Generation X: Workplace Issues with Today's Emerging Workforce

Terry A. Sanders

Abstract

Generation X, those persons born between 1961 and 1981, are the emerging workforce of the 1990's and beyond. This generation is the first to be born into a world where both parents are working to make ends meet, Corporate America is downsizing to work "smarter", and the world is a tumultuous place to exist. The intricacies of this generation's upbringing have contributed to the dichotomies that make the generation unique. They exhibit an air of independence while seeking constant input as to their work product; they covet the team approach to problem solving while relishing their time away to escape and 'do nothing' and they are easily bored and want to change tasks while wanting to be a part of the future of their workplace.

The situation remains that this is the generation that is poised to take America into the 21st. Century. Our role is to blend our workplace ideology with the Generation X philosophy of life, a task that is as interesting as any journey that America's workplace has endeavored to go.

Introduction

The management and leadership of a workplace is a formidable task. Personnel, with their specific needs and expectations are neatly balanced with the needs and expectations of an organization that provides a service or expects a profit. What happens when the emerging workforce does not 'fit' into the existing paradigms of a corporation or governmental entity? Can you find another workforce; can the emerging workforce be 'changed' by placing them along side the existing workforce with the hope they will pattern their concepts to the existing ones?

Generation X, the emerging workforce of the 90's is pushing the envelope of workplace structure as they exercise their concepts of how things are done. Latchkey children who have grown up in single parent households amid the downsizing of America definitely have a different perspective on life and their beliefs, expectations, and attitudes are greying the heads of many a supervisor. The challenges are before us; find out what makes this generation tick and structure the workplace for them or force the round peg of Generation X into the square hole of corporate America and government.

Most will agree that the Generation X workforce is a formidable opponent to traditional corporate and governmental organizations. They truly march to a different drummer, more so than any generation before them. "There is no greater luxury than the freedom to do nothing" cites one Gen Xer and those delegated to motivate them will heartily agree. The group as a whole has experienced parents, friends, and family members who have toiled in their profession only to retire to infirm health or personal tragedy, precluding them from cashing in on their retirement years. Hence the desire to have their personal lives in the forefront and their professional lives as merely a means to fund their personal lives.

Generation X grew up during the downsizing of America where two family incomes were

the norm and one out of every two marriages ended in a divorce. This generation learned to live on their own at a young age through necessity and this necessity for independence brings them in conflict with the managers of today who grew up in the structured post military babyboomer mind set. "Perhaps as a result of their latchkey childhoods, they are not used to being closely supervised and are good at working on their own" writes Cmdr. Catherine McNeilly of the Pittsburgh Police Department (Street Survival Newsletter, 1998), in a statement that will throw all but the most open minded law enforcement supervisor into a dither. Structure without supervision, an emerging anomaly in the quasi-paramilitary law enforcement profession.

The interest of most law enforcement managers is in how we use this emerging workforce in a the highly structured profession who's bounds are set by the courts and the Constitution? How do you maintain continuity of service with a work force that admittedly prefers to be committed to themselves and their wants and needs rather than those of a traditional service oriented profession? And the ultimate question, what will the profession look like in ten years if the generational characteristics of Gen X do play out and the work force seeks new challenges, or worse, new employment after only 4-6 years on the job? The answers to these questions may be found in current research which focuses on traditional business employee/employer management concerns; but do these findings relate to Gen Xers that are seeking employment in the stifling structure of law enforcement?

These issues are paramount to the continued success of the criminal justice profession. Our profession, like no other, has the right to take away the freedom of an individual based upon our discretion in application of law. Neither the military nor the courts have the ability to interact in a face to face scenario and commit a citizen to incarceration. This is truly an awesome capability that is structured with an equally significant mandate of fairness and knowledge and the discretion to fairly apply these abilities finds its' foundation in the commitment that one has to the profession.

This project was designed to determine the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of incumbents in the criminal justice profession. These answers should serve as a basis for laying the path by which we, as law enforcement leaders, can guide our agencies through this emerging work force.

Background
Generation X has been described as those individuals born between 1961 and 1981, the generation which followed the baby boomers, according to Douglas Coupland in his book, Generation X. Although much has been written about this generation, few works provide specific insight into the inner belief systems that drive this work force in the corporate and governmental world. Bruce Tulgan, in his book Managing Generation X, interviewed over one thousand Generation Xers with a framework of questions that focused on "How are you being managed", and "How does that affect your work" Each interview lasted from thirty minutes to three hours and eighty five of the respondents had their thoughts presented in the book.

