

The Silent Generation Meets Generation Y: How to Manage a Four Generation Workforce with Panache



TALENT STRATEGY

HCI White Paper

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By Carolyn Sprague



INTRODUCTION

Managing a multi-generational workforce is a challenge that many organizations are facing today. Shelly Schmocker, Vice President of Product Management at StepStone Solutions, says that effective workforce planning strategies will require a shift in thinking from the topic of the "aging workforce" and instead, address issues related to the "multi-generational workforce". Companies are stepping back and looking more holistically at how to develop programs and deploy technology that will speak to four distinct generations in the workforce. Each age group requires a different approach when designing career and compensation strategies, creating performance motivators, and addressing learning styles. The biggest challenge, however, is how to effectively encourage collaboration among the four different generations of workers (cohorts). Tom Casey, Senior Vice President of BSG Concours, prefaces further discussion on this topic with the following comments:

- o We can no longer think about human capital challenges purely in the context of the aging workforce.
- o We can't just think about what we can do to make Generation Y (a.k.a millennials) happy in the workforce.

Instead, we need to answer the following question: "How do we best manage four active generations of workforce cohorts with differing expectations?" The answers to this question - and much more - will be revealed in this HCI white paper, based on the Human Capital Institute webcast, The Silent Generation Meets Generation Y - How to Manage a Four Generation Workforce with Panache.

A CHORUS OF CORPORATE CONCERNS

Baby Boomers' views of Gen Y's in the workplace include some of the following generalizations:

- o Gen Y's don't have loyalty to the company
- o They have poor communication skills
- o They are impatient and they don't respect authority
- o They spend too much time online
- o I (Boomer) can't get them to accept my job.

Gen Y's certainly don't look like "us" (Boomers) and their experience and backgrounds are vastly different than that of a Boomer, according to Tom Casey who describes himself as a "typical" Boomer. Casey is 58 years old, has 4 grandchildren, draws two pensions, and works 100% (full-time) in the workforce. His approach to work has been shaped by events and values that are very different than those that influenced Gen Y. Casey cautions that no matter the role in your company, you will be managing Generation Y workers in the future, and the task will be challenging.

ECHO OF CONCERNS RETURNED

There are an equal number of generalized perceptions about Boomers that are held by Gen Y's:

- o They are inefficient
- o They don't respect me
- o They assume that I'm interested in the career path that "they" have chosen for me
- o They are obsessed with face time and have too many meetings
- o They don't give me (millennial) the latest technology and they don't use technology effectively

The real issue that underlies generational stereotypes is that there's incomplete communication between differing generational groups. Casey uses the analogy of the game "telephone" in describing just how jumbled communication can get between differing generations. One party speaks into the line and the other party either can't hear the message or hears it incorrectly. The breakdown in communication happens in both directions and leaves both parties feeling frustrated.

One "War Story" helps to put into context why Gen Y individuals are so different than Boomers. Casey notes an interesting tactic that some recruiters have used with success in hiring Generation Y workers. Recruiters have discovered what Casey describes as the "DaVinci Code" for recruiting Gen Y workers. Gen Y's are very family-centric, and one way to win them over is to involve their family in the hiring process. This approach is not without its drawbacks, however. Some employers are finding that once they've involved the family in the recruiting or

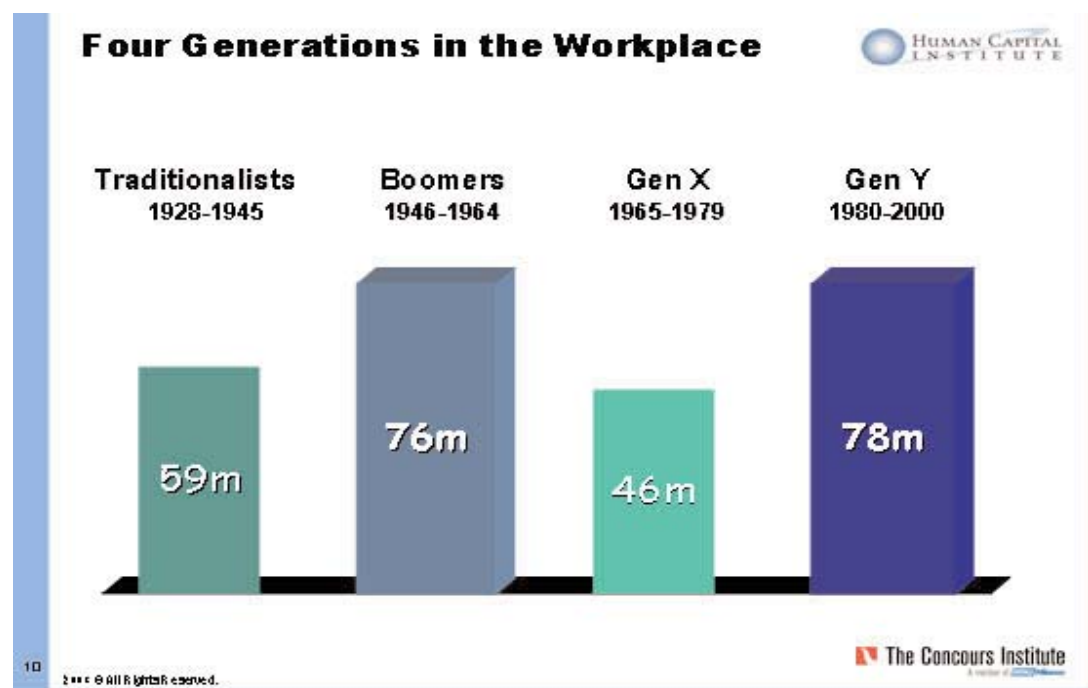
hiring process, they've hired the whole family. It is not uncommon to hear stories of parents calling employers to find out why their son or daughter got a poor performance review. Obviously, this is not an experience that many Boomers can relate to; in fact, Casey states that in a poll of Boomers, 60% felt that they would have been better off without parents at all.

