IS YOUR OFFICE SMART ENOUGH FOR GEN Y?

Retention of younger workers is a real problem... they are prone to quickly jump from one thing to another.
In the race to secure the best GenY hires, interviewing companies need to be conscious that the next generation interprets corporate values from a whole new perspective. To this audience, values should be about how your company will support their preferred work styles, protect the environment and ensure their personal safety.

Intelligent offices show GenY you walk your talk when it comes to valuing your employees and protecting the environment. As skills shortages once more take hold in many industries, intelligent buildings and tools to support flexible work styles will be key to attracting and retaining the very best graduates. Just as important, such changes have real potential to improve productivity and empower all employees – boosting bottom line performance across the board.
## VALUES & BUSINESS DRIVERS

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>ENTERPRISE PERSPECTIVE</th>
<th>EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAFETY</td>
<td>Ensuring best practice safety processes and awareness</td>
<td>Enterprise provides a safe place to work. Systems and processes are in place to ensure safety is the priority.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CULTURE</td>
<td>Energised, productive employees.</td>
<td>Great place to work.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional, 'switched on' place to do business.</td>
<td>Feel connected, supported and engaged across the globe with my colleagues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRODUCTIVITY</td>
<td>More effective employees - give back to the organisation.</td>
<td>Enterprise provides services and facilities that simplify my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>WORKLIFE BALANCE</td>
<td>Loyal, committed employees who choose to stay with the company longer.</td>
<td>Enterprise understands and supports my need to manage both work and personal life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLEXIBILITY</td>
<td>More effective employees - give back to the organisation.</td>
<td>Can work anywhere, anytime with the tools I need to do my job.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Support the ability of employees to time share, return to work. Less 'brain drain'.</td>
<td>Have a secure job to return to.</td>
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<tr>
<td>REDUNDANCY PROOFING</td>
<td>More productive employees.</td>
<td>Trust the availability of the tools and integrity of content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRANDING AND MARKET</td>
<td>Employees become strong advocates for the Enterprise, attracting quality employees.</td>
<td>Proud of where they work. Advocates to outsiders - This is a fantastic place to work.</td>
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<td>PERCEPTION</td>
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Table: Primary Attributes
Today’s graduates interview their employers – not the other way around. Secure in a world that has yet to say ‘No’ to them, they judge you based on your capacity to service their needs and values, which are markedly different from previous generations. And they are remarkably cynical about corporate promises. It is not enough to say you are ‘committed to the environment’, the green brigade want to know about the movement sensors that power down the lights in your empty meeting rooms and the rain water tank on your roof.

But far more important to this ‘centre of the universe’ generation, is your ability to demonstrate you care about and value them: their safety, lifestyle and preferred work patterns. While you still need to offer a competitive salary, a remuneration package is no longer just about the money – it’s about you empowering their ‘workstyle’ by providing the latest technology wherever they choose to work.

Dollars may attract GenY – but they don’t retain them. Many industry verticals are about to lose a generation of baby boomers with specialised domain expertise. In the oil and gas industry, this event is being tagged as the great ‘crew change’. Competition is fierce to attract the next generation into the right academic disciplines and to be the preferred employer of choice when they graduate. But, as the industry is discovering, it takes a lot more than a high salary to attract and retain GenY, especially if the work is in remote or harsh locations.

While younger workers have always moved around before settling down, this generation is particularly peripatetic. According to one executive, less than a quarter of his company’s new IT hires were still there after three years. Another commented,

“RETENTION OF YOUNGER WORKERS IS A REAL PROBLEM... THIS IS DEFINITELY AN ADHD GENERATION – THEY ARE PRONE TO QUICKLY JUMP FROM ONE THING TO ANOTHER.”

Beyond the crushing cost of employee churn, this is creating another – potentially more serious – issue. With GenY flitting from company to company, many businesses cannot interest enough qualified younger recruits to enter the leadership development pipeline. If this trend continues, a leadership gap will emerge, with succession benches getting dangerously empty.
So here is the question: How do you inspire loyalty in a generation that apparently doesn’t care about climbing the corporate ladder?

