



Leadership Development

The Young Generation – Generation whY

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Think about the members of your Squadron.

How many are in their thirties or under?

In all likelihood there are few if any.

So what will your Squadron membership be in 10 years? In 15 years?

The baby-boomers off-spring have entered the workforce and they may be very casual in their dress, don't wear a watch and have a propensity for questioning everything. This is Generation Y, or, the Why Generation. Our challenge as an organization will be to attract and interest them in participating.

From their ranks will come the future leaders of our organization.



The Generations

- *Baby Boomers – Workaholics, Can-do*
- *Gen X – Skeptical, like their freedom*
- *Gen Y – Determined, like activism*

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According to the Conference Board, some 64 million skilled workers will be able to retire by the end of this decade and we will have to be recruiting new members from the younger generations.

The Baby Boomers are starting to retire and Generations X and Y will be stepping into their shoes in leading USPS into and through the 21st century.

Attributes and attitudes differ greatly between the generations. Baby boomers are Optimistic, Workaholics and have a can-do attitude; Gen Xers are Independent, Skeptical and like their freedom while Gen "Yers" are Hopeful, determined and like activism and the latest technology. Gen "Y" dislikes anything slow or that implies negativity



Generation Y

- *Born between 1977 & 1995*
- Over stimulated brains
- Unconventional dress
- Electronic appendages

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Generation "Yers" for our purposes are those born between 1975 and 1995 and there are 79.8 million of them.

They seem to share an over stimulated brain and it is often tuned to something other than work. They use technology – day and night - video and audio – so it's not so strange that Gen Y has developed such a distinct profile.

Their dress often is unconventional – – small statements that won't cause trouble. The most important decorations though are electronic – iPods, Blackberries, laptops – and they are used like extra limbs. - - They feel naked without them.



Gen Y Characterized

Self absorbed
Gregarious
Multitasking
Loud
Optimistic

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These younger people are characterized as self-absorbed, gregarious, multitasking, loud, and optimistic.

According to a leading generational-research firm, "Rainmaker Thinking", "This is the most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world. The good news is they're also going to be the most high-performing workforce in the history of the world. They walk in with more information in their heads, more information at their fingertips – and sure, they have high expectations, but they have the highest expectations first and foremost for themselves."



Survey of College Students

- Most own a computer and cell phone
- Most have a Facebook account
- Most use instant messaging
- Third own a blog and use websites as their primary source of news

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A recent survey of 8000 college students in the US found that almost all own a computer and cell phone and have a Facebook account. Most use instant messaging and a third own a blog and use websites as their primary source of news.



Recruiting Generation Y

- Emphasize shared values of USPS
- Interest them in civic service activities
- Use technology – brochure on flash drive

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To get noticed by Gen "Yers" an organization has to have what they call a "vision." They aren't impressed with mission statements, but they are looking for attributes that indicate shared values: public activism, flat hierarchies, participative decision making.

Gen "Yers" will be interested in our civic service activities: Safe Boating course, Cooperative Charting, Vessel Safety Checks, Environmental Programs.

To recruit "Yers" we would do better handing out flash drives with our PR materials rather than printed brochures.

It is for us, the Mature Generation and the Baby Boomers to stimulate and interest the "Yers" in a leadership role in furthering the purpose of USPS while bringing us into their world, the 21st century.



Retaining the Y Generation

- *Provide:*
- *A support network*
- **Work that challenges**
- **Caring relationships**
- **Mentors to guide and coach them**

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While getting Gen "Yers" to join the squadron will be a challenge, getting them to stay and take leadership positions will be even harder.

The key is the same one their parents have used their whole lives – loving, encouraging and rewarding them. What that amounts to for the squadron is a support network, work that challenges more than it bores and feedback.

The loyalty of twentysomethings is really based on the relationships they have with those directly above them. There is a perception among management that these relationships shouldn't be too personal, but that's how they know we care about them and their input.

We need to mentor, to guide and coach them along the path – not because we have always done it that way – but to let them develop their own ideas – and then be there to support and praise them or to catch them if they stumble.



Retaining the Y Generation

- Maintain a Casual atmosphere
- Allow to contribute in a substantial way
- Use email and text to communicate
- Assign to squadron web site or blog

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"Yers" are more likely to want to work in a casual atmosphere. The USPS uniform may not appeal to them at all.

"Yers" want to be able to contribute in a substantial way from the very beginning. Our challenge will be to get them plugged into jobs in the Squadron where they can be productive and feel like they are doing good work and challenge them to advance.

To schedule meetings we should send out emails or better yet text messages rather than mailing newsletters.

To meet them on their own turf, we could give Gen "Yers" the opportunity to work on the squadron's web site or to set up a squadron members' blog. Need a spreadsheet or PowerPoint presentation? Guess which generation loves to do that kind of stuff and can do it in half the time?



The "Why" Generation

- They ask "Why?" about everything
- Why do we have to do it that way?
- Why do I have to learn this?

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The "Y Generation" is also known as the "Why Generation."

They ask "why?" about everything. They are quick to question traditional ways.

We need to understand that asking why, is not a form of rebellion. Gen "Yers" have been taught from a very early age to question everything.