FOUR GENERATIONS IN THE WORKFORCE

Figure 1 illustrates the numbers of each of the four generations currently represented in the workforce. The four groups are: Traditionalists, Boomers, Gen X, and Gen Y. Generation Y represents the largest number of workers in the workforce, with even greater numbers than the large Boomer representation.

By examining different generational perceptions, the most obvious question from each cohort about the other is, "What are they thinking?" The only

Figure 1



way to really arrive at an answer is to examine what the expectations are from each cohort. Every generation has different expectations, and employers know what has shaped many of the experiences and expectations for Traditionalists, Boomers, and even

Gen X's. Companies are still trying to figure out what the expectations are of Gen Y, and this will be something companies will need to keep working on for some time.

Figure 2

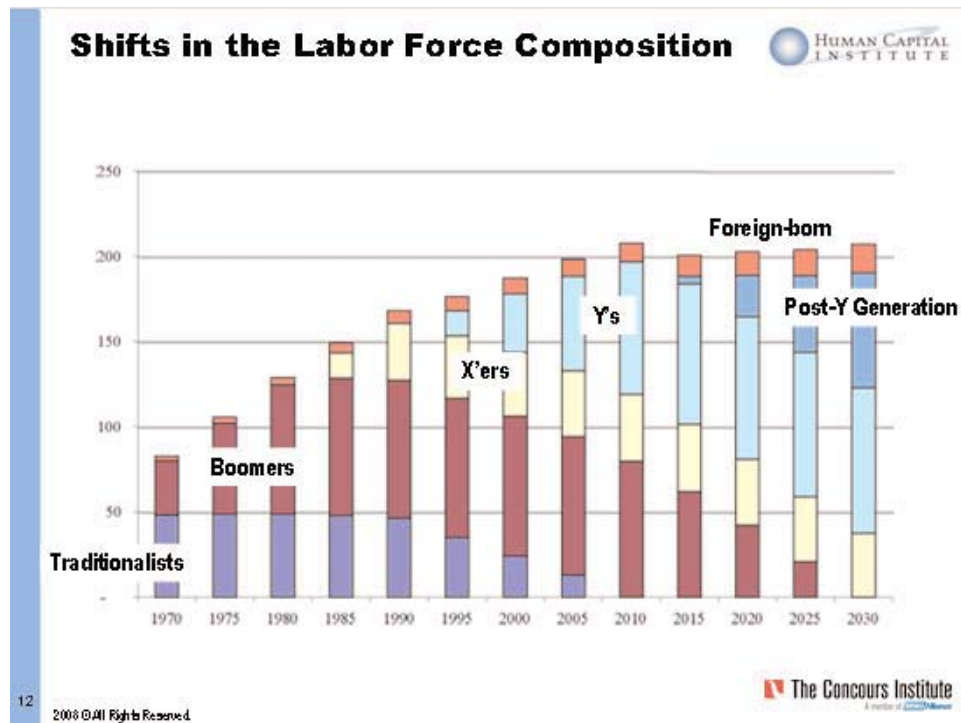
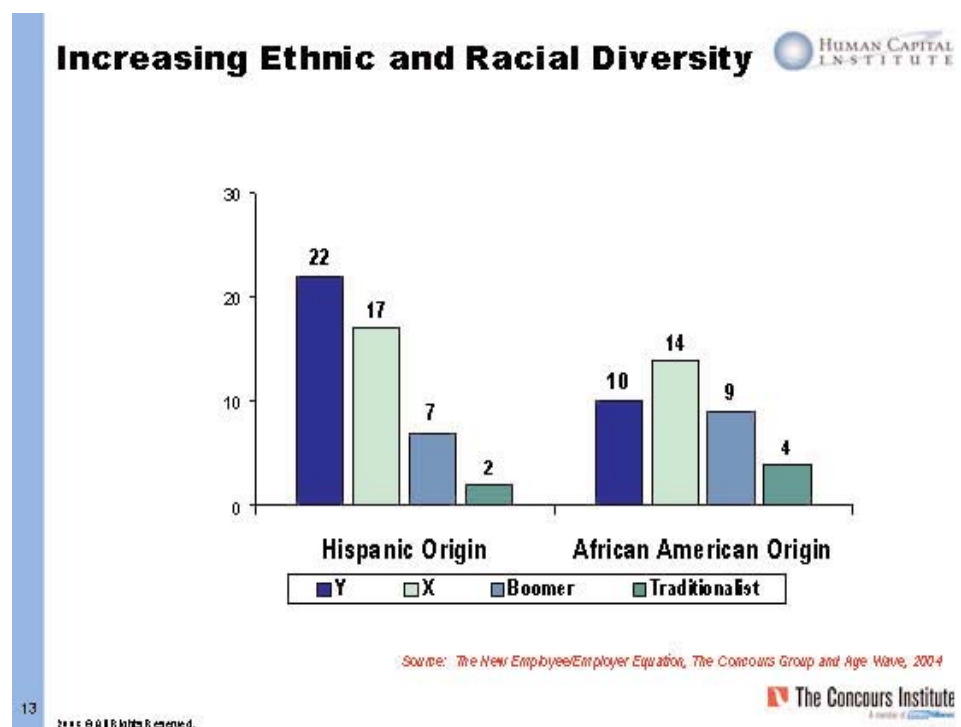


