

News You Can Use

by Haidee Allerton

DANCE 10, LOOKS 3

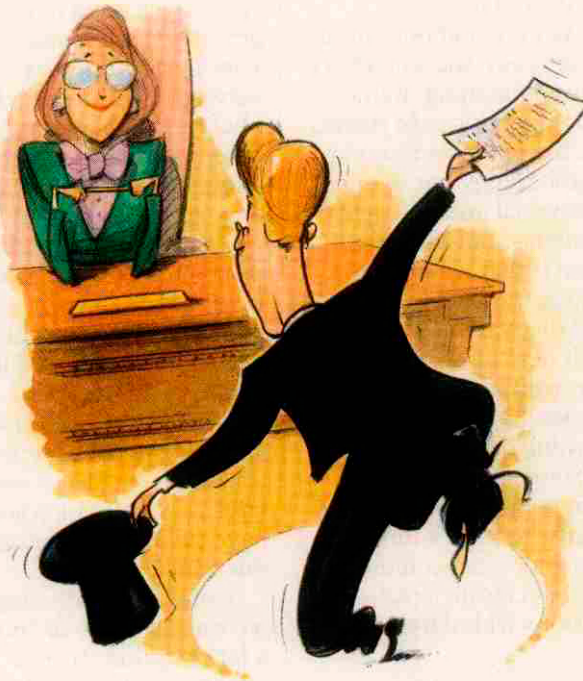
IT WAS INEVITABLE, perhaps. Now that the term "performance" is linked with work, look for job interviews to be more like "auditions." So predicts Lee Hecht Harrison, a change-management and outplacement firm based in Hartford, Connecticut.

"Performance interviews are the wave of the future," says Randall Clark, senior vice-president and general manager. Clark says that top candidates will have to prove themselves by taking on projects in which they're expected to demonstrate their communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and on-the-job experience. For example, a job finalist may be asked on a Friday to develop a presentation to deliver on Monday to his or her prospective employer.

Clark and his associates also predict that psychological assessments will increasingly be an important part of the hiring process, that job seekers will make more use of the Internet, and that people will work at more short-term and interim jobs.

REALITY CHECK

MOST—90 PERCENT—of American workers who have had on-the-job coaching or mentoring say that it was an effective development tool. But only 38 percent of employees has ever had a coach or mentor, according to a survey of more than 1,000 U.S. workers conducted by Personnel Decisions.



POP QUIZ

TRUE OR FALSE? Generation Xers are

- ▶ apathetic
- ▶ unreliable
- ▶ unfocused
- ▶ cynical
- ▶ opportunistic.

And they have the attention span of a gnat. The answers: true and false.

Some experts say that these deficiencies stem from frustrated creative energy—and that, in fact, Generation Xers have the potential to be enthusiastic, disciplined, and achievement-oriented. Tapping this resource may be today's greatest challenge for managers.

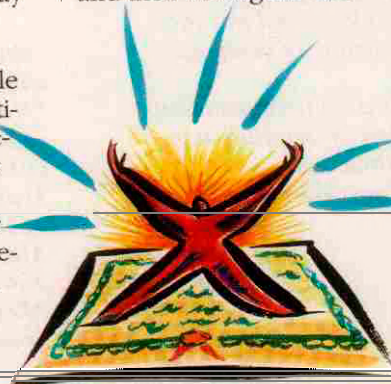
Faced with an unstable job market, Xers are motivated by the desire to acquire flexible skills; they don't feel that they can waste time "paying their dues." Managing them requires new approaches.

Here are some tips for encouraging loyalty among young

workers, for making their jobs valuable to them, and for getting their best work:

- ▶ Enable Xers to develop marketable skills.
- ▶ Let Xers help design their own training agenda.
- ▶ On projects, give Xers clear goals and deadlines; let them develop a sense of creative responsibility.
- ▶ Foster a sense of completion and achievement when projects are finished, provide fast feedback, celebrate success, and work on areas that need development.

This creates an "implicit contract" between workers and their managers. The



low-cost incentives can help bring out Xers' talent and reduce their turnover. Sure, there are risks: You may give up some control or lose a talented young employee to another company. But many experts say that there's more danger in overlooking such a productive resource.

Contributed by Bruce Tulgan, CEO of Rainmaker, an information-analysis and strategic-consulting company based in New Haven, Connecticut. Staffed entirely by Generation Xers, Rainmaker was founded by Tulgan, author of Managing Generation X (Merritt Publishing, 1995).