Tulgan took the known incidental characteristics that are typically associated with Gen Xers and illuminated them through practical applications in the real world of work. In doing so, Tulgan dispelled many myths of irresponsibility and lackluster performance in favor of paradigm changes which could capitalize on the intricacies of this generational workforce. Throughout the readings, it is evident that Generation X does have most of the qualities that we look for in an employee. They do exhibit commitment, honesty, an ability to work as a team, and a desire to see the organization succeed. The difference in this generation is, perhaps, the same difference as we would find in any generational workforce: their motivators. If one is to compare Generation X with the other generations before it we would find that they have developed a greater autonomy to function, an intolerance of abuse at the hands of their employers, a desire for flexibility, and a keen sense of wanting to belong to the search for the solution. Tulgan presents many examples wherein members of Gen X openly admit that salaries are a motivator but not THE motivator and that they would rather have a sense of belonging and share in accomplishment of the organization than work in an organization of prestige where you are just a small cog in the big corporate machinery.

This generation presents a work force that could be the exception to the rule of mundane. By virtue of their challenged upbringing, they have developed keen living skills which if appropriately focused, can propel any organization forward at a significant rate. If we stifle their now developed characteristics they could be the mill stone that drags the organization to its' knees. Again relying on material that had been previously published, I found little offered as to how Generation X and their specific characteristics were applicable to the field of Criminal Justice.

Methods

The identified need which was addressed in this project was to develop a survey instrument which would exact specific responses in which attitudes, beliefs and expectations of criminal justice participants could be determined. Information readily available through literature review tended to disclose a general set of expectations that were derived from a survey of all members of a Generation X sample, regardless of their profession. The focus of this project was two fold. First, to obtain survey data from incumbent Criminal Justice participants and determine if this data was analogous to existing data of the general Gen X population and second utilize the data generated by Criminal Justice incumbents to provide a basis of knowledge with which to meet the needs of this workforce.

For a survey to be effective it must be administered in a manner that does not prejudice the participants toward any one view. The construction of the survey must be such that the questions accurately determine the feelings of the sample and present the results in a manner that is quantifiable. The survey should be anonymous and the expressed purpose for the exercise should be presented to the sample group in an innocuous fashion so that their answers are truly representative of their feelings.

This survey was constructed to measure attitudes, beliefs, and expectations among the study group of criminal justice incumbents or academic majors which were members of Generation X. Generation X is described by Douglas Coupland in his book, Generation X,

as those persons born between 1961 and 1981. The survey consisted of thirty four questions of a specific nature each requiring a sliding scale, five point (Likert) response ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The respondents marked the appropriate response on the survey instrument. Additionally, three questions concerning the personal demographical information of the respondents were included at the end of the survey.

The survey was administered to four groups of individuals, all with a general career focus in criminal justice. One group were those criminal justice majors at a local community college. The second group consisted of members of the basic law enforcement academy training program in Volusia County, Florida. The third and fourth groups were criminal justice majors at a Central Florida University and St. Johns University in New York. The survey was administered by class instructors or professors and the respondents were presented a minimum of background information concerning the purpose of the study to preclude bias. The questions were not discussed in advance and the surveys were completed anonymously

The surveys were returned to this writer and upon receipt of the surveys they were entered into a general data base which recorded each of the responses in numerical value and the demographic information of the respondent. The methodology for processing the data was through the use of spread sheets with sorting and cross tabulation of specific responses. Surveys which contained substantial omission or apparent patterned responses were discarded (approximately five surveys). The general data base was then sorted to eliminate those respondents that did not fall within the age characteristic of Generation X (1961-1981). The general data base was then further sorted into two comparative study groups of criminal justice academic majors and those persons actively seeking employment as a law enforcement officer through the basic law enforcement academy training program. The cross tabulation of responses to specific questions are also presented in the Discussion section of this study.

The information obtained from these study groups carries certain strengths and weaknesses. The study groups were actively pursuing study in an academic setting. As evidence by their attendance in class and participation in the study, the have the financial means and the academic record to attend the courses. Each individual, by the criteria met through academic admission, has completed at least the twelfth grade. Again citing basic academic requirements, the respondents functioned on an acceptable level of academic ability including their ability to assimilate knowledge. Inherent in this knowledge is the ability to complete the survey and express one's attitudes, beliefs, and expectations.

A generalized weakness may be found in this data given the manner and the place in which the survey was given. Did the respondents feel pressured to respond because of the setting in which the survey was administered and by the persons administering the device? Having not stipulated when the survey was to be administered, the possibility exists that the some surveys were administered at the end of the class or before breaks, times which could lead to hasty responses. Nonetheless, the quality and consistency of the responses are indicative that the responses were candid and cross references of the individual

responses shows correlated vales between related questions.