Figure 3



SHIFTS IN LABOR FORCE COMPARISON

Management of human assets is the priority right now, according to Tom Casey. Companies that think they can manage the expectations of four cohorts using a homogenous model are in for a shock. It is time to throw out a one-size-fits-all model of talent management and embrace a more flexible model.

Figure 2 is a graphical representation of different generations of workers over a span of 60 years (1970- 2030). The graph shows that Traditionalist (mature) workers are going to be around for a while and Boomers are going to be around for quite a while longer. A multi-generational workforce exists now, and companies must think about the four cohort groups and their expectations in order to keep them in the workforce and productive. "If you aren't struggling to get good people, or people at all, you will be," states Casey. Those who reside in the C-suite can longer get by with "happy talk" in response to human capital management. The homogeneous human capital management model of the past simply will not work with such diverse cohorts in the workforce; flexibility needs to be "burned in" to the human capital management model.

ETHNIC & RACIAL DIVERSITY

The bar chart in Figure 3 represents the two major ethnic minorities in the U.S. and their representation across each of the four generational cohorts. Casey states, "diversity in the workforce is not just a number, it is a reality; companies have been paying lip service to diversity in the workplace for years." Just how diverse the U.S. population is can be illus-

trated by what's happening in the current presidential elections. For the first time in history, the Democratic Party is likely to nominate a woman or a person of color as the Democratic nominee. It is time to recognize that the U.S. is a very diverse nation and that diversity in the workplace is a topic of great importance.

INCREASING EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

The proportion of college graduates in the United States is increasing. However, the percent of graduates as compared to overall population is problematic. Consider the following statistics:

- o Currently between 25-30% of the U.S population attains a college degree.
- o In the future two-thirds (66%) of all new jobs created will want college grads to fill them.

It is not difficult to see the problem here for employers. Not only will there be a shortfall in the number of college graduates to meet demands, but there is also going to be a severe shortage of graduates with "requisite skills." The ramifications of the "skills shortfall" are already being felt by companies. Tom Casey warns that HR professionals need to look at this issue directly and acknowledge that their companies will need to get into the education business. Companies will need to fill a larger education role in teaching skills to employees through training and development. Casey points out that companies of any size "will need to get serious about training and development; you are in the education business."

GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

In addition to a deficit of skilled, educated employees in the workforce, companies are now dealing

with the challenge of employee commitment. Statistics show that for both male and female workers, there is a decline in the level of responsibility that workers want to take on in their careers. Boomers joined the workforce with the expectation

