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Robert May

Robert May, Managing Director at IT solutions consultancy ramsac, says that understanding new ways of working is vital to any enterprise

## From Generation X to Y and Z

If Facebook were a country, it would now be the third largest country in the world. That astonishing fact was recently upheld across the media as an indication of the way in which (the so-called) 'Generation Y' is already changing the way in which the world interacts. It is a strong indication that we are witnessing a noticeable shift in the way in which the future workforce wants to communicate, and consequently will have a huge impact in the way future business leaders will want to do business.

Seismic changes in the way we do business are nothing new. In much the same way that previous generations adopted the telephone, television and computers, the business leaders and entrepreneurs of tomorrow will be looking to use the tools they know best to solve problems – and they will be looking towards potential employers to ensure they have these in their arsenal when they enter the business world.

A good example of how things are already moving is email. The ubiquitous communications tool of the last decade or so has become a staple portal for the sharing of letters, memos, documents and files – largely replacing a sizable percentage of reliance on postal services, fax machines and even telephones. However, to many graduates email is already out of date, with Instant Messaging applications making it seem slow and inefficient – especially in a fast moving and time-sensitive environment.

Similarly, the huge increases in mobile data usage in the last few years show that the Smartphone is rapidly overtaking traditional Internet access as the web portal of choice. Generation Y has fully embraced the use of mobile devices and school-leavers and graduates will be eager to transfer their Smartphone prowess to the world of business, along with their peers.

So where does this leave the business leaders of today? All businesses should be aware of the wealth of talent entering the workplace each year, and smart businesses' leaders will recognise that it is important to embrace new ideas to attract fresh talent. The soon to arrive influx of graduates and school-leavers, hungry to cut their teeth in the world of business, will often expect more than basic IT in their new career. Lightweight

laptops/netbooks and Smartphones are integral to the personal lives of Generation Y, so they will expect businesses to equip them with similar tools if their position requires them to think and act on their feet to benefit the organisation.

The clues can be found from all our own experiences within the business world during the last 10, 20 or 30 years. The pace of change in the workplace, thanks to technology, has been astounding. From the computers, phone systems and fax machines of the 1980s through to the mass adoption of the Internet and email in the 1990s and the explosion of communications options during the last 10 years, the modern workplace is a very different one to that of the previous generations. Undoubtedly there had been reluctance to adopt even the simplest IT by some quarters upon its introduction. Today, as always, there is hesitancy from some business leaders to make the investment (and a sometimes fundamental mindset shift) needed to embrace new ways of working, but any tool which gives an organisation an edge over its competition will always find favour with anyone with the vision to fully capitalise on it.

Savvy businesses realise they can significantly improve productivity, increase their profile and raise the bar for customer service (as well as opening the door for new business opportunities), by having a well managed, proactive and rapidly reactive work force. What could be more helpful to the spirit of entrepreneurship than arming fresh talent with the relevant tools they need to help your business continue to thrive in a changing environment?

The simple truth is that business, like all aspects of society, is constantly evolving and so are the young breed of up-and-coming professionals who play a large part in keeping industry and commerce relevant and profitable. A firm understanding of the benefits of change is an important one for all business leaders who want to continue to thrive. The older generation may be confounded by some of the ideas that come from Generation Y, but they represent the upcoming market as well as future employees, so it is vital to accept new ways of working and ensure your business is blooming for the inevitable rise of Generation Z!