

'Hanging out' questionable

New generation bringing different expectations to workplace

BY RALPH SCHAEFER

ralph@okneighborhood.com

Imagine, if possible, new associates "hanging out" with senior law firm partners.

Then imagine having to explain to that new associate that it not proper to text while in a meeting with the partners.

Even more important for the long-time lawyers, try to remember back to when they started their legal careers.

These are some of the challenges ahead for law firms as the millennial generation enters the workforce, according to Judith Finer Freedman. It is now, even if those experiences have not yet occurred.

Freedman, founder of The Balanced Worker Project, spoke to attorneys participating in the Speed Networking program at the University of Tulsa College of Law and told them what they can expect from future attorneys.

It's not a totally negative picture because a lot of work can be accomplished by this new generation, she said. They are not slackers. They will work hard. But it is up to everyone in this room — or now practicing law — to unleash the talent while maximizing what they bring while minimizing the challenges.

Freedman assured her listeners that students would hear a similar message about working in law firms because she was scheduled to speak to them later.

"Like it or not, the keys to the kingdom are changing hands," she said. "What is really important for all of you is to learn how to engage the new generation in a time friendly and cost effective manner.

"Being lawyers, it is very hard to



Judith Finer Freedman, left, and Janet K. Levit, Dean, University of Tulsa College of Law

take time to mentor and bring this new generation along. But they really are going to be the future leaders."

The speaker wondered, then asked for a show of hands of how many remembered the first time they used a computer.

Numerous hands went up and Freedman admitted that she also remembered the first time she used a computer.

That's not true for the new hires, she said. Computers have been part of their life. There are other changes that will impact the law firm thought practice. Building relationships and communication are high on the list. The reasons go back to when they were children and their Baby Boomer parents were "a bit crazy."

Baby Boomers were born between 1946 to 1964, she reminded her audience. Next came the Gen Xers,

born between 1965 and 1981. The millennials were born after 1982.

"My parents didn't help me with my homework," Freedman said. "I am a Baby Boomer and my parents didn't about any homework that I needed to do."

Children of Baby Boomers go that extra mile to make certain their kids get opportunities and doors are open to them. Unfortunately, that is causing a lot of difficulty as this generation enters the workforce.

Technology is making a dramatic difference.

A slide during the presentation showed a father asking his daughter about her homework. The daughter's reply that her dad was to check it out on her blog.

The older generation finds it frightening that face-to-face communication isn't as common as

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it once was, Freedman said. "But guess what, the train already has left the station. It's important to become aware of technology and more computer savvy because it is the best way to stay connected to the new generation."

It's easy to spot a millennial, just look at their gadgets. They are connected somewhere. If they don't have their laptop, they have a huge ear pod hanging out of their ear. They stay connected with Facebook and there are 55 million on Facebook on a regular basis.

In addition, they have a camera so they can get pictures and place them on Facebook.

Some of the current generation take their attire too far, but look at the '60s generation. There is a difference and they have a different way of presenting themselves.

Another big difference is the coffee they drink.

They have that double, double, extra sweet, extra hot latte.

Why? Because he has been told by his parents that he or she is special and that they need that special coffee.

It is interesting, Freedman said when one looks at coffee usage in the last 30 years. It has skyrocketed with this generation.

Blackberrys also are important to this generation.

"I do a lot of work with law firms helping them identify workplace protocol and train new associates," she said. "Guess what? They didn't know they couldn't be on their Blackberry during meetings when every other senior partner is not on theirs. There are some nuances that all who are seasoned workers may consider the Blackberry the top of the line. But for the incoming generation, it's not the top of the line.

Education also has changed dramatically, Freedman said. This generation basically is bored with school learning. It was much more fun to be on the computer playing

ADAMS, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM realized they had to re-calibrate to reach them.

It is interesting because for some reason an educator changed the A and B grade range. As a result, a study has shown there is a higher percentage of students entering college with the higher grades while those with a C have fallen to about 5 percent.

The feeling was that changing the range would encourage students to go on to higher education.

But Freedman wasn't so sure.

About 25 percent of the students feel that if they show up for class

“ Like it or not, the keys to the kingdom are changing hands ”

— Judith Finer Freedman

they should at least get a B. That is because there has been a cocoon around them. They also think poorly of a professor who doesn't get back to them right away when they email a question.

Instead of the three Rs — Reading, Riting and Rithmetic — in now is Rigor, Relevance and Relationships.

Look at relationships for a moment, she said. The new generation wants to be connected.

Research shows that 81 percent of the new associates leave firms because they didn't feel connected with their coworkers. They live in a diverse world and see it as multi-cultural. When they are in an environment that is not multi-cultural, it feels unusual because their educational environment has been that way.

It is important to realize that new hires are looking for diversity, Freedman continued. It is something that is important to them when they are choosing a place to work.

These are issues that law firms will be bumping up against regardless of the practice area, she said. There also is another factor to con-

sider. Everyone has heard the new generation is made up of multi-taskers. But research shows this is not a good thing.

While individuals might have a really good brain, their brain power is compromised with more than one thing at a time. It's actively negatively impacting them because two thirds of their active reading habits are hindered when they have the radio on, the television on in the background and then they are checking their Blackberry.

