

36 DAYS TO GO: HOWARD V RUDD

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Losing their balance

Gen Y needs to slow down and think things through, writes **Andrew Northcott**

GENERATION Y is a very intelligent, knowledgeable and tech-savvy group. The only problem is they believe they are more so than previous generations. Gen Y has been brought up with technology continually making life easier and faster with devices such as the internet, email, text messaging and cable TV.

The average Gen Yer finishes high school, attends university to complete a three- or four-year degree, decides it is probably not time to work and contribute to the economy and either travels overseas or starts their second degree to ensure gaining employment is an easier task. But, at a time when unemployment is at a 30-year low, is it just an excuse to put off the inevitable responsibility?

It is scary to think a generation believes it is better equipped than their predecessor — whether this is because they have spent more time educating themselves to the detriment of their experience or the belief that because they have completed a business management degree and understand the theory, they have the skills and knowledge to run a business.

As managing director of Labour Solutions Australia I have placed more than 3000 people in a range of white- and blue-collar jobs and deal with a range of employers from some of the largest blue-chip companies to the small one-man builders.

There is a common trend evident with all employers — they are not looking for a 25-year-old who has two or three degrees, who is very knowledgeable on the various theories and the way business should operate but lacks a substantial degree of practical experience and commercial sense.

As Generation Y continue to enter the workforce in arguably some of the most prosper-

ous times Australia has seen, there is a continuing lack of loyalty for employers. Unlike previous generations where the achievement of gaining reputable employment and moving through the ranks of a company was a sign of true success, today's generation doesn't share the same view and, instead, believes employers owe it something.

One of the reasons for the seemingly fickle work ethic of Generation Y is more than likely a result of the society they have grown up with. There has been a sharemarket boom, property boom and resources boom all within the last 10 years. Perhaps Gen Y have a misunderstanding that to create the levels of wealth that many expect, they don't have to commit to working as hard, or for as long, as the previous generations.

This attitude will be forced to change as these exceptionally good times eventually diminish and they will be lucky to gain employment. They will

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more than likely not be able to just take a punt on the sharemarket and see their money double, or achieve 20 per cent increases in their property — in fact it could be quite the opposite. And the threat of losing their job could pose real consequences.

Gen Y has been raised in an incredibly fast-paced environment where information comes at it at a million miles an hour from all directions. Gen Y expects things to be fast and perhaps expect career progression and wealth to follow suit.

Gen Yers write emails or jump on Facebook instead of sending letters or calling, write text messages and phone from their cars instead of

waiting to get to the office or home. They receive information updates regularly on their computers and mobile phones; everything tries to grab their attention everywhere they go.

All of this results in a quick thinking but a quickly distracted generation.