One answer is to invite them to work in an intelligent office with cool technology that: ensures their personal safety; allows flexible work practices by expanding beyond its physical boundaries to encompass home and client offices; and provides familiar tools to support collaboration and efficiency – as well as reducing your organisation’s carbon footprint.

This does not mean you need to relocate to another building. Your current office already has multiple digital systems: heating and air conditioning, lighting, communications, security, access control. To make it intelligent, you need to allow all these to work together with new levels of intelligence. This will mean both incorporating new technologies that will allow your building to sense location information in real time, and feeding this information into IT tools that make work life simple.

For example, in an intelligent building, smart printing interfaces will automatically send your document to the printer closest to where you’re sitting and show you a map so you can find it. Or, interactive models of your building will allow you to look up where a colleague sits on a floor plan and to open an interactive dialogue box to set up a meeting. At the same time, immersive visuals of building facilities will show you the resources available in that meeting room, so you can make sure it’s fit for purpose. These, and many other smart, self-help tools will remove the need for the vast majority of help-desk calls, eliminating IVR queues and other annoyances – and productivity drains – for this impatient generation.

To date, the benefits of embedding buildings with ‘sense and respond’ technology have been firmly focused on environmental outcomes. Sensors measure and capture energy consumption and the building powers down empty meetings rooms and unused appliances. You can also feed data into mashups accessible via the intranet or personal dashboards, allowing employees to monitor the status of the environmental footprint of their floor, control their personal energy consumption as a work group and take action to reduce it to meet measured targets. Imagine the impact of a display in your foyer that demonstrates how building smarts and staff are collaborating to save energy.

But this is just the start. The uses for real-time building information go way beyond reducing your energy consumption. Every office needs to provision employees and visitors with a number of services: a premises access card, meeting rooms, a hot desk, security authentication for access to wireless services, and usually a safety and emergency evacuation induction. An intelligent building creates the potential for a series of new services to support concierge desks in offering these services.

For example, a unifying smart card could become an employee or visitor’s ‘eBoarding Pass’ which stores and unlocks a series of pre-provisioned services on arrival, such as building access and bookings for a hot desk, meeting room, video conferencing facilities and a car park space. This enables visitors to automatically ‘check in’ to your building through kiosks in a registration lounge.
ENSURING PERSONAL SAFETY

These eBoarding passes will help building security and safety personnel to ‘see’ the building and its occupants in real time. In an emergency, new information – presented in visual overlays of the building floor plan – can support existing evacuation procedures. The visual display will show the precise location of personnel and identify who may have been left behind and need aid. The visual greatly assist in making informed decisions about how best to manage the evacuation and offers emergency response teams invaluable insight into hazardous conditions, people at greatest risk and the best route to reach them.

Your business will no longer have to rely solely on red-hat sporting Fire Wardens physically scanning every office and lavatory for stray employees. Instead, intelligent building evacuation management assistance will allow Wardens to account for every individual, both as they leave a floor and when they clear the building and reach a rally point.

ALLOWING FLEXIBLE WORK PRACTICES

The 9 to 5 day is dead. The office hours of the industrial era have never worked for parents or carers – but they are an anachronism to the (ironically) responsibility-free GenY. The next generation, so protective of its work/life balance, expects flexible hours and the opportunity to regularly work from home.

Today, there’s no reason they can’t. Over the past five years, virtual workers have increased 800%, with a growing trend in people conducting work from homes, client sites and even cafes. Globalisation and connectivity mean 70% of people in developed countries spend ten times longer per day interacting electronically than physically. By 2015, 80% of work outcomes will depend on collaboration – and most of it will not be face-to-face.

