

Are You A Gen Y Magnet?

Q&A with Ryan Healy of Brazen Careerist



Thank you again to everyone who attended the “Are You a Gen Y Magnet?” webinar on August 6, 2008. The presentation was a tremendous success. Over 900 people listened in and we received more than 230 questions and comments.

We’ve grouped the questions into 20 categories. And we have posed a few of these questions to the Brazen Careerist audience of career-focused, Gen Y young professionals. Hearing from one Gen Yer is good, but hearing from an entire Gen Y online community is great!

Check out the start of the conversation by visiting Brazen Careerist.¹

**Brazen
Careerist**

Content provided by:
Ryan Healy
RyanHealy@BrazenCareerist.com
222 West Washington Ave Suite 108
Madison, WI 53703
203.314.6138



Category #1 Regulated and Time Sensitive industries

How do highly regulated or time sensitive companies attract and retain Gen Y?

Even if your workplace is highly regulated or time sensitive (like a financial institution or customer call center) there are still changes you can make to increase your Gen Y appeal. First, you should be very clear during the recruiting process about both the required hours spent in the office (or other business environment limitations) and the reasons for the situation. Making this clear is a sign of respect for your future employee, and will allow him to make a decision that is in line with his priorities. If he's determined to have a flexible schedule, he probably won't waste your time with further interviewing--saving your company a lot of wasted time.

Secondly, it's especially important for companies that require a lot of face time to create a social work atmosphere. Knock down the cubicle walls, provide free lunches and think about on-site dry cleaning, day care and a gym!

Category #2 Blue Collar Work Environments

Do you have any strategies for implementing some of these ideas in a blue collar environment?

Many of these strategies can be just as easily implemented and are just as effective in blue collar environments as white collar. Both hands-on and results-based management are good practices in every work setting.

Thoroughly train your blue collar employees. Invest money and energy into assuring they are prepared for the job. Then, give them projects to complete with a solid completion deadline.

Additionally, "cool" career sites appeal to more than just white collar workers. Everyone in Gen Y uses the internet for social, informational and professional reasons these days, so be sure to create an appealing site, and join the social media conversation.



Category #3 Team Players

You mentioned that Generation Y are great team players, but what about the things that need to be done on an individual basis? Can Gen Y's not work alone?

Gen Y does thrive in team environments. We love to talk things through, bounce ideas off of each other and organize ourselves into teams. However, once a decision is made, Gen Yers completely understand that it's time to buckle down and work. But to keep Gen Y both engaged and motivated, strive to provide at least some part of every day that feels collaborative. Even one hour of talking things through and figuring out next steps will make up for the other seven hours alone in front of a computer.

Also, this is where one of Gen Y's basic strengths really shines. If I'm in front of a computer, working alone on a challenging project that I cannot figure out for the life of me, I won't hesitate to come ask for help. I'll ask for help from my peers, my subordinates or my boss. Gen Y won't waste time figuring something out when, odds are, someone else in the office can help. We won't hesitate to use the connections we have to keep the work moving in the right direction.

Category #4 Challenges

Why should the world adapt to Gen Y? Do you think Gen Y has a responsibility to adapt to the rest of the world?

Absolutely! Generation Y does not expect the corporate world to bend over backwards to meet our demands. We're simply graduating college, jumping into the corporate world, and looking at it from a fresh and new point of view. When we see certain things happening that don't make sense, like being in a cubicle from 9 to 5 simply because we were told to be there, we question the status quo. I believe that Gen Y is in the process of realizing we need to "grow up" and buy into many of the things that every generation has before us, but corporate America would be well served to view things through the eyes of Gen Y. Then we can meet halfway.

I posted this question to Brazen Careerist.com and received some amazing feedback from fellow Gen Yers. Check out Brazen Careerist² to see their responses, and we hope you will join the conversation around this question by leaving a comment!



Category #5 Compensation

How much pay is important to Gen Y?

Salaries and compensation are very important to Generation Y. The average person now graduates college with more than \$20,000 in student loans and over \$5,000 in credit card debt. On top of that, to afford rent in a large city and cover all the other expenses, you need to make a substantial income. However, Gen Yers quickly realize that sacrificing 100 hours a week to chase a huge salary is usually not worth it.

This is why you see many Gen Yers moving back home after school. If our parents welcome us home to help ease the financial burden and give us the chance to find a job that we enjoy, it truly is the smartest financial and career decision a young person can make.