Figure 4

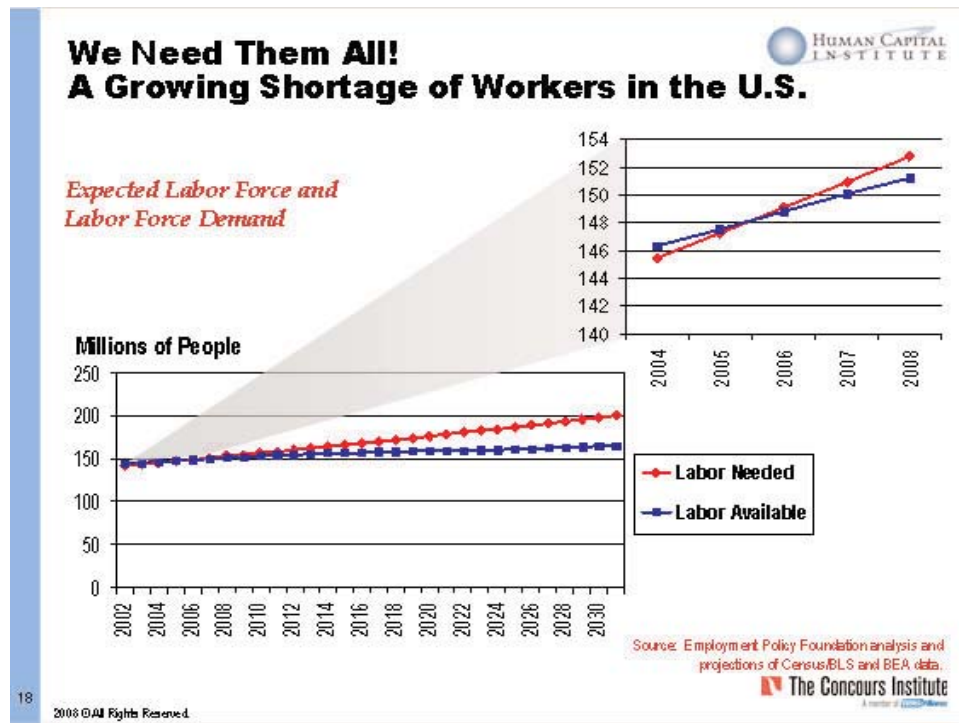
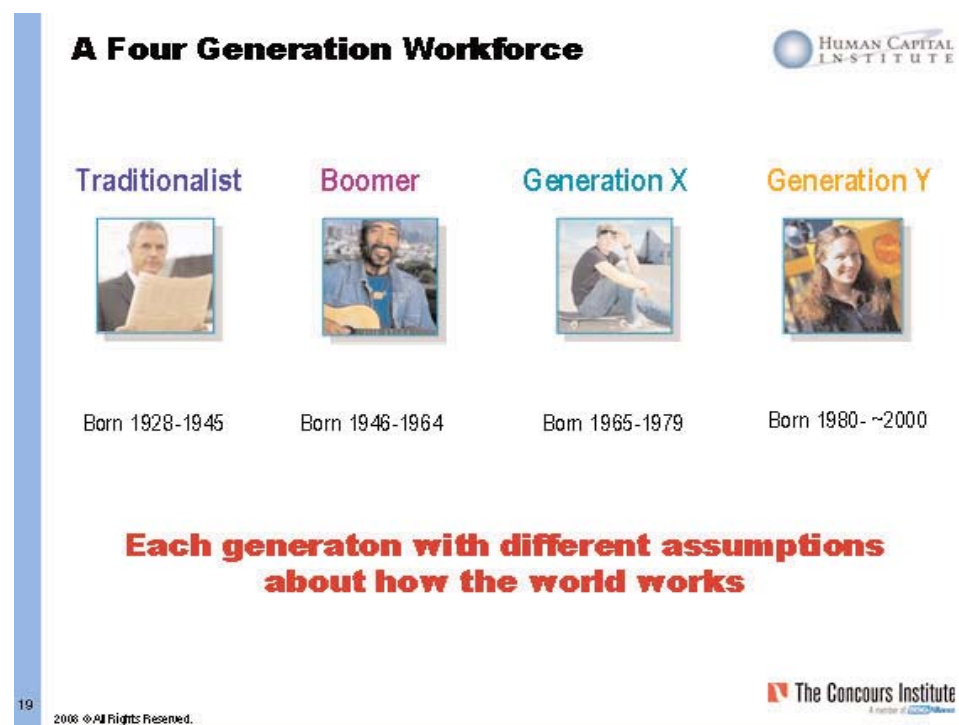


Figure 5



of getting more responsibility and moving up the career ladder. "It was the reason we went to work," says Casey. Attitudes about allegiance to work started to change with Gen X workers and now that Gen Y's have entered the workforce, the change is even more dramatic. Taking on more responsibility is a "huge" issue for Gen Y workers; for them it is all about flexibility. Restlessness and a desire for mobility are more important to Gen Y. Companies are figuring out that they must respond to this new paradigm and that the generation that "lived to work" is a thing of the past. As companies scramble to find numbers of workers with requisite skills set, flexibility will become part of the talent model. Figuring out just how much flexibility they can "burn in" to their organizations is a direct response to the changing expectations of young workers. Work and career flexibility are "non negotiable" for many millennials.

GROWING SHORTAGE OF WORKERS IN THE U.S.

According to a 2005 Labor Force report, a projected shortfall in workers is imminent in the U.S. It won't just be the U.S. that will struggle to find skilled workers; developing countries like India will also face shortages. The more specialized the skill set that is needed, the more difficult it will be for companies to attract workers with appropriate skills. Demographics, skills, and education are all factors that will contribute to the labor shortages which will have differing impacts by industry segment. Figure 4 illustrates the continuing trend of worker shortages by year.