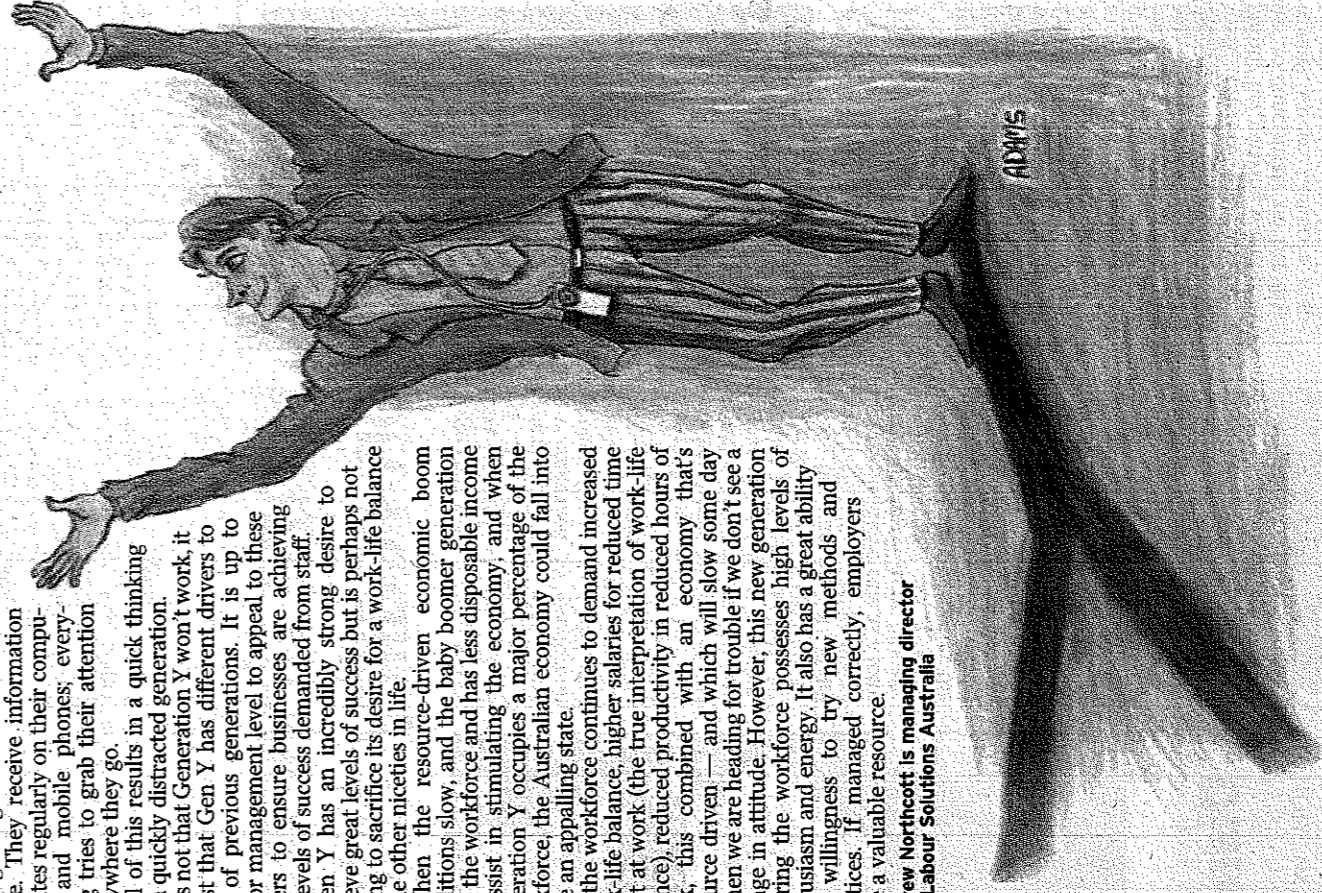
It's not that Generation Y won't work, it is just that Gen Y has different drivers to that of previous generations. It is up to senior management level to appeal to these drivers to ensure businesses are achieving the levels of success demanded from staff.

Gen Y has an incredibly strong desire to achieve great levels of success but is perhaps not willing to sacrifice its desire for a work-life balance or the other niceties in life.

When the resource-driven economic boom conditions slow, and the baby boomer generation exits the workforce and has less disposable income to assist in stimulating the economy, and when Generation Y occupies a major percentage of the workforce, the Australian economy could fall into quite an appalling state.

If the workforce continues to demand increased work-life balance, higher salaries for reduced time spent at work (the true interpretation of work-life balance), reduced productivity in reduced hours of work, this combined with an economy that's resource driven — and which will slow some day — then we are heading for trouble if we don't see a change in attitude. However, this new generation entering the workforce possesses high levels of enthusiasm and energy. It also has a great ability and willingness to try new methods and practices. If managed correctly, employers have a valuable resource.

Andrew Northcott is managing director of Labour Solutions Australia



Forum to address who, what, when and Y

IS THE future safe in the hands of Generation Y? The fifth forum in a six-part series entitled *Our Future, Your Say* will focus on Generation Y. A panel of high-profile Generation Ys will discuss what Brisbane will look like in 2020, how they think the city could work better, and whether current leaders are ruining

Brisbane's amenity for future generations. *Our Future, Your Say* is a joint project between *The Courier-Mail*, Channel 9, Griffith University's Urban Research Program and the Brisbane Institute. The forum will be held at Brisbane Powerhouse on Monday at 6.30pm. RSVP to rsvp@brisininst.org.au or phone 3220 2198.

OUR FUTURE
YOUR SAY