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# Engage:GenY

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## Gen Y Traits Come Honestly

by [Mike Doherty](#), 6 hours ago

A lot that's written about the psychology of Gen Y members has a negative connotation. Most centers on seeing them as "entitled" employees and consumers -- a generation that believes it's entitled to involvement in a brand, entitled to a great job, entitled to be impatient, entitled to tell their parents what to buy and so on. I was recently speaking at the Shopper Insights conference in Chicago, and I saw an interesting presentation from Kit Yarrow that shed some positive light on subject.

Kit is a professor and author of the book *Gen BuY* and through her research found that Millennials do have a unique psychological code but that they come by it "honestly," meaning it isn't deliberate or contrived but rather that it's a natural byproduct of their environment and rearing.

For starters, the prevalence of technology in their lives has altered Millennials' cognitive functions. They were internet-empowered from their first breath and it's had an impact on the nature of their relationships and the way they work, and it certainly facilitates their sphere of influence through social media.

When it comes to how Gen Yers work, on the surface it can look like they are impatient and entitled but the reality is that they never learned patience. In my day, I learned patience and perseverance through simple rights of passage like researching a term paper using the card catalog at the library. Ugh. Imagine the difference for a Millennial performing the same function. No patience is really required when everything you need is a click or two away. So instead of learning patience, they learned they can get what they want when they want it.

But their technological life has also impacted their relationships. Because Millennials are overloaded with easily accessible options for everything from recipes to music, they seek trust-worthy guidance. As their world becomes more complex with new jobs, families, and expanding interests, there is a great opportunity for brands to help them quickly navigate the world in a way that is visual, intuitive and contextual to the way their mind works.

Gen Yers were also raised in a youth-centric society by Boomer parents with little of the traditional family hierarchy that older generations knew. Millennials were empowered and involved in family decisions about everything from what their parents should wear to what car to buy.

When you consider this, plus the fact that Gen Yers grew up during an educational era where schools awarded trophies for just about everything (including showing up) to increase self-esteem, it's no wonder confidence comes naturally to Millennials. While this generation's confidence can look like self-importance, I think understanding its origin sheds a more positive light on how to work with it.

For example, because Millennials are used to being involved (regardless of their place in the hierarchy), they will respond well to a manager who can explain how even the most mundane projects are valuable to the company. In the end, status isn't about the money they make but rather about the influence they have.

While studies of how Gen Yers came to be the people they are today are plentiful, few are positive. I appreciate that Kit Yarrow has a positive view of where their psychological code originates. And I look forward to reading all of her book.

 This commentary is insightful. I recommend it to others.  
31 people recommend this article.

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[Joel Eisfelder](#) from [Campus Media Group](#) commented on: August 06, 2010 at 3:26 PM

I'm curious why the term "psychological code" is used - almost implying there is something inherent in Gen Y from birth that makes them what they are. In the nature vs. nurture debate, Professor Yarrow definitely ascribes their tendencies to the "natural byproduct of their environment and rearing." I think we tend to exaggerate the differences we perceive in Gen Y. They grew up using the internet, maybe got a few more trophies than us - but I bet we could all think of people we know from other generations that lack patience and expect to have a "sphere of influence" too, although we may have called it something else at the time.

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