EXPERIENCES OF THE FOUR GENERATIONS

In order to understand the distinctions between the four generation cohorts and understand what is driving their expectations, one must examine the historical and cultural context that shaped each cohort. Figure 5 shows each of the four generations currently in the workforce.

TRADITIONALISTS

Traditionalists, born between 1928 and 1945, were raised in homogeneous families and neighborhoods. This generation witnessed the rise of the white collar job and a strong commitment to higher education. Traditionalists have a respect for authority and place a lot of value in receiving financial rewards and having security. A good example of the focus on security needs can be seen in how important health care is to this generation.

BOOMERS

The baby boom generation, born between 1946 and 1964, was shaped by the Vietnam War; the Civil Rights movement; and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, John F Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy. Boomers are more suspicious of authority than their parents as a result of events like Watergate and unpopular wars. Boomers are competitive by nature, but they do show some commitment to making a better world.

GENERATION X

Generation Xers were born between 1964 and 1980 - the oldest Gen X's are in their early 40s now. This generation saw the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. They were the first to experience high divorce rates amongst their parents, and most had some exposure to parents or relatives losing jobs to the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s. The growth of the Internet and global access to information created a generation that is information rich. Generation Xers asked the question, "where can I get the information?" Generation Xers are self-reliant and have clear tribal affiliations.

To illustrate the importance of the tribe to Gen X, Casey recounts a story about how one of the Big Four Accounting firms planned to recruit and hire several Generation X accountants. The firm was interested in hiring three Gen X employees, but was aware that the three were part of a tribe of six individuals who were very close. In an effort to hire the three desired individuals, the accounting firm made offers of employment to the entire tribe of six friends. The accounting firm was unsuccessful in hiring any of the six individuals, however, because the firm had failed to realize the existence of a seventh member of the tribe. All were lost to a competitor firm who had been successful in wooing the entire group.

GENERATION Y

Generation Y, born after 1980, is challenging traditional hiring and recruiting practices. Companies don't have a lot of experience with this generation and are still figuring out what motivates this group. There will be a struggle for some time as to how to

manage Generation Y, which comprises not only the largest consumer group but the largest employee group as well. Gen Y's are the children of the Boomers and the siblings of Generation X. Generation Y's are very upbeat and optimistic despite having been exposed to routine violence in schools and terrorism. Events such as the Columbine school shootings and September 11th terrorist attacks created an almost constant state of vigilance for many of these young people. Exposure to technology became ubiquitous for this generation and the comfort level with the use of technology is unprecedented. The family-centric model created a very pro-child environment; Generation Y listens to their parents and respect authority. Generation Y is pro-learning, spiritual by nature, and socially conscious with a very high self esteem. They like to be mentored by Boomers rather than peers; and while they have a high respect for older and more authoritarian role models, they don't have a high regard for organizations. As a result of the culture and influences that have shaped Generation Y, they are trustful of authorities, respect their parents as role models, and recognize that work is just one priority in life, not the priority.

The diversity in background, experience and expectations of the four generational cohorts require different approaches to managing them in the workplace. The key to managing different generations lies in understanding the drivers of the differences and leveraging unique characteristics to create win-wins for employees, their cohorts, and their employers. Managing the multi-generational workforce requires that each distinct cohort in the workforce be considered individually from the

standpoint of career expectations, mobility, development, and recruitment. To ignore the needs and wants of one cohort over another is a very risky practice.

Figure 6

Practical Steps for Attracting and Retaining Y's

1. Address parents as an explicit part of your workforce strategy - messaging, awareness, concerns
2. Shift performance management to tasks, not time - allow (encourage) time shifting and asynchronous work
3. Design jobs - and the workplace - for collaboration
4. Invest in technology
5. Encourage the Boomers in your midst to mentor Y's
6. Coach managers to provide frequent acknowledgement and feedback
7. Challenge Y's with tasks that require "figuring out"
8. Re-design career paths: more frequent, smaller steps - lateral moves - not necessarily up

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Figure 7

Happy to Do the Task, but Not the Time

But... I can't find any young people willing to take the job!

Everyone in my department works 60 hours a week - always have and always will.

Long hours are not daunting; they are willing to put in the time. Forget time clocks: they will work long hours on their own schedules, not yours.

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ATTRACTING AND RETAINING GENERATION Y

The most pressing challenge for employees today is to figure out how to attract and retain Generation Y

talent. The task is daunting because this generation has such different attitudes and expectations than previous generations. As Tom Casey points out previously, companies are still figuring out how to manage Gen Y employees. They had better figure out how to do it soon, because this challenge can no longer be ignored. Figure 6 outlines some practical steps for attracting and retaining Gen Y employees.

