

Book Review:

A Guide to Working with Millennials in the Legal Profession

by Tammy King

***Cracking the Code: Unlocking the Potential of Future Leaders in the Legal Profession*, by Judith Finer Freedman, West (2010).**

Prior to the Great Recession, lawyer retention was the hot topic for legal employers, particularly larger law firms. In her recent book *Cracking the Code*, Judith Finer Freedman argues that although retention seems to have taken a backseat as a major issue facing firms and legal practices during this economic downturn (given that new lawyers are thankful just to have jobs), the issue of how to build future leaders for the legal profession needs to remain a primary focus today. She notes that the current economy does not change the fact that members of the Millennial generation (or Generation Y) have been psycho-socialized differently than any generation to date and, in order to remain competitive, legal employers must be positioned so that they can respond to the different work habits of Millennials.

Freedman is a work-life consultant, researcher, and lecturer on the dynamics of work-life effectiveness, generational diversity, gender bias, and mentoring. She founded The Balanced Worker Project, which helps individuals and organizations develop solutions to the challenges of work and life demands and cross-generational differences in the workplace, and has spoken at past NALP conferences — most recently at the 2010 Canadian winter meeting. For *Cracking the Code*, she interviewed numerous legal professionals, and insightful quotes from NALP members (both

school and employer) are peppered throughout her book.

Freedman's book is a good supplement to the plethora of research on Millennials in the workplace and provides much needed specific advice for those in the legal profession. We've all heard by now that this is the first time in history that society has seen four distinct generations in the workforce (the Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials). The 76 million Millennials are already making their presence known in law schools and in the legal profession, and the impact of this sizeable generation will only continue to grow. Freedman argues that in the long-term, legal employers must be prepared to respond to the generational differences and the needs of Millennial lawyers to feel valued and challenged in their professional lives. Her book provides a framework for developing programming and policies that will leverage the numerous strengths that Millennials bring to legal employers.

In *Cracking the Code*, Freedman first summarizes the existing research on generational differences and examines how Millennials are different from previous generations. She then identifies the specific strengths and challenges that Millennials bring to the practice of law. For example, a common trait legal employers see in Millennial lawyers is the expectation that they will have significant responsibility for handling cases and matters from day one. Older lawyers view this as Millennials not wanting to pay their dues, while Millennials view it as the need to have challenging

and fulfilling work because they have been conditioned since childhood to challenge and stretch themselves. Freedman then provides practical workplace strategies that will resonate with Millennials and tips for minimizing the generation gap — for example, by explaining to new associates the need for them to build equity in their firms and show that they are developing the skills that will allow them to add value as a good lawyer before gaining a coveted spot on the “bet the company” litigation team.

Although the best practices outlined in the book may seem a bit simplistic and a matter of common sense, Freedman’s slim volume does provide advice specific to legal employers that has been lacking in the literature on generational differences to date. Readers intrigued by the topic may want to delve further into the general research and sources Freedman cites. Freedman’s book may not provide all the answers to integrating Millennials into the legal profession, but it is a good starting point and fills an existing void. Legal professionals

should welcome this addition to the existing research on this topic. Although the main audience for this book is legal employers, and specifically those working in the lawyer professional development field, NALP school members will also find the information helpful in understanding current law students, their strengths, and the challenges inherent in molding them into the next generation of leaders in the legal profession.

Tammy King is the Assistant Dean for Career Development at Creighton University School of Law. She is a member of the NALP Publications Advisory Group, on whose behalf this review was submitted.

Ed. note: Cracking the Code is now available from the NALP bookstore (www.nalp.org).