REAL-LIFE TRAINING

IT SEEMS FITTING that a shoe company would deliver training on the road. Hence, "Rockport on the Road," a radio program sent monthly on audiocassette to traveling sales representatives—to take advantage of their abundant "windshield time," says Rockport.

The idea came to Dick Roesler, vice-president of human resources, as he listened to National Public Radio's "Car Talk" on his car radio. "Rockport on the Road" uses music, sound effects, and humorous skits to deliver sales-oriented information. In-house trainers Frank Carroll and Beth Bartholomew serve as co-hosts. With the help of a media consultant, Frank and Beth have developed an on-air rapport in the great radio tradition of male/female partners. Guests include Rockport's retailers.

On with the shoe...er, show.

@work

HERE ARE SOME TIPS ABOUT SURFING CYBERSPACE AND SOME NEW SPACES TO SURF.

HR professionals can access late-breaking news affecting the HR field on Work/Life Net, a monthly subscription-based service with summaries and abstracts from newspapers, magazines, newsletters, universities, independent consultants, and government sources. Users can indicate such areas of interest as elder care, workplace violence, productivity, and trends in benefits. To find out how to connect, call Work/Life Enterprises at 617/738-6969.

Engines for Education, sponsored by Northwestern University, explores what's wrong with education systems, how to reform them, and how technology can play a role in their reformation. The address is <http://www.ils.nwu.edu/~e-for-e/>

A word of caution from "Storm Warnings," a newsletter published by Liegerman & Nowak in New York: If you're thinking of webpeddling (selling on the Web) or using downloadable art, software, movies, and so forth, know that stealing credit-card information has become a kind of rite of passage for school kids.

And to be cybercool, says L&N, start dropping the terms "HotJava" (a new interactive Web-browsing software) and "spiders" (self-directing finding agents). Both get you around the Web faster.

TREND WATCH

HERE ARE SOME BLIPS on the horizon:

- Doctors are going back to school, but not for more medical training. They seek MBAs so that they can operate their practices like a business and protect earnings endangered by rising insurance and other costs. A program at the University of California at Irvine began with a class of 60 physicians. These students have an average income of \$230,000.
- The information onslaught has created a new job: chief technology officer, according to the consulting firm Christian and Timbers in Cleveland, Ohio. Taking over where the chief information officer leaves off, the CTO helps decide how to apply

new technology most effectively. He or she synthesizes the broad array of alternatives and helps integrate new technology into a company's systems.

Christian and Timbers says that about 10 percent of *Fortune* 500 companies now have a CTO and that it conducts about 15 searches a year for the executive position, compared with no such searches three years ago. Christian and Timbers predicts that more than 25 percent of *Fortune* 500 companies will have CTOs by the year 2000.

- Lockheed is just one company that finds it has to monitor employees' use of nonwork-related sites on the Internet and World Wide Web, reports the *New York Times*. Many employees are surfing sports sites, on-line classifieds, and dial-a-porn

areas of cyberspace during work hours. As one employee says, "If my company didn't want me to browse the Web, it should not have given me Netscape."

Some companies are using software programs to block employees' access to certain destinations. And in one case, a leisure-type site itself warned a user that he was spending almost five percent of his time at work playing chess.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave.

BEST-PRACTICE CORNER

HERE ARE SOME best practices cited by the board of judges for the 1995 APEX (American Product Excellence) Awards given by the Management Roundtable in Waltham, Massachusetts. The practices are being used successfully by teams in new-product development.

- The customer is king.
- Prototype early and often.
- Keep in touch with technology.
- Get feedback on design from the people in the product's distribution channel.
- Internal selling matters.
- A fool with a tool is still a fool. In other words, you need solid knowledge about the theories behind the models in order to implement them.
- When in doubt, farm it out. Form strategic alliances to get the best technology, parts, and innovation.

QUICK TIP

MANAGERS and supervisors can demonstrate their self-confidence, get support for their decisions,

and build relationships simply by saying "I'm sorry" and "I need your help."

From *The Manager's Advisor*, Peter Barron Stark & Associates, San Diego, California.



HELP FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

THE UNITED STATES Chamber of Commerce has launched its Small Business Institute program, with 35 courses aimed at providing education and training resources to small-business owners and their employees. The program focuses on making small businesses more competitive with courses in such areas as marketing and sales, budgeting and finance, legal issues, human relations, communication, management, and leadership.

Crisp Publications of Palo Alto, California, has co-published a series of books based on SBI courses to be distributed by the National Book Network. Some first titles include *Great Customer Service for Small Businesses*, *Building Teams for Your Small Business*, and *A Legal Guide for Small Businesses*.

Send items of interest to "News You Can Use," 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.