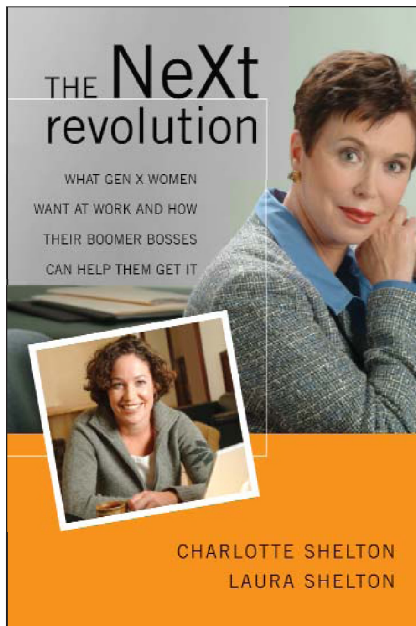


# Bridging the Generational Gap



**The NeXt Revolution:  
What Gen X Women  
Want at Work and How  
Their Boomer Bosses  
Can Help Them Get It**

By Charlotte Shelton  
and Laura Shelton

Reviewed by Josephine Rossi



EACH YEAR, the Great Places to Work Institute surveys companies and their employees to determine which organizations foster the best working environments. Using two employee surveys that measure trust and company culture, the Trust Index questionnaire covers issues of credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie. The problem, however, is that those qualities are subjective. Actions that earn the respect of one person may not even be noticed by another.

Bridging that chasm, or in some cases, canyon, of opinion is the goal of this new book, written by a mother and daughter on both ends of the office spectrum. Charlotte, a baby boomer mom, is a management professor, coach, and consultant. Her daughter, Laura, is a 30-something television reporter trying to juggle her career and personal life.

Frustrated, disillusioned, and confused about her work, Laura wondered if her feelings were common among her female friends, many of whom have switched careers and employers or have quit the workforce altogether. So together with her mom, she conducted an email survey of 1,200 women and men between the ages of 27 and 40, otherwise known as Generation X. The results of that research are the foundation of the book.

In the first four chapters, Laura introduces readers to an in-depth profile of the political, social, and economic demographics that helped to shape her generation. While not the most eloquently written, the pages are teeming with stats and quotes that command attention. That information is woven together by relevant anonymous comments from the survey. Together, the combination gives interesting insight into a generation often described as disloyal, impatient, and demanding, and attempts to explain how and why many of its members are abandoning the traditional workplace for greener pastures.

## Fresh from the Press

**T+D editors sample from a bounty of autumn titles.**

**If You Don't Make Waves You'll Drown: 10 Hard-Charging Strategies for Leading in Politically Correct Times**

By Dave Anderson  
(Wiley, November 2005, \$24.99)

Management specialist Dave Anderson has thought a lot about political correctness in the workplace. In this book, he focuses on what he says are its negative effects: discouraging talent, distracting from the business purpose, and taking the focus off results. In fact, he says that character, competence, and consistency “trump” religious beliefs, race, and sexual orientation in the workplace.

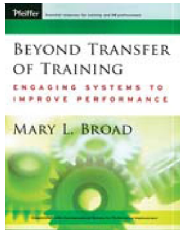
Anderson maintains that a leader's job is not to be his employees' friend; it's to make them better, more accountable workers. He also challenges what he deems are business “myths,” such as successful charismatic leadership.

The problem with this book, however, is its presentation, which sports an obvious political agenda and includes antagonistic interjections veiled as witty sarcasm. For example, I doubt many would argue against the notion that workplace advancements should be based only on performance and qualifications. But throw in terms such as “PC cesspool,” exemplify conservative activists and politicians, and suggest that readers talk to their employees like Jesus did with the Pharisees, and that argument isn't so credible and is even less palatable. That is unless it's presented to same-minded folks.

—Josephine Rossi

## Beyond Transfer of Training: Engaging Systems to Improve Performance

By Mary L. Broad  
(Pfeiffer, International Society for Performance Improvement, September 2005, \$50)



This book provides foundation blocks and tools to help key players in organizations gain the workforce performance and organizational results they want. The author provides guidance on how to define, implement, evaluate, and sustain systemic and systematic performance improvement programs.

With the help of guidelines, flowcharts, examples, checklists, and case studies, practitioners can gain detailed information about how to achieve desired performance in widely differing settings.

This handy resource guide:

- offers analyses of complex organizational systems
- includes research-based strategies by key stakeholders for enhancing performance
- contains evaluation methods for both encouraging and measuring performance
- shows how different complex systems turned low performance into successful workplace performance
- explains how advances in e-learning can improve performance.

