

Gen Y speaks up to reject entitlement label New study finds young workers realistic, loyal but seeking recognition

(Toronto, Sept. 30, 2009) Young Canadians express a sense of commitment to their employers; seek entry-level positions or paid internships; and, will readily perform administrative duties, according to a national survey by Angus Reid Strategies, sponsored by Career Edge Organization, a national not-for-profit organization that helps Canadian employers gain access to and leverage untapped talent. These young people also expect to be recognized and rewarded for their work. In fact, they believe the quality of their work should be the primary basis for evaluating their performance. These and other findings of the survey shed new light on the much-debated association between Gen Y and their alleged sense of entitlement.

"Recent public discussions on Gen Y and entitlement have led many employers to form a less-than-flattering opinion of these young people," said Anne Lamont, President and CEO of Career Edge Organization. "We wanted to better understand the aspirations and expectations of this next generation of the Canadian workforce to help align employers' demands with Gen Y's career goals".

The survey collected the opinions of 1,000 youth, age 18-29, across the country in September and ensured the adequate representation of visible minorities as well as youth with at least some post-secondary education. The goal was to represent diverse opinions that truly reflect this group of Canadians. Results from a survey of this size are accurate to within +/-3.1 per cent, nineteen times out of twenty.

Contrary to the notion of entitlement, this generation has realistic goals when planning and building their careers. Nearly half (47%) of the respondents believe they are adequately equipped to start their career upon completion of their education. Sixty per cent also believe they can pursue entry-level positions based on their education. A further forty-one per cent believe they can pursue paid internships.

These young people are also eager to start their careers. For those within this age group who are already working, 89 per cent took less than a year to find a job in their desired field. Current students are less optimistic. Half of them believe they will take more than a year to reach this goal.

Nearly all respondents (91%) believe a paid internship is a valid option to gain work experience and for those who are currently pursuing an internship, an overwhelming 93 per cent believe they are already aligned with their desired career path.

"The overwhelming positive responses towards paid internships suggest to us that young people who are interested in these opportunities are focused and committed to their desired career path," said Ms. Lamont.

The survey also finds that this is a generation ready to show commitment to their employers. While they don't expect to be in any one workplace for quite as long as their parents, they do express a clear idea of loyalty and expect the same from their employers. Seventy-six per cent of the respondents agree that fair compensation and promotion are clear ways for employers to demonstrate their loyalty. Sixty-six per cent agree that they would express their loyalty to their employers by going above and beyond their job description.

This clearly defined sense of fairness and recognition distinguishes the work attitude of this generation. They are tasks and results driven. They believe career advancement should be based on merit (93%) and not tenure. They would readily perform administrative duties (91%) but many would not accept other people taking credit for their work (57%). They want to be evaluated by their performance, such as problem solving and communication skills, and not necessarily by other attributes such as respect for authority.

"The survey results suggest this generation aspires to a very different work environment and reward system from their parents' generation," said Jodi Shanoff, Vice President, Angus Reid Strategies. "These young people have a strong sense of self and boundaries. They expect recognition and reward based on their contribution and they place great importance on achieving a work-life balance."

While more than half expect competitive pay and benefits from their employment, money is not the top immediate or long-term goal for many of these young people. Forty-three per cent want a job to advance their career now and 61 per cent identify work-life balance as their long-term career goal, followed by meaningful and challenging work (57%) and job security (43%).

"From an employer's perspective, it's worth remembering that this generation of talent wants to prove themselves and be committed to their employer and career. They expect reciprocal commitment from their employers. Those employers who provide a supportive environment are likely to find dedicated and skilled employees who will grow with their organization," said Ms. Lamont.

About Career Edge Organization

Career Edge Organization, a national not-for-profit, has worked with over 1000 employers across Canada to provide meaningful work experiences through paid internships to over 9200 talented interns since 1996. It operates three paid internship programs: *Career Edge* for recent university or college graduates, *Ability Edge* for graduates with disabilities and *Career Bridge* for internationally qualified professionals. Career Edge Organization provides strategic staffing solutions including on-line access to candidates, payroll administration and HR expertise to help employers recruit, hire and retain quality talent. Interns benefit from on the job coaching and training in a supportive and professional environment.

- 30 -

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