

**Chronicle Herald, BILL POWER  
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### **OUR GENERATIONS:**

Traditionalist (1922-1945): Respectful of authority, loyal to the organization.

Baby Boomer (1946-1964): Challenging of authority, but loyal to the team.

Generation X (1965-1980): Unimpressed by authority, but loyal to the manager.

Generation Y (1981-2000): Respects competency, rather than title. Loyal to peers.

### **Source: n-gen People Performance Inc.**

Keep an open mind about that kid with the purple mohawk or the one with the pierced tongue, human resource professionals were urged Thursday.

The young person dressed like something out of a punk-rock video could very well be a company's next head of production or marketing, according to workplace consultant Giselle Kovary.

"There was a time when traditionalists running organizations could overlook an inappropriately dressed applicant and opt for the applicant who appeared more traditional, but this is no longer the case," said Ms. Kovary, an expert in the multi-generational workplace who was in Halifax for a seminar hosted by Workopolis, the Internet recruiting and job search provider.

She said that for the first time since the industrial revolution, many employers are faced with four very different age groups: traditionalists, baby boomers, generation Xers, and generation Ys.

Each of these groups has a vastly different mindset and expectations, and keeping track of all these differences is keeping more than a few human resource managers awake at night, said Ms. Kovary, managing partner with n-gen People Performance in Toronto.

For example, some workers in the traditionalist category might be distressed by the constant communication enabled by text-messaging or e-mails, but generation Y workers tend to expect this sort of link with people in authority.

At the same time, a generation Y employee might not be aware that beachwear is inappropriate on the job and could be totally unaware the traditional worker might be distressed by the way a younger colleague dresses.

However, retention of young employees is a huge challenge for human resources professionals, so these vast differences in working styles and appearance must be handled carefully, Ms. Kovary said in an interview.

"It's important to understand the differences of each of the four generations and to maximize the skill sets of all four," the workplace consultant said. Workopolis president Patrick Sullivan, a Halifax native, said surveys show many companies will have difficulties over the next five to seven years replacing retiring workers, especially blue-collar staffers.

"It's is getting tougher to find and retain these important entry-level workers," he said.