"If someone is lecturing and say they are multi-taskers and it is important to take advantage of it, it's not true," Freedman said. "Leave the room."

The kids take in the information, but this is having a negative effect on how they are communicating.

"I don't know how many of you have had frustrations when you have a brief in front of you that has been put together by a new associate or new attorney," she said. "If you have had some frustrations, well that is part of how they are doing everything. It is done so swiftly they are not thinking or taking the time to think it through."

There are other generational differences that will impact the office work.

Baby Boomers were taught to respect their elders while the millennials "hang out" with them. The new generation's parents are with their children 24/7 and are micro-managing their lives. That's not a good thing when they get to college and parents still are doing their term papers.

Now, instead of going to parents or peer group for advice, millennials go to the Internet and that may be why parents sense an arrogance or "know it all" attitude, Freedman said. That transcends to the workplace where they expect an assignment that doesn't really reflect their experience level.

This generation also has too many choices, something they learned

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as children when parents let them choose vacation spots rather than telling them where they were going.

As a result, they may enter the workplace where they expect to be asked if they want to work for a particular client.

Too often the millennial generation feels that it is gifted, she said.

That doesn't necessarily mean they will be more successful in life.

They don't have their "helicopter parents" around when they enter the legal profession, she said. As a result, they don't have that feeling of importance, they don't have time for that network and that network is their virtual and personal network that is breathing for this generation.

When that happens they start to feel closed in, Freedman said. They are naive about workplace protocol and attorneys have said time and again the young associate doesn't

respond for important events where they could network with senior lawyers.

Teach the new associates about workplace protocol instead of how to be great negotiators, she said. Show them how senior lawyers and partners are working and the skills they can acquire instead of being so frustrated that they don't get it.

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Look at the new associate's work life expectations, Freedman said, calling them the four Es — empathy, engagement, exposure and e-life.

These associates want a work life balance that has nothing to do about kids. It's about them. They not only want it, they expect it because they have had it until now.

Empathy requires active listening,

putting down the Blackberry and hearing what the mentee is describing, she said. Do not assume their view is the same way you saw in as an incoming associate.

Questions like "what does it mean to you?" "how did you respond?" and "what could you do differently the next time?" helps the associate reduce his anxiety about early job

performance. Freedman said. It's also helpful to follow up and let them know that you made mistakes as a young associate. Be more of a career coach than a stylistic advisor. Don't be a parent to the new associate. Be more of a career coach than a stylistic advisor. Associates are feeling very hurried as they

get into firm life or find out what life is like in the legal profession.

"You may get frustrated by the new associate's work style so it's important to let go of the paradigm of how work used to be accomplished and embrace the new ways of how work can be accomplished by this new generation," Freedman said. -

DOCKET SCHEDULE

FD DOCKET A

WEDNESDAY
10/13/2010

1:00AM FD-09-1322-Philip Edens, Chasidy Edens & McAntoni W Reynolds

FD DOCKET B

WEDNESDAY
10/13/2010

1:00AM FD-04-30-Charlotte R Stephens, Donald W Stephens & Brian J Robertson

FD DOCKET D

WEDNESDAY
10/13/2010

1:00AM FD-08-3637-Angel Dawn Moore, Gilbert Lee Moore & Replini R Berry

FD DOCKET E

PROBATE TRIAL DIVISION

JESSE S. HARRIS
DISTRICT JUDGE
ROOM 508

WEDNESDAY
10/13/2010

9:30AM PG-08-802-Margaret Edna Spears Clark (B Carpenter)

2:30AM PB-10-522-Lewis Dale Moore (M Powell)

9:30AM PB-10-409-Patty June Paylor (M Matheson)

9:30AM PB-10-378-Connie June Hicks (M Powell)

9:30AM PB-10-372-Frank H Capwood (J Beauchamp)

9:30AM PB-10-321-George William Snedden II (J Shelton)

9:30AM PB-10-320-Patricia Llewellyn Vargas (J Shelton)

9:30AM PB-10-229-Marcelo N Costa (G Jackson)

9:30AM PB-10-222-Fred Leroy Moolikan (J Lower)

9:30AM PB-10-221-Peggy Lynn Parish (G Cheadle)

9:30AM PB-10-153-Donald Lee & Betty Jean Steel (H Gausberger)

9:30AM PB-10-120-Murray Stewart McKinley (B Woodard)

9:30AM PB-09-481-Julia Mae Hayes (C Kaher)

9:30AM PB-09-365-Dale Howard (C Webb)

SPECIAL JUDGE
ROOM 507

WEDNESDAY
10/13/2010

9:00AM PG-10-378-Zaden Wayne Greenleaf

1:30PM PG-09-686-Madison Marie Blich (J Al)

2:00PM PG-09-604-Cammie Lyle Borden (J Al)

UPCOMING DOCKETS

CIVIL TRIAL DIVISION

MARY FITZGERALD
DISTRICT JUDGE
ROOM 506

THURSDAY
10/14/2010

9:00AM CJ-10-3912-Regent Bank, Estates Of Stephen T Lester Et Al (B Beasley/T Burke)

1:30PM CJ-10-3020-Judith A Buncker, Lloyd A Caldwell Et Al (G Miles/B Smith)

2:00PM CJ-09-8341-Kenneth Syar Et Al, John S Marouk (D O Et Al)