Results

The results of the survey are displayed in three formats: the general responses in aggregate, responses of incumbent law enforcement respondents, and comparative responses between the two groups. The questions are denoted with the descriptors of Attitude, Belief, or Expectation to note their assessment focus. As noted earlier, the questions were answered using a five point sliding scale of agreement ranging from Strongly Disagree through Strongly Agree.

General Population Responses

1. When you make a decision, how do you know it is morally right? (Belief)
    A. I feel/believe that it is right (81%)
    B. Most people say it is right (0%)
    C. The moral authority (Church, God) says it is right   (5%)
    D. It is legal   (5%)
    E. It produces the best results for the greatest number of people   (7%)

2. Training would help me keep my interest in my job. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(1%)	(3%)	(16%)	(51%)	(28%)

3. What a law enforcement officer does off duty should have no impact upon his career. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(29%)	(48%)	(8%)	(12%)	(3%)

4. If I had a felony record I would still make a good law enforcement officer. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(20%)	(29%)	(24%)	(20%)	(6%)

5. If I were attending a party and marijuana was being used I would leave. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(23%)	(17%)	(17%)	(14%)	(29%)

6. If I were attending a party and cocaine was being used I would leave. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(2%)	(10%)	(9%)	(20%)	(58%)

7. Law enforcement officers are expected to maintain their personal lives to a higher standard than the   general public. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(1%)	(14%)	(13%)	(52%)	(20%)

8. It is acceptable for a law enforcement officer to refuse to make an arrest because he feels that   the law is "unjust". (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(26%)	(42%)	(13%)	(16%)	(2%)

9. There are times when it is alright for a law enforcement officer to lie in order to achieve the means   of getting a criminal off of the street. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(29%)	(30%)	(10%)	(25%)	(5%)

10. I feel that law enforcement officers are in the profession because they want to make a difference. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(2%)	(11%)	(17%)	(46%)	(10%)

11. I support the death penalty for certain crimes. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(3%)	(6%)	(22%)	(54%)

12. I feel that the general public "likes" law enforcement officers. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(8%)	(31%)	(16%)	(43%)	(2%)

13. I expect to remain with one employer for the duration of my career. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(11%)	(32%)	(30%)	(19%)	(8%)

14. I believe that law enforcement officers should have at least an Associates Degree before they   are hired. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(3%)	(15%)	(10%)	(50%)	(22%)

15. I believe that continued education is important for law enforcement officers. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(2%)	(3%)	(44%)	(52%)

16. I would consider the professional standing of an employer before I applied for a position with that employer. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(3%)	(13%)	(57%)	(26%)

17. I believe that rigid structure is an important element in a law enforcement agency. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(6%)	(18%)	(57%)	(18%)

18. I feel that I should have the opportunity to move around within an organization rather than staying in the same job year after year. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(4%)	(8%)	(48%)	(21%)

19. I would be content *not* to seek promotion during my career. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(68%)	(22%)	(5%)	(3%)	(2%)

20. I think law enforcement officers should have the discretion to not arrest an individual even though a   crime has been committed. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(15%)	(27%)	(13%)	(32%)	(12%)

21. Law enforcement officers should be treated like an ordinary citizen if he/she is stopped off duty for   a traffic violation. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(2%)	(24%)	(15%)	(32%)	(26%)

22. A law enforcement officer should show a greater degree of discretion when faced with the   possibility of arresting another law enforcement officer for a minor crime. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(8%)	(25%)	(20%)	(33%)	(14%)

23. Job benefits (medical, retirement) are the most important things to me when applying for a   position. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(3%)	(34%)	(17%)	(33%)	(12%)

24. The salary is most important to me when applying for a job. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(4%)	(25%)	(15%)	(38%)	(17%)

25. I resent authority when it comes to my job. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(25%)	(48%)	(20%)	(6%)	(2%)

26. I prefer to set my own destiny rather than have someone else determine it for me. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(1%)	(5%)	(8%)	(43%)	(42%)

27. I am comfortable self-assessing my work performance. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(9%)	(9%)	(65%)	(15%)

28. If I had a preference I would accept no responsibility for anything other than myself. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(17%)	(72%)	(13%)	(19%)	(4%)

29. My current job is a stepping stone to a better job. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(5%)	(13%)	(17%)	(39%)	(26%)