Freedom to fit work around life doesn’t just make employees happier, research shows that, on average, ‘distributed’ workers give back to the company more than 50% of the time they save. These people typically achieve their agreed-on results in fewer hours – and their work is usually of higher quality.

But expectations of the technology companies provide to support flexible work have changed. GenY expects the full range of IT support, including social networking tools, regardless of whether they are on site, connecting from home or at any random location. This will require:

- **Plug and play.** GenY likes the latest gadgets and wants to be able to use them at work or at home. In other words, they need a dynamic desktop environment where users can choose their favourite access device and seamlessly and securely connect to enterprise applications.

- **Data sharing.** You’ll also need a unified, enterprise-wide voice and knowledge management system that allows information sharing/access to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Traditional systems such as portal, file shares, collaboration rooms may not suffice. Wikis and Blogs are now the norm.

- **Single number access.** To improve efficiency, direct inward dialling will assign one phone number access to each person regardless of location, linking both desk and mobile handsets. GenY’s like to stay connected all day long, so ‘follow me’ telco services are not an intrusion – they are expected and welcome.

- **Network access.** Remote workers will demand wireless devices and universal network access and support from any location 24/7.

- **Virtual meetings.** Video teleconferencing capabilities will need to go beyond your meeting rooms and to be available on demand from portable devices. Many GenY live on Skype and expect corporate systems to provide a personal face-to-face video conference interface from any portable device – on demand.

- **These unified communications** capabilities will also enable cross-generational mentoring. As baby boomers and GenXs leave the workforce, the loss of corporate IP may create a knowledge vacuum. To address this gap, young employees will need to learn from and be mentored by experienced experts, even after they’ve left full time employment. Advanced communications technology will allow subject matter experts to be retained part time in a virtual learning academy that GenYs can tap into whenever they need help. This process will transfer critical knowledge from people leaving the workforce to those staying on, allowing retiring personnel to stay in touch, and extend their working life.
This means going beyond basic social networking applications. An intelligent building will also incorporate collaborative tools such as optional Automated Speech Recognition, which can record and play back meetings. This type of technology removes the redundancy involved in taking down handwritten notes and allows 'audio mining', where the system searches for previous meetings where similar topics have been discussed, giving meeting conveners access to (security appropriate) organisational views, insights or intelligence, they would normally never hear about.

Meeting rooms and workspaces will also eventually offer tabletop displays that allow several people to work independently or collaboratively without mouse or keyboard. Users will be able to 'grab' data with their hands and move information with simple gestures and touches. The surface also sees and interacts with objects placed on the screen, allowing people to move information between devices like mobile phones or cameras. Your tech savvy GenY hires are already aware of the new multi-touch surfaces currently hitting the market. They will soon expect to see this technology in your meeting rooms and workspaces.

CONCLUSION
The technology that underpins all the above scenarios is available right now. Organisations can use it to transform their office environment into an intelligent, highly efficient, attractive workplace that will empower employees and make corporate values real. This will not only help to attract and retain the best GenY graduates – it will lift productivity and innovation across your entire enterprise.

PROVIDING FAMILIAR TOOLS
GenY employees are underwhelmed by and increasingly vocal in condemning the capabilities of corporate applications. These hires are savvy techos, used to configuring wireless access points on the fly at university. They will not wait in line for a Field Service team. When the words "Service not available" appears, you can expect them to try to fix the problem themselves.

As more enter the workforce they will bring knowledge and skills about newer technology and expectations about how it should be used in their jobs. For example, young people routinely use social networking and collaborative technologies to connect with their friends and build professional networks. As a result, they are used to far more technologically-mediated communications and want their employers to adopt more of these tools in the workplace so they can use them to link to their professional networks, keep up with peer groups and forge knowledge links.

To a digital native, it seems bizarre that the cool software they enjoy on their home computers and iPhones is not available from their billion dollar corporation. While, today, this complaint is brushed off as whining, in the race to attract GenY talent, it will become an increasingly serious issue.
About CSC
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