Companies need to figure out what will attract Gen Y's to their organization, and then the challenge will be to retain them. Tom Casey points out that in the late 1990s stock options were a perk offered by many companies to attract employees. Stocks options are of very little interest to Gen Y's, because the return on investment for stocks is generally at least three years - an eternity for Gen Y. The only reasonable way to figure out what this cohort wants is to engage these employees in

helping to shape the company culture, work environment, and compensation packages. One thing is certain, companies cannot hope to attract a new generation of employees without figuring out what drives their expectations.

Recruiting Gen Y requires a completely new set of tactics than were previously used with success. Gen Y is comprised of born consumers, and success in marketing a company (recruiting) means that organizations need to speak directly to Gen Y expectations.

U.S. ARMY RECRUITING STRATEGY FOR GENERATION Y

One employer that has had to change its recruiting strategy for Gen Y is the U.S. Army. The Army has continuously changed its recruiting message over the years to appeal to each different generation. The Army's message to Traditionalists focused on authority figures and encouraged Traditionalists to join the ranks of authority. An anti-authority message was marketed to the Boomer generation, while recruiting the Gen Xers focused on technology and collaboration while respecting uniqueness. The U.S. Army has continuously changed its marketing strategy to appeal to each successive generation of potential recruits. Today's Army recruiting tactics have changed again; its marketing and messaging are being developed to attract young recruits. The Army, like other employers, has focused on the parents as a way to get their message to Gen Y. The overall message to parents is "you've done a great job raising these kids; let us help you develop them even more". The key to marketing to Generation Y must focus on differentials. The differentials include how to develop and communicate strategies that speak directly to Generation Y.

TIME AS A DIFFERENTIAL

The definition of time depends upon which cohort is defining the concept. Companies are aware that young workers are not going to work the types of hours that older generations have done. It is a struggle for companies to even get Generation Y workers in the door, and companies are seeking ways to address the aspects of time. It is widely acknowledged by most that it is not how much time someone spends at work, but rather what they accomplish in that time that is most important. Continuous connectivity and the attitude that they can work anywhere at anytime, mean that Gen Y employees expect to work on their schedule, not yours.

The importance of managing the expectations of all cohorts in the workforce cannot be over emphasized. Generation Y employees are going to require a lot of energy from other cohorts within their organization, but they should not get all the attention. Table 1 illustrates some of the steps that organizations should take to manage the expectations of Generation X and Boomer employees in the workforce.

RETIRING RETIREMENT

There is a definite correlation between overall population demographics and employee demographics in companies. People are living longer and employers are already seeing trends toward employees having longer careers. Individual who retired in 2000 will, on average, spend 25 years in retirement. Many people are now thinking about "career decelerations" as opposed to retirement because they can't imagine 25 idle years - not to mention such an extended period without income. Employees may

Table 1

Generation X	Boomers
<p>Help them broaden their "fall back" options - increase their sense of self-reliance.</p> <p>Don't require moves that sever social connections</p> <p>Give them choice and control over their career paths</p> <p>Leverage their entrepreneurial instincts</p> <p>Provide family-friendly flexibility</p> <p>Invest in technology and provide the time required to incorporate it</p> <p>Develop the leadership skills required to navigate the Boomer-Y love fest</p> <p>Seek out their views and be prepared to hear they don't like the way Boomers have run things!</p>	<p>Retire retirement - encourage them to stay</p> <p>Create a carillon of bell-shaped curve career options - including cyclic work</p> <p>Offer them options for greater responsibility (as well as less)</p> <p>Allow them to "win"</p> <p>Encourage giving back - through mentoring, community service, knowledge sharing.</p> <p>Provide opportunity (time and coaching) to experience new technology</p>

retire from one company or career only to move to another company or in another direction. For companies struggling to attract and retain talent, looking at potential retirees and enticing them to stay in the workforce is a sound strategy. Remember, many of these folks will want to keep working; they can as easily leave one company for another. Don't assume that workers on the "back nine" of their careers are headed for retirement; open up a dialogue and opportunities to reengage these folks through career development. As labor markets tighten, companies will all be competing for the same talent pool.

One way to look at careers may be by viewing different work periods as being more transitional than final. Employees can transition through careers by using a series of "on-ramps" and "off-ramps" with changes in responsibility and velocity depending on energy, experience, and enthusiasm. Figure 8 illustrates how employees are likely to "rethink" the

concept of retirement in lieu of on and off ramps or cyclic work periods. Across the globe, workers are delving into cyclical work, which simply means that many people see work as being intermittent rather than continuous. Workers are no longer thinking of the traditional continuous career and retirement, instead people envision work segments punctuated by periods of non-work or sabbaticals.

ACCOMODATING FOUR GENERATIONS

In order to accommodate the four generations, companies are going to have to implement the following four critical steps:

- o Insure flexibility
- o Create educational opportunities for as long as the employee is working
- o Create signature experiences for employees to attract and retain them
- o Re-recruit employees everyday

According to Tom Casey, "managing human assets is the challenge right now" for HR leaders. A few key metrics help to illustrate the urgency that is required now to manage distinct workforces.

