

The youth movement

Slackers, schmackers. Gen X bosses put their stamp on business

MOVE OVER

Talking about her generation

Jennifer Kushell is president of the Young Entrepreneurs Network, a trade group that offers advice and consulting services to young executives. She is the author of a forthcoming Random House business start-up manual for 20-somethings. Among her qualifications: She is 23 years old. She discussed her views of generation X's management style with U.S. News.

How will the new generation of entrepreneurs change business management? I

think they're going to bring reality back into business. They are going to close down a lot of corporate walls; a lot of the bureaucracy is just gone in their companies. Young people today care about their employees in a way that I don't think companies ever have. They run their businesses like they would run a family.

Money is not your No. 1 focus.

We all grew up in the '80s with parents who were getting divorced. They were making tremendous amounts of money and then losing it. They were sacrificing their morals. They didn't do things that were true to their original goals. They got too wrapped up in money, in succeeding at any expense. This new generation is saying, wait a minute, we don't want to have to screw people over for money. We want to do things that are going to improve our environment, our families, our communities. Younger people have a different set of values because they grew up lacking them.

What do you mean by bringing reality back to business? I think business has become a tool people use to get money. Younger people are looking at business as a lifestyle. We're much more selective about whom we do business with. We do business

with people because we like them, not because we have to.

Are these ideals likely to disappear once these young managers "grow up"?

I don't think it's a passing phase. We're instilling values that will continue for years to come. It was different in the '80s. The surge of wealth and greed caused us to rebel.

What are the most visible changes so far?

Young people have their employees bring pets to work. They have people bring their kids to work. They force people to make time for the things that are important to them. In many cases young business leaders will choose to do what's right for the family, what's right for the employee, more so than what's right for their bottom line.



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Where do these new

ideals come from? I think it comes from the heart. It certainly doesn't come from traditional management values. It comes from our belief systems, our personal idea of how our businesses should be run. With the opportunity to start a company comes the freedom to manage in ways that we believe are ethical and moral.

More ethical and moral than past

generations? Sure. We take care of the people that take care of us—and that's our employees. That's something that the older generations forgot about. Younger managers will appreciate the people who work for them more than any other generation ever has.

Is this a direct reaction against the way previous generations treated workers? Absolutely—because we heard our parents complain about being restricted from the things that they wanted to do.

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