

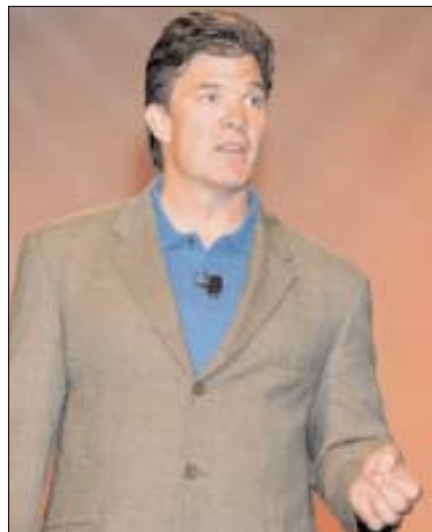
Expert: Managers must set example for Gen Y 'kidployees'

By Robin Lee Allen

KISSIMMEE, FLA. — More than decades separate today's youths from their older employers. Raised in an environment where choices abound and technology and material goods are plentiful, today's youngest workers are wired completely differently than the older folks who hire them, making these "kidployees" difficult to manage unless they are understood, according to an authority on people born after 1980.

In a keynote address sponsored by The Coca-Cola Co., Eric Chester, author of "Getting Them to Give a Damn: How to Get Your Front Line to Care About Your Bottom Line," suggested that employers need to set a strong example, hire the right people and think like a member of so-called Generation Y to motivate them. Chester spoke before 750 attendees of the Multi-Unit Foodservice Operators conference recently held here.

To get inside the heads of Generation Y, a population numbering about 68 million and also called "echo boomers" and "boomlets," employers need to appreci-



Eric Chester is the author of "Getting Them to Give a Damn: How to Get Your Front Line to Care About Your Bottom Line."

like coffee and even crackers, now available in different sizes as well as in low-salt and low-fat varieties — and with jobs as "Help Wanted" signs now dot the landscape.

Such abundance has wired Gen Y to view life as a series of infinite choices with immediate results. In contrast, baby boomers learned that select choices

ate the vast differences between Gen Y and the generations that preceded it, Chester said.

One of the most notable differences is the plethora of choices Gen Y members have always had before them, Chester said. While baby boomers had three television networks to choose from, Generation Y has numerous networks and cable stations beckoning. The same proliferation has occurred with grocery products —

paid off in time. For instance, they believe working hard now leads to future promotions, while boomlets will question why they have to wear a uniform and why they can't have a raise after three days. Such inquiries prompted Chester to call the age group "Generation Why."

"We think linearly," Chester said. "We think like a VCR. They think like a DVD."

Gen Y, which has more material goods than any preceding gener-

ation, has grown up with the attitude that to get rich, you just need to get noticed, he said. For them, work does not define who they are; it is a means to buy more stuff.

Despite these differences, kidployees can be great employees if they have leadership that inspires them, Chester said.

First, he said, managers need to be the example. Because this generation has seen their parents downsized, they do not expect longevity and they rarely see passion. Thirty to 40 percent actively are looking for new jobs, and 30 percent are looking passively, Chester said. But an inspiring leader can win their loyalty.

Chester also noted that employers must hire the right people versus the best people. To do this, employers need to create a profile of their outstanding employees and hire similar personality types. He pointed to Centennial, Colo.-based Tokyo Joe's, an 11-unit fast-casual chain, as an employer that has done this well with its motto "The few, the proud, the pierced, or whatever." Chester said that Tokyo Joe's

places table tents with the motto and the cell phone number of the hiring manager on its tables. The manager responds immediately when called.

In addition, employers need to get inside the heads of Gen Y, Chester said. "Gen Ys would rather be injured than bored," he said. "This generation wants to break predictability. ... You need purposeful change to re-engage the disengaged."

Chester pointed to Pal's Sudden Service, a Kingsport, Tenn.-based quick-service company with 19 units, as doing a masterful job of training its kidployees by teaching general managers to think like them. Meanwhile, kidployees know that they will be held to high standards — for instance, they must show up to work 15 minutes before their shifts start — but they also know that their managers believe they can meet those standards.