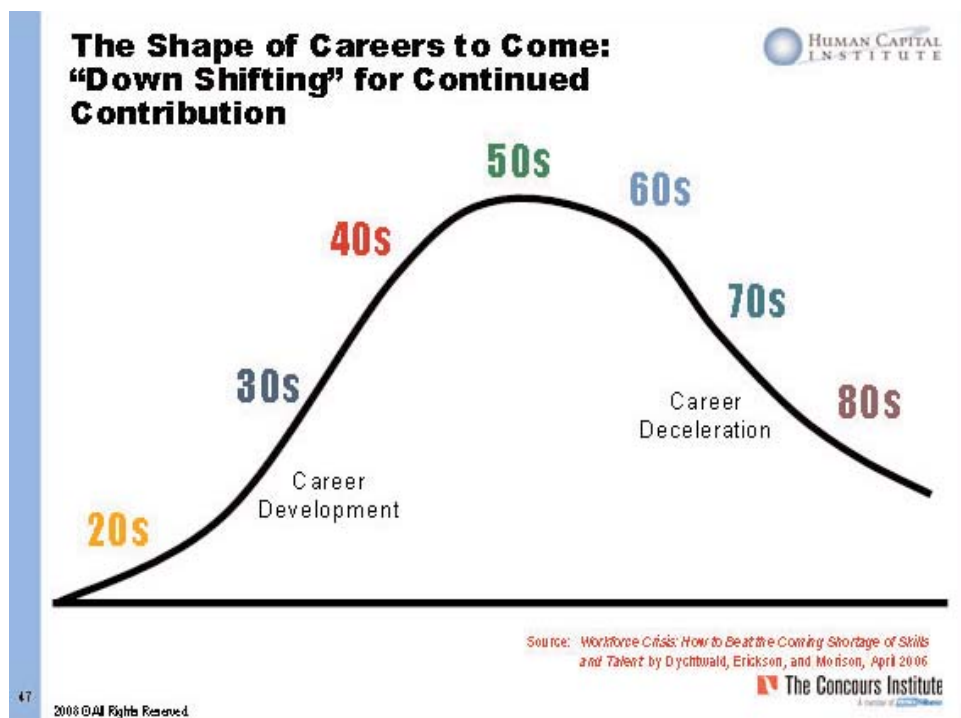
- o +55 is the fastest growing population in the current workforce
- o +65 is the second fastest growing population in the workforce
- o 40% of MIT graduates are from outside the U.S. Historically students came to the U.S. and colleges like MIT because of the quality of the education and because they wanted to live and work in the U.S. Today, a large percentage of foreign grads are returning to their home countries to work, leaving a talent shortage.
- o 600,000 vs. 75,000 are the numbers, respectively, of engineering graduates annually from China and the U.S. These numbers reinforce the reality that the future U.S. workforce is facing not only a worker shortage but also a skills shortage.

Tom Casey gives three requisites that are critical components of future workforce planning initiatives:

1. Recognize all four generations of cohorts in the workforce.
2. Acknowledge that one-size-fits-all management is not going to work.
3. Adopt a sense of urgency - opt for "speed now" and "elegance later"

Casey addresses a number of specific challenges related to human capital management for HR professionals and corporate leaders. It isn't enough for companies to say that they are the best place to work and have a great corporate culture. Casey terms this "happy talk" that does little to serve as a key differentiator for a company of choice. Companies that are really having success in the areas of talent attraction, retention and workforce planning are concentrating on three or four areas where they can claim bragging rights. Creating signature experiences as told through storytelling is a

Figure 8



key differentiator for many organizations. Casey suggests that HR professionals look at Fortune's top ten companies list and review their best practices in talent management. Casey believes that leading edge companies are focusing on creating signature experiences in areas such as: hiring, employee development, recognition and rewards, and talent promotion. Another strategy that is gaining popularity is hiring by team, which focuses on collaboration and exposes employees from different generations to the hiring process.

CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF HR IN MANAGING THE MULTIGENERATIONAL WORKFORCE & PUTTING WORK IN PERSPECTIVE

Workforce planning is *the* priority for HR, says Casey, when it comes to managing the multigenerational workforce. HR needs to be ahead of the worker shortages by focusing on workforce planning. HR departments that don't take this issue seriously are putting themselves and their organizations at risk. Right now there are sectors in the U.S. economy that are running out of workers. Healthcare is facing critical shortages of nurses and radiologists; and in the energy sector, there's already a shortage of engineering talent. Survival of an enterprise will be contingent upon the company being successful at attracting talent from a diminishing pool of qualified workers. A poll conducted by SHRM in 2006 stated that 70% of the HR community was not worried about the challenges of staffing related to an aging and retiring workforce. This type of "head in the sand" attitude is going to be detrimental to many organizations. HR departments will need to experience a "disaggregating and a reconstitution" of the traditional HR operations

model. According to Casey, HR should be focusing on critical areas such as: learning and development, recognition and reward, talent acquisition, and workforce planning. These four components will determine talent readiness.

