

## Oh the youth of today

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If I go to one more HR conference and have to hear someone from HR at Google or McDonalds waffling on about how they are having to manage 'Generation Y' I am going to scream (can someone let me know how to do that on a blog please?).

As a generation W-er (work it out and no, it's not what it looks like), who has 3 grown up 'Generation Y' kids, I do have some in-depth, personal experience of this group and admit there are some differences. First, they have about a zillion more 'friends' than me (or at least the Facebook variety); they are more likely to have repetitive strain injury in their texting thumb in later life (my texts are invariably "yes", "no" or "OK") and none of them like Leonard Cohen: but apart from that I think they are normal human beings just like me and my wife (that's assuming, of course, that a Leonard Cohen fan can be accurately described as normal). Apart from that I see no difference at all in what makes them a living, breathing and fully functioning human being.

I also see no difference between myself and my parents (god rest their souls) who had to emigrate from Ireland to earn a living in England and whose expectations were probably much lower than mine and certainly did not receive the education I did; or their parents who lived at a barely subsistence level, or their parents or the youth that Plato that supposedly referred to, about 2500 years ago, when he asked -

*"What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law. They riot in the streets inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?"*

Youths have a habit of growing up, eventually, and facing the same challenges in their lives as everyone else. Good parenting, for me, is realising that the obnoxious, self-centred, behaviour of teenagers (don't get me started) will eventually resolve itself in an environment of love, care, understanding and support. In fact, parenting has to be the best possible training for working in HR. You have to sort out endless squabbles between immature people; you have to set boundaries on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and you have to make many allowances to ensure people can be who they are within what can often be a very controlling environment.

Yes there are superficial differences across the generations, so what's new? What is certainly not required are 'HR strategies' that pander to the very demands that turn Generation Y, or any other generation, into the me-me-me type of individuals that have forgotten that they need to do a decent day's work. One principle I always followed with my kids was that I did not always give in to their demands simply because, if I did, I would like them less.