

# Feedback a Key Element of Retention Programs

[Gen Y, from Page C1]

Gen-Yers arrive at their first jobs with high expectations. After driving hard to be accepted to top schools and pumping up their resumes with myriad extracurricular activities and internships, many young grads expect a lush ride in the corporate world.

But while the job market may have changed, corporate culture hasn't.

Many entry-level positions still require making copies, fact-checking reports and taking the blame when the manager messes up. In industries such as Hollywood, no matter how many calculus classes the wunderkind has taken, the new kid on the block will still be asked to get coffee.

And new hires may not be ready for that kind of sacrifice.

Generation Y "tends to want, and want it now," said Carol Hacker, president of Carol A. Hacker & Associates in Alpharetta, Ga., a corporate consulting and seminar company.

"They don't want to take the time that it takes to work up. They expect that that's going to happen pretty quickly," she added.

Since he graduated from Stanford University in 2004 with a degree in human biology, Paul O'Leary's career path has been consistently inconsistent. At the age of 25, he's on job No. 5. O'Leary went to Japan for a stint as a gymnastics coach, worked as a salesman for Bose Corp. and held jobs at Google Inc. and Yahoo Inc.

"I have a pretty clear idea of what I want to get out of my career," O'Leary said. "When it gets to the point where the management or the company no longer seems in line with what I have in mind, I start looking elsewhere."

O'Leary finally found a good fit at LowerMyBills.com, a Santa Monica outfit that allows consumers to compare rates on monthly bills online.

An account manager at LowerMyBills.com, the Los Angeles resident was impressed that his supervisor asked about his career goals.

Also, O'Leary said he was looking for a company that was willing to take a chance on a relatively recent grad with little experience but strong motivation.

"I wanted a position with re-

even whether walking around the office with iPod earphones is frowned upon.

"No one teaches that in school," Cincotta said.

Ketchum also is starting a one-year rotation program similar to Ogilvy's, giving account associates the chance to work through different departments in the firm, with regular feedback sessions.

Although many companies in the finance, consulting and technology fields have programs to teach hard skills, including how to build financial models, soft skills programs — which emphasize workplace politics, career development and communication — are increasingly in vogue.

Many employers, particularly small businesses without the resources to hire consultants, find that simply pairing young workers with mentors can be a good way to integrate the new hires into company culture.

"They can be either peers, people that have recently come to the company who they can relate to or people who have been with the organization for a number of years whom they can respect," said Mark Mehler, co-founder of CareerXroads, a Kendall Park, N.J., consulting company.

In 1999, Clifton Gunderson, an accounting and consulting firm based in Peoria, Ill., started a career development network to pair senior managers or partners with newer hires. In the program, the more recent arrivals have an opportunity to create career paths with a mentor, "someone who cares about you and who knows how to take you where you want to go," said Lauren Malensek, the firm's chief human resource officer.

The mentorship program has been one of the most successful components of the firm's training and professional development program, offering tangible results, Malensek said.

If all falls and a young hire walks into the office to give two weeks' notice, offer to stay connected in case future opportunities arise, said Rainmaker Thinking's Tulgan.

"Stay in touch with people and try to re-recruit them," Tulgan said. "The goal from a business standpoint should be to continue to get a return on the investment."

*'The key is having an ongoing dialogue' and 'spelling out expectations every step of the way.'*

**Bruce Tulgan,**  
management consultant

sponsibility, and it took me a little while to find the company that was willing to give that to me," O'Leary said.

Introducing new hires to the wide array of jobs available within a company is how Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide has dealt with young people who aren't quite ready to commit to one career path.

The New York company offers a one-year rotational program, giving young grads a chance to sample what the company has to offer before settling into a permanent role, said Irish Hamilton, Ogilvy's human resource manager.

Vital to the program's success is constant evaluation and personal development, Hamilton said.

"I work very closely with each associate, sitting down with them every two months and guiding them through their career," she said.

Consistently checking in with young workers is one of the most important ways managers can foster a good working relationship with Gen-Yers, said Bruce Tulgan, the founder of Rainmaker Thinking Inc., a management consulting company based in New Haven, Conn.

"The key is having an ongoing dialogue," he said. Tulgan recommends "spelling out expectations every step of the way and being honest with folks about how they're doing."

With young workers just stepping out of the classroom, the more specific the expectations, the better people respond, said Carol Cincotta, senior vice president and human resources director at New York-based Ketchum, an international public relations agency.

Ketchum uses in-house training and consultants to teach its young associates about core practices of the business and