

Get Ready for Gen Y

By Dr. Maurice A. Ramirez

The international marketing firm Youngster recently reported that, for the first time in history, the market group known as Generation Y, comprised of those aged 10 to 25, is evenly divided across each of its five age-based subgroups. A short ten years ago, when Generation Y first burst on to the scene, the vast majority of the generation was aged 10 to 14. This first wave of Generation Y influenced popular culture, giving us nSync and Britney Spears.



In the 10 years that have followed, the early 10-year-olds of Generation Y became 20-year-olds, filling out the older ranks of Generation Y. The relatively constant birth rate in the Western World resulted in an even distribution across all stages of Generation Y. The expanding size of the generation has resulted in the dissemination of their influence — not only through popular culture, but also through

the business culture.

To understand the influence this group has, you must understand how Generation Y functions.

The First Digital Natives

Generation Y has been referred to as the first human natives of the digital landscape. This means that a member of Generation Y has never known a world that did not include the Internet, cellular phones, and immediately available parallel communications. All who came before Generation Y are no more than digital tourists, but Generation Y is as comfortable and capable in the digital world as in the physical one.

Any parent of a Generation Y teenager has marveled as their child adeptly talks on their cell phone, often while simultaneously on a three-way call and sending SMS text messages and email. These amazing youngsters do all this while playing online RPG's (role playing games) that combine video, audio, and text conferencing. An amazing six simultaneous lines of communication, that involve 30 or more simultaneous participants, demonstrates how Generation Y

has evolved the very concepts of networking, collaboration and community.

The RPG player must learn and master no less than 70 new rules or skills. These 70 skills do not greatly increase the player's likelihood of success in the game, but are rather the bare minimum required to negotiate the first level of the game. To advance through the game requires the monitoring of no fewer than 100 individual incoming streams of data, from 360 degrees, in all three planes of three-dimensional space (X, Y, and Z axis). In addition, the most recent generations of game systems allow players to collaborate in real time, with individuals not only within their country, in other countries.

These collaborations are not constrained by language differences. As a result, to work collaboratively within a given group and to have that group work collaboratively against other groups, the players must learn either a language unique to the game, or one utilized in common by all players within their team.

Neighborhood Y

Generation Y members utilize services such as MySpace and Facebook to serve as their digital homes. Similarly, they use professional networking services such as Xing, LinkedIn, and Konnect as their digital offices. For a member of Generation Y, Facebook is a home in their neighborhood, while MySpace is their bedroom. It is not unusual for Generation Y individuals, who initially met in a professional environment, to exchange Facebook and even MySpace contact information in order to facilitate a broader social interaction.

Even more indicative of this tidal change is the number of Generation Y relationships that begin as personal social exchanges, only to evolve into professional relationships and



Career Tips

even business collaborations. Generation Y professionals don't believe in going it alone. Spouses will get to know each other having never met face-to-face. Children will play video games and even learn together in simulation-enhanced environments.



XBox Education

What would happen if the much-ballyhooed *No Child Left Behind* curriculum were handed over to video game programmers, and utilized as the rules, processes

and systems of a series of role-playing adventure video games?

- The entire K through 8 curriculum mastered in two and a half years!
- Four years of high school completed within 18 months.
- Completion of the first two years of college by the end of eighth grade.
- Recall and application in excess of 90% accuracy and proficiency.

The problem with the application of such a model within our current educational system is that for Generation Y, the RPG is not technology, but rather a tool. For those who provide education, RPG systems represent what was once considered a "super computer". This is a chasm almost too wide to forge.

World-Y-Business

As Generation Y members move from their current positions as entry-level managers into corporate leadership, they will bring with them their networking skills. LinkedIn is their North American office, while Xing is their European branch office, and Konnect their Asian branch office. It is not unusual for a Generation Y professional to have over 10,000 direct first-person contacts developed through Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 networks. This is not a collection of random business cards, but rather individuals with whom they have developed business and personal relationships...even friendships. These professionals not only discuss business ventures, successes, and failures, but seek each others' advice in open-mentoring opportunities, and even share personal feelings in these virtual spaces.

These young professionals have tapped a truly global market through the use of the Internet and social networking services. The only question that remains: is the global market ready for true globalization?

About the Author

Dr. Maurice A. Ramirez is a professional speaker and the founder and president of the consulting firm High Alert, LLC. He consults with businesses of all sizes on readiness and recovery from disasters that are either man-made or natural, planned or unexpected. Dr. Ramirez has a new book: "*You Can Survive Anything, Anywhere, Every Time.*" His website is www.High-Alert.com.

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