As a Gen Yer who has both worked in big business and started a company, I would rank pay somewhere in the top five most important criteria I look for in a job. It's certainly not the #1 criterion, but of course, we all need a paycheck. Finding meaningful work and the satisfaction it brings is much more important to Gen Y than a paycheck.

Category #6 Dress Code

What dress code do you recommend for Generation Y?

Typically, Gen Yers believe that office dress should be fairly informal. However, there is no reason to think that your employees will have a problem getting dressed up when they understand the reasons for doing so, like meeting with a client, having a special meeting with the boss, or any number of reasons. The key is to make the details and the reasoning clear for whatever dress code your company has.

Category #7 Face Time

How important is face to face contact?

You can't underestimate the importance of face to face contact in forming relationships and adequately training your Gen Y employees. There should be a healthy mix of formal, face to face training, and flexible work from home schedules. The most important thing to remember is that you need to have a legitimate reason for requiring office hours or face time. If your Gen Y employee asks why they need to be in the office until 5pm, you've got to have a better answer than "Because I said so." Irrational rules delivered without a relationship that's based on honest communication to back them up will send your employees running for the next company without hesitation.

Category #8 Diversity

Do you feel that Gen Y accepts diversity in the workplace more than other generations?

Yes! Generation Y actually expects our organizations to be diverse. But that expected diversity is probably more than you realize. It can take all shapes and sizes--race, sex, religion, age, sure, but also less obvious qualities like personality type. It's important to establish a corporate culture where different types of diversity can exist in an organization by having clear rules that intolerance is unacceptable.

An interesting thing about Generation Y is that we were raised in an era where there were fewer obvious barriers to an integrated society. We've never known what it was like for men and women not to be equals in the workforce, or anywhere for that matter. So, actually, if I discovered a work environment that was not diverse, nor accepting of diverse ideas and people, I would wonder what was wrong with the organization.



Category #9 Retention

Should companies expect shorter tenures from Gen Y?

Companies should not expect Gen Y (or any employee) to stay for 20 to 30 years. With the pace of change in our lives today, this is not a reasonable expectation, for any generation. That being said, there is no reason that Gen Y has to continue leaving their jobs and your company every 18 months on average. The key to retention is to create opportunities for employees to move across your organization. Oftentimes when Gen Y decides to leave a company after a seemingly short tenure, it's because they are just plain bored with their work. If you can give them opportunities to try out different parts of the company, they may want to change jobs, but only to another part of your organization, not to a competitor who offers growth that they can't seem to find with you.

Category #10 The Generation Mix

How can you be Gen Y friendly while not frustrating your other generations or showing preference to the Gen Yers?

The key to being "Gen Y friendly" while not frustrating other generations is all about awareness. Your company needs to educate everyone on the different generations in the workforce and the different values they hold and life stages they are in. For example, a Gen Xer in her mid thirties with two young children will probably have less interest in social time at work, but a Gen Yer might not understand why someone wants to go running for the doors at 5pm.

When everyone understands these generational and life stage differences, the multi-generational workplace dynamic will make much more sense. Further, you should make it explicitly clear that your company will not evaluate employees negatively for leaving work early, coming in late, eating lunch at your desk, or going for a mid-day run. If everyone knows it's all about the work and not the way the work gets done, then we can all enjoy work a little more.



Category #11 How to get management on board

How do we get management to buy into some of these things you discussed?

Getting management buy-in is crucial to implementing the strategies I've discussed. One option is to show them the hard data about Gen Y, how they are using social media and their whole generational experience--the differences in how they've come into the world. Discuss how even the top talent from Ivy League schools are ditching the investment banking and management consulting world to volunteer abroad for a few years after college. Data should open some eyes.

That won't work, of course, for every executive board. But not every change to make the workplace more Gen Y friendly has to come from an executive memo. Regardless of who's steering the ship, you can create change from the bottom up. Talk with your young employees and ask them what changes they want to see. If they want to have a social atmosphere, encourage them to start a social committee that meets once a week to plan company activities. Then invite management to those new activities. Make it clear that the objective is to start conversations between the generations, and to identify that top talent that you know is there in Gen Y.

Further, let's say you have a few Gen Y employees who are interested in web design and social media. Work with them after hours for a couple months to put together a design and specification for an internal social network. If you don't understand the benefits to such an idea, give the Gen Yers a chance to sell the idea to you, and then present the opportunity to

top management. The benefits to this are not only about catering to Gen Y; the value is in increasing cooperation and thereby boosting overall productivity across the organization.

Selling anything to your executives begins with knowing their needs, and finding the best talent to keep the company competitive is on almost every manager's to do list.

