



# Robert Half International<sup>SM</sup>

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP MOTIVATES X AND Y**

Australian managers should evolve their leadership style from 'command and control' to 'inclusive and collaborative' if they are to attract and retain Generations X and Y, according to Avril Henry, human resources expert.

Ms. Henry spoke on the topic of managing and motivating different generations at work to an audience of over 250 HR and finance managers at Robert Half International's fifth Sydney business breakfast, held on Wednesday 20 July.

Organisations must excel at leadership in order to attract and retain the new generations in the workforce (X and Y) in a competitive market where resource is scarce.

Ms. Henry said, "The existence of different generational groups within the workforce makes for a dynamic and challenging experience for Australian managers. The best way for all to thrive in a convivial, productive and effective working environment is through effective leadership and open communication."

Ms. Henry advised managers to be acutely aware of the different views and values each generation<sup>1</sup> holds on career, family, work life balance, flexibility and loyalty, and espouse these according to each group, whilst taking advantage of the assets each can bring to the organisation.

Whereas Baby Boomers and Veterans had "jobs for life" and were loyal to their employer, Generations X and Y are firstly loyal to their career path, and secondly to a great manager or team. 'Gen X' responds well to 'effective' leadership and 'Gen Y' craves 'inspirational' leadership. Both want leaders who listen and involve them.

Ms. Henry continued, "Organisations need to invest in training and development for managers, placing particular emphasis on 'soft' skills, such as performance management and conflict resolution. This type of training is usually the first to get cut from budgets to the long term detriment of business. Generations X and Y want high levels of employee engagement, performance based rewards, acknowledgement for their contribution and opportunities for accelerated development."

Generations X and Y are expected to be better people managers than their predecessors. Unlike Baby Boomers who often fail to recognise good and bad performance for fear of cultivating 'tall poppy syndrome' or offending, X and Y require regular constructive feedback and are determined to be better bosses than those they have worked under, commanding and returning respect, Ms. Henry revealed.

Ms. Henry acknowledged that today's business landscape is governed by change and that Generations X and Y are best equipped to deal with it. Generation X is excited by change and Generation Y has already accepted it as 'part of what life is about'.

She said: "60% of proposals for strategic change in Australian businesses fail. Many business decisions are made by Boards represented (over 90%) by anglo-saxon 50+ males, who belong to the 'Veteran' demographic most resistant to change."

Generations X and Y have other advantages over their predecessors, having observed the failures of their Baby Boomer parents and deciding not to make the same mistakes.

'Gen X witnessed their parents' retrenchments in the early nineties and now view organisations as 'uncaring'. Consequently they put their career before their loyalty to an employer. Many observed their parents' marriage fail and as such are delaying marriage and putting career first. Additionally, female 'Gen-Xers' are delaying child birth (or not having children altogether) and returning to the workforce immediately after child birth to avoid missing career progression opportunities like their mothers did.

'Gen Y' or the 'global' generation has grown up with technology and is using it to break down geographical and cultural boundaries. They effectively use multiple tools for simultaneous communication, conduct friendships with the opposite sex and don't define people by the colour of their skin. They are bringing fresh ideas regarding race and gender to the workplace and can therefore 'embrace diversity for economic reasons'<sup>2</sup>, and not just for social justice.

Avril Henry concluded: "Smart leaders should start adopting an inclusive and collaborative leadership style now as Generations X and Y won't hang about and would rather be self-employed than work for a bad manager."

When concluding the event, Robert Half International Sydney Director Nicole Gorton agreed with each of the points made by Avril Henry and reminded HR and line managers that flexibility in the workplace is key when trying to attract and retain talent.

"The known reality of a national skills shortage has lead to a global war for talent. Therefore, as a hiring manager the need to adapt your hiring profile is key," Ms Gorton said.

“Changing your management style is one thing, but how you attract employees by understanding the different motivating factors will give you the advantage over your competition.

“Candidates are currently entertaining up to five job offers and therefore the old philosophy of “it wasn’t meant to be” is hurting the potential growth of organisations.”

- ends -

### Notes to editors

- 1 The four generations making up the Australian workforce are Veterans (born before 1946), Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and Generation Y (born after 1980).

The key characteristics of each generation are:

- **Veteran:** loyal to chosen profession and organization, carry their job from cradle to grave, resistant to change.
- **Baby Boomer:** optimistic, materialistic, conformist, loyal to their organization. Baby Boomers will have to work into the official retirement age because they don't have enough savings.
- **Generation X:** independent, individualistic, self-reliant, pessimistic, sceptical of authority, craves challenging work. 'Gen X-ers' view their CVs as marketing tools, are likely to have 3 career changes in their lifetime and change jobs every 3 – 5 years. Many will be self-employed at least once.
- **Generation Y:** global generation (can use technology to overcome geographical and cultural boundaries), 'move in herds', use multiple tools for simultaneous communication, different views on race and gender (don't see boundaries) to previous generations. Crave inspiration and diversity in the workplace.

N.B. Veterans and Baby Boomers traditionally define themselves by their job, Generations X and Y are less likely to do this.

- 2 The Karpin Report (1995) identified one of the key factors to Australia's global competitiveness in this current century, was the need to invest in the development of the nation's management and leadership capability.

### Avril Henry

Avril Henry is a professional public speaker, author, executive coach and Executive Director of AH Revelations, a leadership and human resources consulting business. She consults to government departments and private sector organisations on a range of leadership, people and performance strategies. Avril's current clients include the Australian Federal Police, Prime Minister's Office, Queensland Health, NSW Police, Tasmanian Premier's Department, Toyota, CBA, Merck Sharp Dohme, Eli Lilly, IBM and Robert Half International.

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