INTELLIGENCE

The Changing Workforce

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

How do younger workers differ from more-experienced ones? In what ways are worker priorities changing? Answers to those questions can be found in "Generation and Gender in the Workplace," an issue brief recently released by the Families and Work Institute.

The institute, a not-for-profit organization in the United States that researches the changing workforce, family, and community, released the brief based on data from The National Study of the Changing Workforce, conducted in 1992, 1997, and 2002, and the Quality of Employment Survey, conducted in 1977.

The most-recent study examined Generations Y (age 18 to 22) and X (age 23 to 37), Baby Boomers (age 38 to 57), and Matures (over 58). Here are some of the institute's findings.

Differing priorities: work-centric, family-centric, or dual-centric. One primary difference between generations is where they place their priorities: work, family, or both equally. Baby boomers

Findings from "Generation and Gender in the Workplace"

are more likely to be work-centric than other generations; Gen-X and Gen-Y are more likely to be family-centric or dual-centric. Is that a problem for the workforce? Another study from the institute found that workers who are dual-centric advance further in their careers than others. Focusing primarily on work can lead to burnout or stress-related illnesses. Employees who are dual-centric or family-centric, the issue brief says, have better mental health and are more satisfied with their jobs and lives.

Changing gender roles. Younger generations are less accepting of traditional gender roles: Almost two-thirds of Gen-Y employees surveyed disagreed that it's better for women to stay home with children and not work, versus about half of the Matures. Eighty-two percent of Gen Y employees agreed that "a mother who works outside the home can have just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who is not employed." The majority of these workers have grown up experiencing that firsthand.

Another change: Younger fathers are spending more time with their children on workdays. Gen-X fathers are spending more than an hour more per workday with their children than Boomer fathers with children of the same age (3.4 versus 2.2 hours).

Decrease in career ambition. The institute found that fewer workers overall wanted to move into jobs with more responsibility—52 percent in 2002 versus 68 percent in 1992. Many women and men don't want the trade-offs, the issue brief says. Who does want to get ahead? Younger employees, those who haven't advanced far in their careers, and those with low earnings. Men are more likely to want to advance than women.

Despite many people's decreased ambition, employees are working longer and harder than ever: Gen-X employees worked more hours in 2002 (an average of 45.6) than workers of comparable ages in 1977 (42.9 hours). An astounding 80 percent of college-educated employees want to work fewer paid and unpaid hours than they currently do. How many is ideal? The number of hours they're scheduled to work, not the number they actually do.

Another important finding: Employees who do want to advance don't necessarily want to do so in their current organizations. More than half of the workers who wanted jobs with more responsibilities were "somewhat" or "very" likely to leave their jobs in the next year.

◁» **More/ http://familiesandwork. org/publications/genandgender. html**

Top Trends in Office Beverage Consumption

- Premium coffee is gaining in popularity. Upscale coffee shops such as Starbucks are causing workers to pay more attention to quality.
- Tea drinking is growing as well, influenced by people's interest in healthier lifestyles.
- Safe drinking water is a concern for workers, and they want more information about their water quality and safety.

◁» **Source/ ARAMARK, provider of workplace beverage services**

E-News: Non-Profits Successfully Using E-Learning

Non-profit organizations are using e-learning for staff training, public workshops, volunteer training, training for chapters or affiliated organizations, and advocacy, say respondents to the first Non-Profit and Association E-Learning Survey. Sponsored by e-learning supplier Isoph and the Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network, the survey found that more than half of those polled are either using e-learning or planning to in the next year.

The most common type of e-learning being used by non-profits is on-demand, self-paced learning. Half of the organizations surveyed use custom-built courses with their own content. Almost a third use blended learning that combines e-learning and classroom-based training.

The survey found high satisfaction among users: 88 percent said they were very or somewhat satisfied with their programs. Key benefits were convenience, access by learners, and cost-effectiveness; the biggest barrier was staff time in developing programs. Funding, expertise, and concern about end users' technology were also listed as issues by respondents.

◁» **More/ www.isoph.com/pdfs/2004_nonprofit_e-learning_survey.pdf**

Develop a Retention Strategy

Turnover in organizations is increasing after a recent lull, and retention is once again becoming a hot topic.

Consulting firm The Hay Group offers these tips for developing an employee retention strategy.

1. Conduct regular employee surveys. These can help you understand when and why workers are thinking of leaving, as well as enable you to identify groups at high risk for turnover.

2. Consider surveying former employees. Interviews conducted by outside organizations after departed workers have gained emotional distance often offer a clearer picture than in-house exit interviews do.

3. Calculate your annual cost of turnover. Studies say the cost of replacing an employee is between 50 and 150 percent of salary. Tracking costs as you implement your retention strategy can help you determine return-on-investment.

4. Target your efforts. Where in the organization is turnover the biggest problem? Which employees are most critical to keep? Establish priorities and focus your efforts in those places and on those employees.

5. Manage first impressions. To ensure a good fit when employees are hired, provide as much information as possible about the organization's culture and values.

6. Connect people to the big picture. Survey findings suggest that employee confidence in management is one of the most important predictors of turnover.

7. Identify growth and development opportunities. Workers know their employability depends on continuously increasing their skills. If they're not given the opportunity to do so at your company, they'll go elsewhere.

8. Strengthen supervisory relationships. Supervisors can provide coaching and regular performance feedback to help employees determine develoment needs and increase their skills.

Source/ *Hay Insight Selections*