Gen Y employees don't have the same level of commitment to work that Traditionals and Boomers have. While Boomers work long hours and see work as an extension of their life, Gen Y workers have no intention of defining themselves through their jobs. Organizations are going to need to adapt to new workplace attitudes about the role of work. Many Boomer parents are acutely aware that their own children have chosen careers that allow a better balance between work and life. Gen X and Gen Y employees are not lazy; they simply have a different set of priorities than their parents when it comes to work. Gen Y will enter professions like investment banking and consulting that have typically demanded total commitment and long hours. But even the monetary rewards that enticed workers into such fields are probably not enough to get Gen Y to sign over their lives. Gen Y wants to do a good job for their employers, but work isn't all they want to do.

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PRESENTER

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Tom Casey is an expert in the development of organizational transformation strategies for rapidly growing multinational or transitioning organizations. He has consulted in over 20 countries and virtually every economic sector.

Tom is the author of more than 60 articles that have been published in a range of magazines, including President and CEO Magazine, HR Magazine, Human Resources Executive, Personnel Journal, Compensation and Benefits Review, Training and Development Magazine, HRO Today, and Management World. He also authored 2 books focused on human resources practices in Latin America. >p>Tom is frequently interviewed about human resource topics and quoted in the media - for example, television (ABC Nightline, CNN, WCVB Boston, Monitor News); radio (ABC and CBS affiliates, NPR); newspapers (The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, The Boston Globe, Investors Business Daily, The Financial Times, The Washington Post, The Boston Business Journal); and numerous other domestic and international publications. He has been profiled in TIME Magazine and Electronic Business. Before joining BSG Concours, Tom was a Principal with Mellon Financials Human Resources and Investor Solutions division where he was the Eastern Region Leader for the Human Capital consulting practice. Previously, he was a Partner in the Human Resource Consultancy of PricewaterhouseCoopers L.L.P. This group was acquired by Mellon Financial in January 2002. Tom's final PwC position was as the Talent Management Solution Set leader. Prior to joining PwC, Tom was a Vice President with Arthur D. Little International, where he completed expatriate assignments in Europe and South America. Still earlier, he was a Partner with Harbridge House, Inc.

Tom has a bachelor of education degree from the University of Alaska. He also holds M.A. and M.B.A. degrees from Rivier College, N.H. where his studies focused on strategy, organizational development, psychology, and human resources management. He is a graduate of the Yale School of Management Executive Management Program. As well he is a licensed clinical social worker in Massachusetts and accredited as a senior professional in human resources (SPHR) by the Society for Human Resources Management.

Tom is both a United States Air Force and Army veteran with service in Vietnam. He retired from the Army Reserve as a Lt. Colonel.

PANELIST

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Shelley Schmoker is the Vice President of Product Management for StepStone Solutions. Shelley's career focus has been on research and product marketing in the Talent Management industry. Prior to joining StepStone, she held director level positions at Hire.com, Convergys, and Authoria. In her current role, Shelley works with StepStone developers and customers across the globe to drive a continuous commitment to market leading product innovation.

StepStone is one of the world's largest providers of on-demand, talent management solutions, offering a portfolio of technology, software and online services that enable organizations to attract, recruit, develop, retain and manage the best available talent. For more information, we invite you to visit www.stepstonesolutions.us

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Prior to joining the Human Capital Institute, Bill was the Founding Director of AIRS Human Capital Solutions, and served as Director of Training and Curriculum Development from 1997 to 2003. An early Internet adopter and advocate of its far-reaching potential, Bill developed his practical experience by establishing an Internet-centric executive search practice focused on telecommunications. This endeavor helped lay the groundwork for the significant contributions he has made to the core curriculum of AIRS. Bill earned a BS Degree from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and spent 10 years as a journalist working for several media organizations, including ESPN and the Rocky Mountain News, before entering the recruiting industry.

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ABOUT STEPSTONE



StepStone Solutions, part of StepStone ASA, provides software for the complete spectrum of Talent Management, which enables organisations to find, recruit, retain and manage talent. More than 1,100 worldwide customers of every size and industry trust in our solutions - including Akzo Nobel,

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ABOUT THE HUMAN CAPITAL INSTITUTE

The Human Capital Institute is a catalyst for innovative new thinking in talent acquisition, development and deployment. Through research and collaboration, our programs collect original, creative ideas from a field of top executives and the brightest thought leaders in strategic HR and talent management. Those ideas are then transformed into measurable, real-world strategies that help our members attract and retain the best talent, build a diverse, inclusive workplace, and leverage individual and team performance throughout the enterprise.