—Paula Ketter

## Passion at Work: How to Find Work You Love and Live the Time of Your Life

By Lawler Kang  
(Pearson Prentice Hall, November 2005, \$24.99)



You should love your work with as much passion as you love life, Lawler Kang asserts in this inspirational book. That mantra isn't just theo-

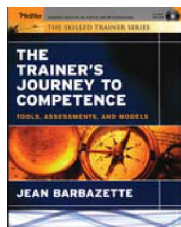
retical to Kang, who survived four life-threatening operations and went on to become a leading business consultant.

Lawler's extensive business knowledge combines with the story of his triumphs over adversity to create a book that is as useful as it is inspiring. The first four chapters offer anecdotes, quotes, and statistics that will motivate you to take control of your own destiny. The next six chapters lead you through the "process of the 5 Ps," a helpful framework that will aid you in defining your passion, proficiencies, and priorities as well as generating a plan and proving that plan. The last two chapters focus on looking for your life's work.

—Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

## The Trainer's Journey to Competence

By Jean Barbazette  
(Pfeiffer, September 2005, \$40)



According to its author, this book will help readers identify the basic and advanced competencies for a variety of roles performed in the training function. Assess-

ment checklists are provided that measure current basic and advanced skill levels and can be used to create a plan to develop incomplete or missing knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The book, the first in a six-book Skilled Trainer series, is divided into nine chapters, which are organized around familiar training and development roles: trainer or instructor, facilitator or coach, course designer, training manager, and training coordinator. Each chapter begins with an objective and assessment questions.

The author, Jean Barbazette, is the president of The Training Clinic, a training and consulting firm she founded in 1977. She is a frequent contributor to ASTD Training and Development Sourcebooks, McGraw Hill Training and Performance Sourcebooks, and Pfeiffer Annuals.

—Paula Ketter

If you happen to be an Xer like me, those four chapters validate that you are not the only one with career anxiety. More importantly, they paint a clear portrait of your defining moments, which were quite different than those of your boomer managers, friends, and relatives. For example, author Tom Beaudoin is succinctly quoted: "My generation inherited not free love but AIDS, not peace but nuclear anxiety, not cheap communal lifestyles but crushing costs of living, not free teach-ins but colleges priced for the aristocracy."

And later, a 29-year-old describes her formative working years watching her friends and co-workers get laid off, and some—even with advanced college degrees—go on unemployment. Those kinds of visceral statements make the book an excellent resource for anyone wanting to understand why members of the MTV generation are desperately seeking work-life balance.

As when discussing any issue that compares one group's characteristics to another's, readers must be careful not to lay blame or give in to stereotypes. Admittedly, that's hard to do, especially when reading the first four chapters of the book. No doubt, Laura's in-depth cross-section of the generation will resonate with Xers and may even stir up some activism (especially when we are reminded that social security may not be around for us!). But it also could ruffle the feathers of some boomers, particularly our working moms who aren't fond of terms like "latchkey kids." So, trust the co-authors' words when they emphasize that mom's intentions were good when she left us kids alone while she worked late at the office. (After all, her actions taught us to aim so high!)

Unfortunately, the book loses some of its snappy momentum when Charlotte takes over in the second half. That's not because her point of view is less valuable; it's because she tackles a less tangible topic—what to do about younger women's (and to some degree, men's) disenchantment with the workplace. I suppose articulating such a broad issue lends itself to many tangential ideas, so I can forgive that she confusingly alter-

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nates directing those notions to both moms and daughters. And that matters even less when the gist of her conversation advocates that both generations and genders band together to create organizations that are financially prosperous, less rigid and political, and emotionally fulfilling.

True, some of her suggestions, such as finding an X-friendlier organization, aren't so revolutionary, and others, such as becoming an entrepreneur, may take a fat savings account or a third party penning some checks. But the overall message of becoming a positive self-advocate is a rare and good one. Her advice to women doesn't involve clawing and maneuvering for the corner office, but rather various methods for carving out a rewarding career and lifestyle.

*The NeXt Revolution* comes to us at a good time, and should receive three full cups of coffee. As more boomers head off into their retirement years, the structure of the workplace inevitably will evolve. For now, managers can use their final years of employment to create a lasting future for the rest of us.

*The NeXt Revolution: What Gen X Women Want at Work and How Their Boomer Bosses Can Help Them Get It*, by Charlotte Shelton and Laura Shelton. Davies-Black Publishing: Mountain View, California. 264 pp. \$24.95

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