Leaders should be patient and understand that they need to explain why we do things. Leaders also need to be willing to listen to new members' concerns and suggestions.

Likewise, Squadron Education Officers and Operations Training presenters need to explain why their classes are important.

A major challenge for USPS then is to be willing to listen to new members including Gen "Yers", examine all our procedures and programs, and make the changes necessary to retain them and attract them into taking leadership roles.



Involve and Mentor

- "Yers" will not stay if not involved
- Give "Yers" real work
- Allow "Yers" to speak up
- Set up a formal Mentoring Program

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Involving new members has always been important. But for Gen "Yers" it is critical. They will not stay around if they are not involved.

Corporations have learned that giving "Yers" real work from day one can be very profitable. All they need is training and coaching.

Gen "Yers" are so vocal that they are not afraid to speak up at meetings. Quite often what comes out of their mouth is actually outside the box, something that none of us have ever thought about. It could be the breakthrough idea to re-vitalize the Power Squadron.

Squadrons should set up a formal mentoring program where every new member is assigned to a leader who will get to know the new member personally, find out what they like to do, then ensure that the member is given assignments where they can excel. Then the mentor should provide them with constant coaching and feedback



Relationships

- Relationships are important
- Give recognition and praise
- Get to know your new members
- Introduce them by name

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Relationships are very important to Gen "Yers". They often are looking for someone to be the Father Figure in their life. Their mentor should understand that they appreciate being treated like a son or daughter.

Recognition and praise is very important to Gen "Yers". Take every opportunity to recognize their accomplishments and this will lead them into undertaking more responsibilities. Some studies show that recognition should be given for even those things we take for granted. For instance, managers in restaurants have found that recognizing perfect attendance and work to standards is needed to keep Gen "Yers" employed.

Leaders should get to know their new members. Recognition includes being able to call them by name without looking at their name tag. Being able to compliment them when they are working with a committee or assisting with a squadron activity goes a long way and will lead them into taking more responsibility.

For example, the Vessel Safety Check Chairman might say this to a boat owner about to have his boat inspected by a Gen "Yer." : "Let me introduce you to Jim Jones, he crews on a 34 foot Sport Fisherman, he is very familiar with the Vessel Safety Check procedures and I know he will do a great job."



The Connected Generation

- "Yers" have always been connected
- Prefer learning by doing
- "Yers" are fast. They multitask constantly
- "Yers" crave interactivity

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As long as they have been alive, the Gen "Yers" world has been a connected place. While highly mobile, moving from work to classes to recreational activities, they are always connected.

The Gen "Yers" will probably not read the Ensign and they are more likely to read the Compass and the Inside USPS Bulletins.

Most "Yers" prefer to learn by doing rather than being told what to do. Whether this is due to growing up with video games is not clear but Gen "Yers" learn well through discovery – by exploring for themselves.

Whether it is the immediacy with which a response is expected or the speed at which they are used to receiving information, the Gen "Yers" are fast. They multitask, moving quickly from one activity to another, sometimes performing them simultaneously.

The "Yers" crave interactivity. The rapid pace with which they like to receive information means they often choose not to pay attention if a class is not interactive, unengaging, or simply too slow. Instructors should be aware of this and also understand that "Yers" desire to be connected with people and to be social as well as students. Recognition for completion of each session should be provided to keep the student engaged.



Gen Y Preferences

- Prefer working in teams
- Very achievement oriented
- Readily take part in community activities

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Gen "Yers" prefer to work in teams. A peer-to-peer approach is common, as well, where students help each other. In fact, Gen "Yers" find peers more credible than teachers when it comes to determining what is worth paying attention to.

The Gen "Yers" are very achievement oriented. They want parameters, rules, priorities, and procedures. They want to know the agenda. As a result, they like to know what it will take to achieve a goal. Their preference is for structure rather than ambiguity.

The Gen "Yers" readily take part in community activities. Given a choice, they seem to prefer working on things that matter, such as addressing an environmental concern or a community problem. They believe they can make a difference and that science and technology can be used to resolve difficult problems.



In closing

- We can't afford to ignore Gen "Yers"
- We need to understand them
- We should not be afraid of change
- We need to streamline USPS

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In closing:

It's time for USPS to get into the new millennium. We can't afford to ignore Generation Y, nor can USPS survive without them. They are here, they are now, and they are the future.

We need to dedicate ourselves to learning to speak their language. Dive into their world. When we get a chance we need to ask them questions and listen to their responses. Why? Because we can't lead them if we do not understand them.

Generation "Yers" are the leaders of tomorrow and we must introduce them to leadership positions in our organization so that we can continue being the leader in the field of Safe Boating Education.

Lastly, we should not be afraid to change; in fact, we should drive it! The "Yers", by their very nature, question rules, policies, and reasons behind them. We need to question our policies and procedures, and if we can't justify something, we should change it or throw it out.

In the process we will streamline the bureaucracy out of USPS, leaving behind the really important policies and procedures that can not be compromised. The freedoms that are left as a result of weeding out stale rules will create an environment that will allow our younger members to maximize their individual abilities to the betterment of USPS.