

## The Why Behind Gen Y: Uncovering Three Gen Y Behaviours

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### Upcoming Events

**April 15, 2008**  
**SHRM Staffing Management Conference – Nashville, TN**

**May 29, 2008**  
**HRPAO Education Centre**  
**½ Day Workshop – Toronto, ON**

**June 24, 2008**  
**SHRM Annual Conference - Chicago, IL**

### Why does this generation give input, when I didn't even ask for it?

Gen Ys, raised mainly by Baby Boomer parents, have been encouraged to share their opinions, starting at a very early age. Baby Boomers decided to raise their children differently. Rather than following the Traditionalist paradigm of command and control and paternalistic child-rearing, Baby Boomers tend to want their children to experience more liberal formative years. They want their children's voices to be heard, their opinions to matter and their suggestions to count. So, many Gen Ys have had their opinion solicited, listened to and acted upon from family members at a very early age.

This type of childhood experience translates into behaviours in the workplace. One manager was shocked as a Gen Y interrupted a meeting she was holding with someone else, because the Gen Y was curious as to what they were talking about. We've heard countless stories of Gen Ys, shortly upon beginning to work with an organization, e-mailing senior leaders or company-wide e-mails with suggestions on organizational improvement. Managers often view their behaviour as disrespectful, brash and a threat to the manager's authority.

The positive aspect of this behaviour is that Gen Ys are looking to contribute, and to be a valuable member of your organization, right away. They are showing drive, commitment and a desire to add value. However, Managers are often not used to harnessing the creativity and enthusiasm of Gen Ys. The key is to leverage Gen Y's input to improve your operations.

### What's the big deal with Facebook / My Space?

For Gen Ys, technology is life. Many Gen Ys booted up a computer, before even having attended kindergarten. Friendships are forged through the latest video game. Connections around the world are made through virtual worlds like Second-Life, blogs and social networking sites, like Facebook and My Space. Even cell phone usage has changed - they would rather text than talk.

In the workplace, every organization is facing the decision of what to do about the use of Web. 2.0 at work. Should we monitor the amount of usage? Should we block access to non-work related sites? Should we discipline those who access these sites? Your organization's response to these questions will significantly impact engagement levels. Leaving technical security issues aside (as they can be managed by an IT department), the key is not to blame the use of technology as necessarily the culprit for performance issues. Rather, there are many opportunities to turn technology into an organizational advantage – to connect with customers, to allow teams around the world to collaborate virtually, to act as temperature gauge as to assess employee engagement levels.

## Quick Links

[n-gen People Performance Inc.](#)

[Events Calendar](#)

[Book, Research & News](#)

[Canadian Management Centre](#)



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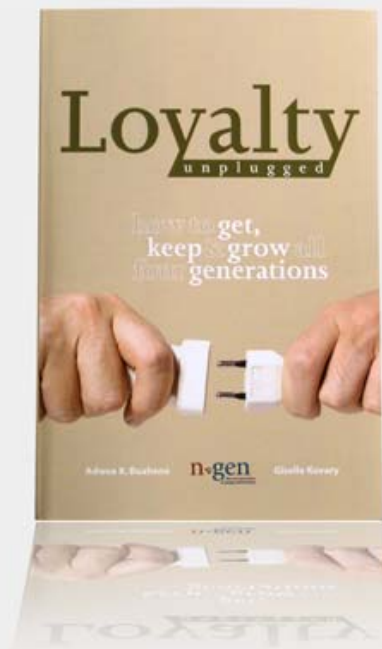
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## Why are Gen Ys in my office all the time?

We have many managers tell us that they are amazed at the amount of feedback and attention Gen Ys appear to want. To understand this behaviour, we have to recognize the highly structured, both school and home, environment in which Gen Ys were raised. In the school system, they are used to receiving constant feedback, and to being guided through a process step-by-step. At home, they grew up in highly structured, highly chaperoned, home environments, where everything is scheduled for them. This type of parenting style attempts to keep children from failing, as parents often worry about the negative effects to a child's self-esteem that might be caused by failure.

In the workplace, sometimes Baby Boomer managers perceive this constant need for feedback as a lack of confidence. Gen Xers are frustrated at the apparent lack of independence Gen Ys exhibit. Neither characterization is necessarily accurate, if we think about how Gen Ys view themselves. They view this behaviour as being hyper-collaborative and engaged. The desire for greater feedback and step-by-step instructions is a habit to which they have become accustomed. Managers may need to recognize that Gen Ys will require a formalized orientation program, and a longer learning curve to gain the skills and behaviours that organizations expects them to demonstrate.

## Tips for Engaging Gen Ys

- ❖ Recognize that their expectations and behaviours have been conditioned, and do not necessarily have the intention that you may ascribe to them
- ❖ Think about how you can maximize their behaviours to be a positive, performance enhancer for your organization
- ❖ Proactively manage expectations – communicate clearly what is and is not expected of employees at your organization
- ❖ Create a framework for how and when they can give input/feedback – make sure to close the loop and let them know what your response is to the feedback (what can or cannot be done)

## Products: & Services

- ❖ Keynote presentations, workshops & development solutions to train leaders, managers and team members on increasing performance of a multigenerational workforce
- ❖ Train-the-Trainer program – a training package that internal facilitators can use to train internal managers on how to manage and lead a multigenerational workforce.
- ❖ Organizational engagement survey that measures how well your organization and leaders demonstrate transparency, responsiveness, partnering
- ❖ E-learning course to raise awareness of generational identities, and how to effectively collaborate as a team
- ❖ Employee brand promise – a consulting package that identifies, builds and creates key messages to get the right people, at the right time for the right positions
- ❖ Orientation – a consulting package that helps you to create, develop and implement orientation programs designed to seal the psychological deal and build productive employees faster

n-gen's book *Loyalty Unplugged: How to Get, Keep & Grow All Four Generations* tackles the why, what, and how-to, from a generational perspective, in all people practice areas. To purchase a copy visit our website [www.ngenperformance.com](http://www.ngenperformance.com) or SHRM Bookstore website: [www.shrm.org](http://www.shrm.org) or Books for Business in Toronto.