Most important, Chester said, employers must foster relationships with their Gen Y employees. "If you want them to care, you must care about them," he said. ■

Health-conscious consumers drive trends, panel says

By Ron Ruggless

KISSIMMEE, FLA. — Health and nutrition are becoming a bigger part of the decision-making equation when consumers consider what to eat away from home, said operators on a panel at the Multi-Unit Foodservice Operators conference recently held here.

And that health-oriented market shows little sign of diminishing, said Robin Lee Allen, managing editor of Nation's Restaurant News and moderator of "Health & Nutrition: Make Your Business Physically and Fiscally Fit."

Panelists included Bruce Reinstein, chief operating officer for Fresh City; Mark Mears, chief marketing officer for Blimpie International; Deborah Robison, director of media and communications for Darden Restaurants Inc.; Daniel Barash, director of new product development for Doc Green's Gourmet Salads, owned by Raving Brands of Atlanta; and Craig Miller, president and chief executive of Ruth's Chris Steak House.

Allen cited research from the NPD Group that indicates growing awareness about high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease, especially among the 80 million people born between 1946 and 1964.

"While 14 percent of younger [baby] boomers are concerned about high blood pressure, 26 percent of older [baby] boomers are," Allen said. "While 5 percent of younger [baby] boomers worry about diabetes, 11 percent of older [baby] boomers do."

NPD also found that one-third of all baby boomers are overweight and about 30 percent are obese. Meanwhile, one in four are on diets, Allen said.

Other factors influencing menus include pressure from consumer-advocacy groups and mandates from local governments on such ingredients as trans fats and carcinogens.

Reinstein of Fresh City said: "We have to look at the fact that everybody looks at nutrition very differently. Somebody who weighs 400 pounds versus somebody who weighs 100 pounds needs to look at nutrition differently. It's up to us to provide the information they need to make smart decisions."

Fresh City offers a "Know Your Food" program linked to its website



Panel participants were, from left, Robin Lee Allen, moderator and managing editor of Nation's Restaurant News; Bruce Reinstein, chief operating officer of Fresh City; Mark Mears, chief marketing officer for Blimpie International; Deborah Robison, director of media and communication for Darden Restaurants Inc.; Daniel Barash, director of new product development for Doc Green's Gourmet Salads; and Craig Miller, president and chief executive of Ruth's Chris Steak House.

that can be accessed from kiosks in each Fresh City restaurant as well as from the Internet. "It's about customization," he said. "And it's about the guest, as opposed to us, the restaurateur, making the choice."

Mears said Blimpie gives guests choices. "Once they get in our restaurant," he said, "they have many different choices to satisfy their craving, whether they are counting calories, counting fat grams, counting carbs or just counting their blessings that they can enjoy a full-tilt taste."

Mears also said restaurants

must be aware of guests' medical concerns. "If you think about the low-carb craze of a year ago, we had diabetics writing us in tears and thanking us for providing them with these kinds of taste options that they felt like they couldn't get before when they went out to eat," he said.

Seasons 52, the three-unit test concept from Darden Restaurants Inc., is designed around offering consumers a varied menu, with all entrée items boasting fewer than 475 calories. The first opened in 2003, and Darden will have five in Florida by year's end.

Robison of Darden said the curriculum for restaurant managers includes nutrition training.

Barash, who helped open Doc Green's this past spring in Atlanta, said the concept features customized salads with meats that are poached, grilled or roasted. The concept's tagline is "Healthy as You Want to Be."

Barash said Raving Brands wanted to create a brand that was both hearty and healthy without being expensive. Doc Green's has a check average of \$8.

Miller of Ruth's Chris suggested that vendors could provide help to operators. "Innovations in the supplier community can make a big contribution to being able to deliver on high-quality, high-taste products for our guests," Miller said.

He added: "We're all in the business of being responsible to the demands of our guests. Consumers will drive this at the end of the day. The more options we are able to give people on these products, the more successful we are all going to be." ■