Category #12 Public Sector

How do you apply many of these attributes to government and the public sector?

Government certainly has more limitations than companies do when trying to implement some of these ideas. So it's important to pick the ones that can be most easily implemented. For example, there's no reason a public sector employee can't join the online conversation by starting a blog or commenting on other government-related blog posts. Also, public sector organizations can still create unique and "cool" career sites for recruits.

However, the most important thing public sector employers can do is loosen up! Government has a reputation for being a boring place to work. Tear down the cubicles (or at least the top walls) and encourage people to collaborate and socialize productively. Bring employees out to team lunches and create opportunities for your Gen Y people to organize social events, like after hour's dinners or intramural sports teams.

Category #13 Small companies

All of your examples were large companies, how can small companies compete?

Despite all my examples, small companies actually have many advantages over large organizations when it comes to attracting Gen Y talent. Small companies are usually more nimble and therefore able to try new ideas faster than larger firms. And in general, Gen Y is somewhat wary of large organizations. We believe we will be just another cog in the big company wheel, thrown into a very limited and often boring job.



Small companies can start by encouraging employees to tackle many different opportunities in the organization. If you hire a Gen Y employee as an accountant, there is no reason that same employee can't spend an hour a day blogging or exploring different social media outlets for your recruiters to use. And smaller companies have lots to gain by using all the capabilities of their Gen Y employees, not just the ones that they were hired based on.

Another great thing a small company can do is provide plenty of face time with upper management. One of the most frustrating things about working in a giant corporation is the lack of personal interaction with the real decision makers in the company. Gen Y wants to meet the people who are driving the organization. Small companies have a far easier time making those people easier to meet and learn from.

Category #14 Volunteering

Do you have any tips on how to engage Gen Y in volunteer activities?

The best way for companies to engage Gen Y in volunteer activities is to make it known that your organization values volunteer work, and then make those opportunities a reality. Encourage employees to spend 30 or 40 hours a year volunteering with local organizations. If there are times each year when your company's business is slower than usual; plan team volunteer activities. If you're a consulting firm: partner with a local charity and encourage your employees who are "on the bench" to participate.

For non-profits, the most important thing you can do is provide plenty of hands-on volunteer opportunities. While Gen Y is interested in donating money, we often don't have enough money to cover our monthly expenses! It's much easier and much more rewarding for young people to get their hands dirty and actually see that the contribution we make is making a difference in the community, or better yet, in people's lives.

Category #15 Technology and Social Media

Facebook: Why do you think it's not a good place to recruit?

Facebook is not a place where people go to look for jobs or talk about their career. In fact, Generation Y views Facebook as a purely social platform for us to keep in touch with friends, talk about our lives, and play around with some fun applications. There is no expectation by users that they will find a great company or even discuss anything career related, so when they see someone trying to recruit them, it almost feels like an invasion of privacy. Also, many people are worried that companies are looking at their photos and profiles as part of a screening process, so when they see a company show up on the site trying to recruit, they will be more than a little wary.

Finally, the biggest downfall of Facebook is that it is not conversation based (there are no blogs). Sure, you can create a profile and users can join your group, but there is no interaction beyond that. Recruits want to talk with recruiters to really learn about the company, they don't just want to see a generic description.

I suggest using social networks with a professional feel, like LinkedIn and of course, Brazen Careerist³. The other types of social media outlets I suggest using are blogs and twitter, because they allow you to create a conversation and join in on other conversations without giving off a vibe that you are pushing to recruit people.

Twitter: What is it?

The newest social media site that I mentioned is a website called Twitter.com. Twitter is self-described as a micro-blogging service. This means that users can send out 140 character "tweets" to let friends and acquaintances know what they are up to. Twitter is the newest rage among "techies" and is quickly becoming a mainstream website. There are countless articles written about how to use Twitter and its benefits, here are a few of my favorites:

1. The True Meaning of Twitter, Fortune⁴
2. A Beginners Guide to All Things Twitter, Brazen Careerist⁵
3. Video: Twitter in plain English, Common Craft⁶



The most important thing to know about Twitter is that it's a constant conversation between you and every person that is connected to you. People don't want to have conversations with brand names or companies, because brand names don't talk back. Only people can talk back. So put someone in charge of your Twitter account who has a personality and understands your company vision, then get the conversation started.

Category #16 Questions from Gen Yers on the Webinar

How do I communicate with a superior who believes it's me who needs to change and not him?

Make sure you don't believe it's only him who needs to change. Change and compromise must come from both sides. Your boss has been doing things a certain way for years, and he probably learned some lessons about how things work best along the way. If you're open minded enough to listen to everything he has to say, I'm sure you could learn from him.

