	Boomers
PART	Retired - Age	5.64	Female	Veterans
PART	Resigned - Personal Reasons	6.14	Female	Gen X
FULL	Resigned - Other Reasons	7.30	Male	Boomers
PART	Resigned - Another Job	8.30	Female	Gen Y
PART	Retired - Age	9.22	Male	Veterans

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Employee Status Code	Termination Reason	Years of Service	Gender	Generation
PART	Resigned - Another Job	9.55	Female	Gen X
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	10.59	Female	Boomers
PART	Resigned - Personal Reasons	18.47	Female	Boomers
PART	Retired - Age	19.90	Female	Veterans
PART	Resigned - Other Reasons	21.47	Female	Boomers
PART	Retired - Early Age	22.63	Female	Veterans
CASUAL	Resigned - Another Job	0.08	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.08	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Another Job	0.15	Male	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.19	Female	Gen Y
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.20	Female	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.28	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.36	Female	Gen Y
CASUAL	Resigned - Personal Reasons	0.50	Female	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Moved O/S or State	0.65	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.66	Male	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	0.78	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.24	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.53	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.66	Male	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.74	Female	Gen Y
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.86	Female	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	1.97	Female	Veterans
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	2.21	Female	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Another Job	2.43	Female	Gen X
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	2.63	Male	Gen Y
CASUAL	Resigned - Another Job	2.91	Female	Boomers
CASUAL	Resigned - Other Reasons	3.18	Female	Gen X

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

Appendix 3

1) Rate the importance of the following characteristics of a manager who would motivate you to maximise your contribution at work:

	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Dynamic					
Empathetic					
Approachable					
Hard-working					
Seeks and embraces change					
Follows through on completing commitments					
Copes well with stress					
Solid ethical character					
Charismatic					
Self-confident					
Dominant					
Interacts well with others					
Copes well with criticism					
Curious					
In control of emotions					

2) What aspects of the workplace motivate you to work productively and contribute to the best of your abilities?

3) Should remuneration be based on years of experience or competency? Why?

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

4) Do you produce your best work when you are left to work as an individual or do you prefer to work on tasks as part of a team? Why?

5) How important are the following in maximising your contribution at work:

	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Leadership style of manager					
Training and development					
Pay rates					
Security of ongoing employment					
Flexibility of hours worked					
Shown respect by colleagues					
Relationship with workmates					
Involvement in decisions that affect your work					
Physical facilities					
Involvement in team meetings					
Dynamic environment					
Social events by employer					

6) Has Gribbles adequately assessed your training and development needs?

Gen Y: Leadership to Maximise Their Current Contribution
Simon Boag

7) Has Gribbles appropriately assessed the contributions you could immediately make to the workplace?

8) Do you believe you have knowledge or skills that could be leveraged to improve the skills and knowledge of older generations at Gribbles? If so, in what areas?

9) How should Gribbles go about maximising your contribution to the workplace in the short term?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

Kind regards,

Simon Boag