

## A WORD FROM RELOCATION SPECIALISTS



Welcome to our last edition for 2006. With summer on it's way, our thoughts turn to all of things we need to finish either at work or in our personal lives before the end of the year. Most of us hope for some down time around the holiday season when we can relax with our family and friends and even take stock of our achievements and where we want to be and plan for 2007.

With this in mind we thought a light hearted look at "Aussie" humour might be appropriate. Unlike many cultures Australians use humour to ease the tension of a situation, so it is the one aspect of Australia that so many international relocatees comment that they find challenging, confronting and are not quite sure how to join in. By understanding this aspect of our own culture we can assist our new arrivals to feel a little more comfortable as they adjust to our environment.

At *Relocation Specialists* we have noticed huge changes in the workplace as we now relocate many people who do not fit the traditional model of family or are maybe moving out of the parental home for the first time. Understanding the different needs and wants of Generation X & Y is essential to the success of all our businesses and interesting to watch the cultural and organizational changes that

must occur particularly as we struggle with a skills shortage in Australia.

As always we welcome your feedback and comments.

Happy Reading!

Anita Fernandes, Principal, Sydney

**Do you work in a *cross cultural* or *virtual* team?**  
**If so, then talk to us about a new program we offer to increase the effectiveness and productivity of that team.**

**Call Anita Fernandes or your local office to discuss.**

## FEATURES

- **A Word From Relocation Specialists**
- **A Cultural clash of different Sort: Generation Y and X**
- **Understanding Australian Humour**

### *Quote of the month*

***Historians believe the widespread use of the word "mate" can be traced to the harsh conditions on the Australian frontier in the 1890s, and the development of a code of mutual aid, or "mateship". Alternatively, we may all just be really hopeless with names!***

### Contact details:

#### **Sydney**

Anita Fernandes  
anitaf@relocationspecialists.com.au  
Tel: +61 2 9973 2968

#### **Brisbane**

Aysegul Kayahan  
Aysegul@relocationspecialists.com.au  
Tel: 0419 969 559

#### **Melbourne**

Theresa Le Duc  
tid@relocationspecialists.com.au  
Tel: +61 3 9531 7224

#### **Perth**

Donna McCrory  
donna@relocationspecialists.com.au  
Tel: +61 8 9371 8702



Written by Peita  
Pacey and  
Monita Mascitti-  
Meuter

*They're young, smart, brash. They may wear flip-flops to the office or listen to iPods at their desk. They want to work, but they don't want work to be their life.*

*Eileen Blass, USA TODAY*

Companies today face a culture clash of a different sort: the emergence of generation X and Y within the workforce. Young *baby busters* (gen X) and *millennials* (gen Y) as they are also called, are readdressing ways of recruiting, maintaining staff and incorporating new employees. By extension, relocation practices and cross cultural training has had to readjust its focus to include the needs and values of this subculture, as these are becoming integral in understanding the cultural issues the generations X/Y face. The culture shock is not so much anymore between clashing cultural values that stem from cultural diversity, as it is between different generations within our now globalising world culture reshaping the organisational culture of companies in general.

So what are we dealing with when we say generation X and Y? Generation X are generally typified as Baby Busters, MTV Generation) Born between 1961-81, this generation has faced economic downturn and housing affordability issues. They are

## A Cultural Clash of a Different Sort: Generation X and Y

known as the "So what" Generation and are overeducated for jobs available. In Australia they leave the parental home later, defer home purchasing and are if they choose to have children, tend to be older parents especially if tertiary qualified. These families are smaller and the children receive lots of individual attention. There is also a significant wealth disparity within this generation: They like to spend rather than save and their financial success equates independence unlike the Boomers for whom it meant security.

This different attitude also affects their efforts in trying to find a balance between work and life: work related experience interspersed with "lifestyle" events such as in depth cross-cultural learning's: as a result they are skeptical, culturally progressive and technologically savvy. Their workplaces however are demanding and hours worked often excessive.

Generation Y are also alternately known as millennials, gen-Y, echo boomers, Net gen, and even "generation why," because they never stop questioning the status quo. Born between 1980 – 91, this generation wants immediate gratification feedback and results. They have high



expectations of themselves and their employers and consider respect based on age hierarchy redundant.

Personal fulfillment is more important than financial success and as a result, everything is motivated for the "experience". Whereas generations before would remain loyal to the one company over decades, generation Y is loyal to their career but not employers and thus likely to move around until they find somewhere more suitable. This adds to the complexity of a country facing a skills shortage. Similarly to generation X, these are highly technologically advanced employees but also the most medicated generation of our time with high depression rates, and obesity as recognised problems.

In summary, within a cultural context, the values of these two new groups can be analysed as follows.

- They value quality of life over work
- They are highly individualistic (focus on self improvement)
- And, both can be said to practise low power distance:
- Defining traits and values are subtly different *between* these two generation, however, as can be seen below:

# RELOCATION TOPICS

	Generation X	Generation Y
Attitude	laid back individualistic resourceful	laid back Individualistic resourceful, cynical
Society	white/middle class suburban	socioeconomically, ethnically and sexually diverse
Youth	latchkey kids	Y" returns from school to housekeepers
Older	financial necessity forced many to live at home with parents	older Millennials are ensconced in their own apartments — often subsidized by parents
Power Distance	Disrespect of authority and distrust of institutions	Disrespect of authority, anything denoting hierarchy, to a higher degree than Gen X.
Work and Life	Generation X looks more to a series of work-related experiences interspersed with 'lifestyle' events such as cross-cultural learnings.	Generation Y employees begin and may stay with part- time employment. Generation Y sees the multi-scheduling of personal priorities and work experience as the expected state of affairs over a working life.

