

Excerpted from: <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/data/320/5873/250b/DC1/1>



Science Magazine Podcast

Transcript, 11 April 2008 show

http://podcasts.aaas.org/science_podcast/SciencePodcast_080411.mp3

Begin excerpt:

Music

Host – Robert Frederick

Generation Y entered the workforce a few years ago now, and many of that generation now have doctorates and are starting their scientific careers in earnest. This week, ScienceCareers takes a look at these new young scientists to make sense of this new workforce and the workplace that Generation Y-ers are entering. Here's a preview, with contributing editor Kate Travis and contributing writer Lucas Laursen.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

Generation Y are a group of headphone wearing, job-hopping slackers.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Excuse me? We're technologically savvy, career-focused optimists. I don't blame you for that opinion. There are a lot of misconceptions about us – you know – Generation Y or Millennials.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

Millennials?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

People who came of age in the new millennium. Not everyone agrees on the definition of Generation Y, but generally it's people born after 1980. Sorry, you don't qualify.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

Excuse me, I'm Generation X and I'm not that much older than you. How different could our generations be?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Very different, according to Reena Nadler. She's a Millennial, and program director of LifeCourse Associates, a marketing and human resources consulting company.

Interviewee – Reena Nadler

We've found that many Millennials object to the term "GenY," because it implies that we are just an extension of Generation X. One of the messages that we think is really important to learn about this youth generation is that we represent a very strong break from the styles and attitudes of Generation X.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

Meaning you all slack off even more than we GenX-ers supposedly do?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Hardly. Instead, as Paul Redmond of the University of Liverpool points out, we Generation Y-ers are the most educated generation to date.

Interviewee – Paul Redmond

They've got very strong values about things like the world, and business, which mark them out as quite different from Generation X, the generation that preceded them. I think particularly the key characteristics are they're driven by change, challenge, and choice. So they like lots of variety, lots of change, and lots of choice.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

Wait a minute, aren't all these generational labels a little contrived?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

That's a typical response from a Generation X-er. Yes, they may be generalizations, but we're all influenced by our surroundings. Again, here's Reena Nadler.

Interviewee – Reena Nadler

Certainly not every Millennial is, you know, pressured and close with parents and has been sheltered their whole life and has a high sense of happiness and confidence. That doesn't describe everybody. But that is sort of the direction in which young people are moving. The time at which you come along deeply affects who you are and what place you have in the world.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

OK, so we can make some generalizations. So, then, what does Generation Y want out of a job?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

For starters, we GenY-ers like managers who listen to us.

Interviewee – Avril Henry

The first thing that they're looking for is they actually want to be listened to.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Avril Henry runs a human resources management consultancy in Australia.

Interviewee – Avril Henry

The biggest complaint people under the age of 26, our GenY's, have about current managers in the workplace is that, "They don't listen to us. They think because we're young and have less experience, we have nothing to offer." They're also, interestingly, the most technologically savvy generation in employment history. They know more about technology than veterans, boomers, and X put together.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

And what do you all expect to be able to do with all that knowledge?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Well, listen to this.

Interviewee – Avril Henry

Gen Y just want to be the CEO tomorrow.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Avril Henry may have been kidding, but she's on to something. We GenY-ers aim high, and have little patience for grunt work. Again, Paul Redmond.

Interviewee – Paul Redmond

Some employers are finding it hard to integrate Generation Y's into the workplace, particularly in the first few years when work is fairly routine. So employers are finding it hard to retain good Generation Y graduates because if they get bored, they tend to go.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

And Reena Nadler says we hop from job to job because we don't want to get started in the wrong direction.

Interviewee – Reena Nadler

When a Millennial leaves one job and goes to another, they tend to be thinking about how that will affect their long-term careers. And that's very different from what many employers see as the typical job hopping, and really attribute to us, which is just moving from gig to gig because we have no institutional loyalty and don't really care.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

Thinking about their long-term career? At age 22? Isn't that a little early?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Heck, at age 22, most of us are halfway through our first 10-year plan. But Paul Redmond advises young people to keep their long-term plans flexible.

Interviewee – Paul Redmond

They've come up from a very logical sort of view about careers. But keeping your options open is actually, you know, a career skill.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

OK, so Generation Y-ers do care about their jobs and their career paths. But they sure don't sound like it to their employers with their casual, informal emails and office behavior.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Maybe we just get straight to the point. That said, Avril Henry has some advice for us.

Interviewee – Avril Henry

You need to understand the communication style of other generations and that it's more formal and less informal. So you need to learn more about the language to use when you are talking to the older generations.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

And while Millennials may not always communicate well to their employers, we like our managers to communicate to us how we're doing.

Interviewee – Avril Henry

GenY want regular feedback. Well, not once a year in the performance appraisal process or even quarterly. They want to be told every week, "You're doing a good job." Or, if they're not doing a good job, "Tell me what I'm not doing well." So they're looking for that regular constructive feedback.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

OK, that's good advice for people who manage GenY-ers. What else should employers know?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Well, Paul Redmond says it's not always about the money.

Interviewee – Paul Redmond

What Generation Y seems to want is change, the idea that they're working for something that's important, that fits in with their value system, and the idea that it's a noble calling is very important to Generation Y. And we're finding that some employers are discovering that just paying people more money isn't a great motivating force for Generation Y.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

And we're looking to learn from good managers from the boomer generation, folks born right after World War II. Again, Reena Nadler.

Interviewee – Reena Nadler

Boomers respond really, really well to one-on-one relationships, and Millennials really want to build mentoring relationships with older adults. So this is a huge opportunity for workplaces to really pair older and younger workers and get the best out of the both of them.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

So which generation's perspective is best?

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

None of them are. As Avril Henry points out, no generation is right or wrong, we are just different.

Interviewee – Avril Henry

We've had our expectations and our values created by different social, economic, political, and historical events. And so therefore we need to understand the point of view and the position that each generation is coming from to be able to effectively communicate and work together.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

That's a good point. I'll copy that down.

Contributing Writer – Lucas Laursen

Don't bother. I have it in an mp3 file. For Generation Y, this is Lucas Laursen.

Contributing Editor – Kate Travis

And for Generation X and Science Careers, this is Kate Travis.

Host – Robert Frederick

You can read more about Generation Y in the workplace in this week's ScienceCareers, www.sciencecareers.org.

Music

End excerpt.