That being said, he also may have learned some of those lessons 20 years ago, before the internet, before email, and before we could practically be anywhere without being physically present. I would discuss with your boss some of the research about Generation Y and some of the books that I recommend below. Your boss should love discovering that you think about bigger issues than your Facebook page and the best bosses will want to learn from you, too. Also, I would respectfully request of him that he allows you to try some of the ideas, like working from home on Friday afternoons. And then deliver--prove yourself with the small steps, then go in for the bigger, riskier requests.

But if he really won't listen because he doesn't think he needs to, it's maybe time to start looking for a new boss in the organization, or a whole new gig!

Category #17 Brazen Careerist, Inc.

How many generations do you have at Brazen Careerist?

We have 3 generations represented at Brazen Careerist.

Kathleen Kurke is our resident baby boomer.

Penelope Trunk and Jay Wigley make up our Generation X population.

Ryan Paugh, Monica O'Brien, Dan Healy, Photis Patriotis and me round out our Generation Y group.

Every day is interesting, and it's always a challenge to blend the generational differences, but we try our best. I think we're doing a good job!



Category #18 Book Recommendations

What are the names of the books you recommended?

I recommended multiple books during the presentation. Below you can find the name, author and a link to each one.

1. Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation, Strauss & Howe⁷
2. Generations: The History of America's Future, Strauss & Howe⁸
3. Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It, Cali Ressler & Jodi Thompson⁹
4. Mass Career Customization: Aligning the Workplace with Today's Nontraditional Values, Cathleen Benco & Anne Weisberg¹⁰
5. Brazen Careerist: The New Rules for Success, Penelope Trunk¹¹

Category #19 Statistics

Where did all of these statistics come from?

My numbers and stats came from a variety of sources. Many came from the books I previously mentioned. Here are a few links to other sources for Gen Y statistics

1. Wikipedia¹²
2. 60 Minutes segment¹³
3. Deloitte's Millennial Fact Sheet¹⁴

Category #20 Speaking Requests

Do you speak at companies?

I am available for presentations. I've spoken at multiple conferences and Fortune 500 organizations.

For additional information, please contact Kathleen Kurke at Kathleen@brazencareerist.com.



Appendix

Here's where you'll find all the links referenced above:

Brazen Careerist^{1,2}

<http://www.brazencareerist.com/2008/08/12/they-asked-so-let%e2%80%99s-tell-companies-what-gen-y-really-wants/>

Brazen Careerist³

<http://www.brazencareerist.com/>

The True Meaning of Twitter; Fortune⁴

http://money.cnn.com/2008/08/06/technology/true_meaning_of_twitter_lashinsky.fortune/index.htm?postversion=2008080711

A Beginners Guide to All Things Twitter, Brazen Careerist⁵

<http://www.brazencareerist.com/2008/08/11/a-beginners-guide-to-all-things-twitter/>

Video: Twitter in plain English, Common Craft⁶

<http://www.commoncraft.com/Twitter>

Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation, Strauss & Howe⁷

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0375707190/ref=s9subs_c4_14_at1-rfc_g1?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=center2&pf_rd_r=1PWZF78XW8GE66CHJM6A&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=278240301&pf_rd_i=507846

Generations: The History of America's Future, Strauss & Howe⁸

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0688119123/ref=s9subs_c4_14_img2-rfc_g1?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=center-2&pf_rd_r=1PWZF78XW8GE66CHJM6A&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=278240301&pf_rd_i=507846

Why Work Sucks and How to Fix It, Cali Ressler & Jodi Thompson⁹

http://www.amazon.com/Why-Work-Sucks-How-Joke/dp/1591842034/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1218584301&sr=1-1

Mass Career Customization: Aligning the Workplace with Today's Nontraditional Values, Cathleen Benco & Anne Weisberg¹⁰

http://www.amazon.com/Mass-Career-Customization-Workplace-Nontraditional/dp/1422110338/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1218584351&sr=1-1

Brazen Careerist: The New Rules for Success, Penelope Trunk¹¹

http://www.amazon.com/Brazen-Careerist-New-Rules-Success/dp/0446578649/ref=pd_bbs_sr_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1218584427&sr=1-1

Wikipedia¹²

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation_Y

60 Minutes segment¹³

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/11/08/60minutes/main3475200.shtml>

Deloitte's Millennial Fact Sheet¹⁴

http://www.deloitte.com/dtt/cda/doc/content/us_consulting_millennialfactsheet_080606.pdf