

In addition to new products and franchise opportunities, many attendees at the recent National Restaurant Association show in Chicago were wondering how to manage a new generation of employees.



FOOD AND DRINK MAY/JUNE 2004

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NEWS

# Whys Up

Pierced, dyed, tattooed and disillusioned, Generation Why is possibly the most poorly managed segment of the work force.

**THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY HEAVILY RELIES ON** 16- to 24-year-olds to operate successfully. From taking orders to pouring drinks, serving burgers to bussing tables, it's the young and sturdy that most often fill these positions.

Although the customer-driven environment of the foodservice industry depends on its employees, this market sees some of the highest turnover rates. Eric Chester, consultant, motivational speaker and the author of *Employing Generation Why: Understanding, Managing and Motivating the Young New Work Force*, appeared at the National Restaurant Association's 2004 Restaurant, Hotel/Motel Show in May to explain exactly what "Generation Why" is, and how employers can best manage these employees.

Generation Why – also called the Generation 'Net or the Millennials – comprises more than 68 million people born between 1980 and 1994. "Forty million people who fall into Generation Why are working full time," Chester said. And employers will find themselves up against a brick wall of distrust and cynicism if they don't understand this group.

As a Baby Boomer, Chester said he grew up with the belief that hard work pays off. "Baby Boomers set out to change the world, and assumed their children would do the same," he said. However, their Generation Why offspring grew up in a different era.

"These are Americans who have never known a world without cellular phones, cable TV and laptops," he said. "They are used to instant everything.

They believe they can separate effort from reward, and they know justice can usually be bought." The result, he said, has been a generation of youth that appears disengaged, disrespectful and skeptical to many Baby Boomer employers. Generation Why has seen corporate scandals rob employees. They have seen downsizing and offshoring. They know that working hard doesn't always pay off, and when an employer says jump, they ask, "Why?"

With an ever-widening gap between the Baby Boomers and Generation Why, managing this work force is an undeniable issue. Chester names four main challenges that foodservice companies face with their work force: recruiting, training, managing and retaining a quality staff. "Employers can't always do what they've done and expect to get what they've always gotten," Chester said. Generation Why grew up in a different era, with different challenges and opportunities. For employers to harness the positive attributes of this group, Chester told his restaurant show audience in Chicago, they must take a new approach.

The impatience that employers see in Generation Why is a result of an immediate-gratification-based society, which also echoes the same demands of many customers. Speed often equals greater profits, and these employees can help employers tune in to more efficient systems. This requires that employers listen to what employees have to say, Chester said. "Employers must tune in to Generation Why's frequency," he said. "Pigeonholing them or stripping their identity is a good way to get them to tune out. Survey employees on job satisfaction issues, and you will get a lot of honest responses."

The hiring process is another crucial way in which employers can reach out to the patience-lacking youth. "How long, from application to hire, does it take?" Chester asked. "If it takes too long, the candidate may have already gone to the competition." He cited one company that puts candidates directly in touch with the director of human resources. She personally answers all employment inquiries and schedules an interview within minutes of the conversation. Chester said this tactic has resulted in long-term employee loyalty.

Telling the truth to candidates about what the job entails also strengthens the eventual relationship between the employer and employee. "Don't say the job is all about having fun, and then make the employees mop up spills on the first day," Chester explained. "If there are unpleasant tasks involved in the job, say so up front."

Chester also suggested recognition and reward programs. "Rewards encourage repeat behavior," he said. "Hourly employees may not work harder just because business has picked up if they have no incentive. Find ways to reward them when their productivity leverages profits."

Ultimately, Chester said, taking a new approach to Generation Why employees will lead to greater productivity and employee satisfaction, and reduced turnover. He estimated that for each \$6.50-per-hour employee that resigns, it costs the employer \$3,500 to fill the position. At this rate, the cost of mismanaging Generation Why employees is too great for employers to ignore.

-Hanna Aronovich

More information can be found at [www.generationwhy.com](http://www.generationwhy.com).

## Dry Advice About Wine



Contemporary diners are looking for the right wines to match their lifestyles, and winemakers are working to produce light, fresh varietals at reasonable prices, as well as offering laid-back food pairings, for adventurous customers.

Italian winery Ecco Domani recently introduced its newest 2003 and 2002 vintages to markets in the United States, Canada, U.K. and Japan. Diners and shoppers may be attracted to bottles of the new 2003 Pinot Grigio delle Venezie, 2002 Merlot delle Venezie and 2002 Chianti wines by their hip

designs, bright colors and \$10 price points, but the company says the true attraction is what's inside.

Ecco Domani, which means "here's tomorrow," prides itself on contemporary style and taste – wines are not oak aged in order to preserve full tastes of the fruit. Ecco Domani's winemaker Fabrizio Gatto (shown above) says his winemaking team strives to create wines that offer a combination of basic wine components: proper acidity, inviting aromas, moderate alcohol levels and a high level of food compatibility.

"My goal is to start with the best grapes possible and reflect the fruit flavors in the finished wines," he said at a recent tasting with **Food and Drink** editors.

According to Gatto, the company has experienced positive growth since introducing its debut selection in 1996. This is due in part to growing appreciation for wine and wine culture in the United States.

"I have seen the appreciation of Italian style, and wines like Pinot Grigio grow enormously among Americans," he said.

Both 2002 and 2003 brought unusually dry weather to the provinces of Siena and Florence within the region of Tuscany where the Sangiovese grapes – the main component of Chianti – are grown, as well as in the northeastern Tre Venezie region, where Ecco Domani grows its Pinot Grigio and Italian Merlot grapes.

Although precipitation reached record lows, the company says its grapes did not suffer, but instead were able to mature with high levels of sugar and intensity.

"2003 saw the driest growing season Italy has seen in 50 years, **"2003 saw the driest growing season Italy has seen in 50 years, which led to excellent intensity."**

-Fabrizio Gatto

which led to high sugar levels in the grapes of northern Italy and excellent intensity in the wine," Gatto said.

Ecco Domani recommends that diners make food pairing decisions based on their personal preferences. However, the company does have several suggestions for the new vintages.

Ecco Domani says its 2003 Pinot Grigio matches well with seafood, particularly salmon and sea bass, in addition to poultry, pasta dishes with vegetables and sauces with fresh herbs such as basil, dill and tarragon. The 2002 Chianti pairs well with pasta, hors d'oeuvres and red or white meats and the 2002 Merlot is complemented by a wide range of foods, including tomato-based pasta dishes, poultry and grilled meats.

-Joanna Miller