What approach can companies then take to try and integrate, and especially retain this new generation as they are replacing the retiring baby boomers?

- Gen Y: Give lots of feedback on how progress is going and any developments

- Gen X – is very involved with children, so the workplace must recognise the priority and be flexible to reflect this need.

- Generation Y is less motivated by money and more by personal fulfilment so employers need to provide reward and recognition programmes rather than solely salary benefits.

- Invest in training and development for managers, placing particular emphasis on 'soft' skills, such as performance management and conflict resolution.

- In order to retain generation X/Y's management needs to be trained on the psychology of people & communication skills. Retention will be more successful if employees are happy where they work.

- Listen to messages, show empathy, and share experiences

- Use text messages to communicate

- When recruiting use technology

- Emphasise non-work activities to show understanding of work-life balance and lifestyle/ experience opportunities

- Networking and socialising opportunities are important

- Develop a learning culture within your company

So what types of situations is the corporate world facing with these new faces being hired? Just read the example below.

A 22-year-old pharmaceutical employee learned that he was not getting the promotion he had been eyeing. His boss told him he needed to work on his weaknesses first. The Harvard grad had excelled at everything he had ever done, so he was crushed by the news. He told his parents about the performance review, and they were convinced there was some misunderstanding, some way they could fix it, as they'd been able to fix everything before. His mother called the human-resources department the next day. Seventeen times. She left increasingly frustrated messages: "You're purposely ignoring us"; "you fudged the evaluation"; "you have it in for my son." She demanded a mediation session with her, her son, his boss, and HR--and got it. At one point, the 22-year-old reprimanded the HR rep for being "rude to my mom." Source: Daniele Sacks, *Scenes from the Culture Clash* ([www.fastcompany.com/magazine/102/culture-clash.html](http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/102/culture-clash.html))

## Understanding Australian Humour



Written by  
Cultural  
trainer

Monita Mascitti-  
Meuter

I am originally from the Netherlands Antilles, and I met my Australian husband in Canada. One of the things that struck me most was his sense of humour – how different it was to mine. Wrought with little bits of sarcasm and quick come-backs, I had to change my tactics in trying to win debates very quickly. It was only *after* I arrived in Australia that I came to realise there were a few more like him (that was a bubble that had to burst I guess), and that this sense of humour was possibly endemic to the culture!

Australian humour is something quite unique and it pervades everyday speech. Where else (and don't say Britain, because that's just not exactly the same) can you find a black sense of humour with an anti authoritarian approach, laced with cynicism and self deprecation, not to mention a quickness of wit for dessert? Australian humour often uses slang (eg 'have a Captain Cook' – have a look; china plate – mate ; ball & chain – the wife ; the dog & bone – the telephone); the political cartoons (one only has to think of Michael Leunig's brilliant

work) and comedy (Strictly Ballroom, Muriel's Wedding; Kath & Kim). My opinion though is, that the best examples of Australian wit can be found in such talk shows as the Andrew Denton show and the Glass House. The uniqueness of Australian humour also comes forth in its upside down approach (calling someone tall 'shorty' someone quiet 'rowdy' someone bald 'curly' and a redhead 'blue'). Cutting down those tall poppies indeed. It's a sport, and, as with any sport, Australians are good at it.

Don't get me wrong: I appreciate Australian humour: I couldn't live without these intellectual gymnastics. Whether I will ever be able to *master* this art, is another matter all together. After fourteen years I'm still a quiet observer. I actually think my three year old son is getting the hang of it without even trying. The other day I told him he'd be punished if he told anyone again that they were a poo poo head (fascination with words that have an affect on adults is a great pass time at this age). He though about this for a while, and lo and behold a few minutes later he quite innocently said: "Mummy I had a bad dream last night. I dreamt of a poo cow with a poo tail, and it was really scary." How could I punish what he dreamt? Within little time he took it a step further: "We are not allowed to say poo, are we mummy?" Yeah, saying poo is naughty" I swear I could see him snicker. In one afternoon he managed to string the forbidden word in phrases at least thirty

times, and I was powerless whilst my three year old now relished the power of sentences. I had created the proverbial monster, unleashing powers I didn't know he had. (O, and in his defence, the fascination with bodily functions is not quite Australian, I know: that's the unfortunate Dutch side to his equation. It's there in proverbs, humour...you name it: quite a smelly humour load to carry for a little boy, I admit.)

Finally, just for *fun* I though I'd leave you a few examples of Australian humour I came across the other day:

- The shorter the nickname, the more they like you.
- There is no food that cannot be improved by the application of tomato sauce.
- All our best heroes are losers.
- It's not summer until the steering wheel is too hot to hold.
- The poisoning of Phar Lap remains the purest example of what happens when Australians attempt to take on the outside world.
- When tipping in a restaurant, we add 10 per cent, and then round down to the nearest large-denomination note. Yet, miraculously, we still believe we've tipped 10 per cent.

Sources:  
[www.parris.josh.com.au/humour/xeno/AussieCulture.shtml](http://www.parris.josh.com.au/humour/xeno/AussieCulture.shtml);  
[www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au](http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au);  
[www.convictcreations.com](http://www.convictcreations.com)