

**TITLE: "HOW WELL ARE WE PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION?"**

by Tim Bryce

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Since 1971: *"Software for the finest computer - the Mind"*

*"There is only one problem with common sense;  
it's not very common."*

*- Bryce's Law*

We've got some very bright and ambitious young people joining the work force now but they are coming at a very different time in the business world. Thanks to technology, we now live and work in a much faster paced society than what I joined just three short decades ago. It is also a much more competitive environment due to changing economic conditions. True, the Greatest Generation has basically moved along, but the Baby Boomers are still firmly in place and are not inclined to retire any time soon. This means the class of 2007 will be competing not only with people in their 20's, 30's and 40's, but also with people in their 50's and 60's who cannot afford to retire.

This got me thinking about how well we are preparing the next generation of workers. Are we really training them to succeed or are we setting them up to fail? Sure, they might be well educated in their professional area of expertise, but I am finding a remarkable number who lack basic street smarts. Somewhere between the safety of home and school, and the bitter realities of the real world, a void exists in preparing our youth for adulthood. In a way its like being a parachutist for the first time, except you are being pushed out the door with no instruction on what to do. This can be very traumatizing to young people who tend to be overwhelmed by the responsibilities of adult life.

In school, students were only concerned with attending class, absorbing the material, eating and their social life. But now in adulthood, they suddenly have to face such things as insurance, taxes, housing, transportation, banking, investments, retirement accounts, health care, nutrition, paying bills, corporate cultures, etiquette, dress, career development, business ethics, office politics, networking, employment, management, etc. Oh yea, and

Work. They may have been adequately trained for their profession, but nobody is preparing them to make the transition into adulthood.

The parents haven't prepared them. If anything, they have sheltered their youth from reality for far too long. For example, many kids today have not had to mow a lawn, clean a dish, push a broom, or hold a part-time job. Instead, they were free to concentrate on their homework and video games. In other words, parents have failed to instill the concept of simple responsibility and the value of a dollar. A lot of parents today are "hands-off" meaning they are content to let others raise their children for them, be it a relative, a nanny, a coach, or a teacher, thereby providing them with some free time to rest and relax.

The teachers haven't prepared them either, but in their defense this shouldn't be in their job description. Instead, they should be concerned with teaching academic subjects, such as math, literature, languages, science, etc. However, since a lot of parents have dropped the ball, teachers have been forced to become surrogate parents, something they are not necessarily trained in or suited for.

Ultimately, this means today's corporate managers are inheriting a generation of naive young people with unbridled enthusiasm who are having difficulty adapting to the corporate world. Many of this generation seem to believe they are uniquely different, that the old established rules of today's corporate culture no longer applies to them; that corporations must adapt to them, not the other way around. Such naivety can be dangerous and lead to their demise as reality sets in.

To overcome this problem, perhaps we can help our youth by devising a new type of curriculum that would teach such things as:

- Personal Organization - e.g., managing finances, insurance, housing, transportation, etc.
- Adapting to the Corporate Culture - how to understand the culture and adapt to it. This would include discussions on business ethics, and studying change.
- Professional Development - teaching concepts of craftsmanship, continuous improvement, and basic business skills.
- Social Skills - how to effectively communicate and socialize in an office environment.

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- Do's and Don'ts in the Workplace - discussing the realities of employment, company policy manuals, and other legal issues.
- Management 101 - teaching basic management concepts and rules to help "newbies" fit into the corporate culture.

Actually, none of this is new. We have all had to learn it through the School of Hard Knocks. However, if the next generation is to ever have a chance in today's fast paced world, we have to jump-start this process for them. Otherwise they will have difficulty surviving. Basically, what is needed is just some simple parental advice.

If you would like to discuss this with me in more depth, please do not hesitate to send me an e-mail.

*Keep the faith.*

**END**

*About the Author*

*Tim Bryce is a writer and management consultant with M. Bryce & Associates (MBA) of Palm Harbor, Florida and has over 30 years of experience in the field. He is available for lecturing, training and consulting on an international basis.*

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