30. My personal life comes before my professional life. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(4%)	(21%)	(19%)	(40%)	(15%)

31. On my days off, I enjoy "just doing nothing". (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(12%)	(36%)	(8%)	(34%)	(10%)

32. I prefer to work in an unsupervised atmosphere. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(3%)	(26%)	(24%)	(37%)	(9%)

33. I want my employer to tell me how I am doing on a regular basis. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(6%)	(17%)	(54%)	(22%)

34. I was raised in a two parent household.

(Yes)	(No)
(75%)	(25%)

I am Black ( ), White ( ), Hispanic ( ), Native American ( ), Asian ( ), Other ( )
    (16%)   (70%)   (7%)   (1%)   (1%)   (3%)

I was born in 19___

I am Male ( )   Female ( )
    (59%)   (41%)

Specific Law Enforcement Responses

1. When you make a decision, how do you know it is morally right? (Belief)
    A. I feel/believe that it is right (65%)
    B. Most people say it is right (0%)

C. The moral authority (Church, God) says it is right   (8%)
D. It is legal   (12%)
E. It produces the best results for the greatest number of people   (8%)

2. Training would help me keep my interest in my job. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(44%)	(47%)

3. What a law enforcement officer does off duty should have no impact upon his career. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(47%)	(44%)	(0%)	(6%)	(0%)

4. If I had a felony record I would still make a good law enforcement officer. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(15%)	(41%)	(18%)	(23%)	(0%)

5. If I were attending a party and marijuana was being used I would leave. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(6%)	(12%)	(23%)	(59%)

6. If I were attending a party and cocaine was being used I would leave. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(15%)	(83%)

7. Law enforcement officers are expected to maintain their personal lives to a higher standard than the   general public. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(12%)	(47%)	(41%)

8. It is acceptable for a law enforcement officer to refuse to make an arrest because he feels that   the law is "unjust". (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(35%)	(38%)	(18%)	(8%)	(0%)

9. There are times when it is alright for a law enforcement officer to lie in order to achieve the means   of getting a criminal off of the street. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(38%)	(18%)	(12%)	(26%)	(6%)

10. I feel that law enforcement officers are in the profession because they want to make a difference. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(47%)	(44%)

11. I support the death penalty for certain crimes. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(24%)	(68%)

12. I feel that the general public "likes" law enforcement officers. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(26%)	(20%)	(50%)	(0%)

13. I expect to remain with one employer for the duration of my career. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(9%)	(12%)	(29%)	(21%)	(29%)

14. I believe that law enforcement officers should have at least an Associates Degree before they   are hired. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(18%)	(26%)	(50%)	(22%)

15. I believe that continued education is important for law enforcement officers. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(18%)	(82%)

16. I would consider the professional standing of an employer before I applied for a position with that employer. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(56%)	(36%)

17. I believe that rigid structure is an important element in a law enforcement agency. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(6%)	(9%)	(62%)	(24%)

18. I feel that I should have the opportunity to move around within an organization rather than staying in the same job year after year. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(6%)	(0%)	(35%)	(59%)

19. I would be content *not* to seek promotion during my career. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(71%)	(21%)	(6%)	(0%)	(0%)

20. I think law enforcement officers should have the discretion to not arrest an individual even though a   crime has been committed. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(21%)	(44%)	(0%)	(18%)	(15%)

21. Law enforcement officers should be treated like an ordinary citizen if he/she is stopped off duty for   a traffic violation. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(21%)	(15%)	(21%)	(32%)	(12%)

22. A law enforcement officer should show a greater degree of discretion when faced with the   possibility of arresting another law enforcement officer for a minor crime. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(18%)	(21%)	(35%)	(24%)

23. Job benefits (medical, retirement) are the most important things to me when applying for a   position. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(24%)	(15%)	(32%)	(24%)

24. The salary is most important to me when applying for a job. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(26%)	(21%)	(29%)	(18%)

25. I resent authority when it comes to my job. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(53%)	(41%)	(6%)	(0%)	(0%)

26. I prefer to set my own destiny rather than have someone else determine it for me. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(6%)	(6%)	(35%)	(47%)

27. I am comfortable self-assessing my work performance. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(9%)	(71%)	(18%)

28. If I had a preference I would accept no responsibility for anything other than myself. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(32%)	(32%)	(21%)	(15%)	(0%)

29. My current job is a stepping stone to a better job. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(15%)	(32%)	(26%)	(26%)

30. My personal life comes before my professional life. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)

| (0%) | (15%) | (18%) | (47%) | (18%) |

31. On my days off, I enjoy "just doing nothing". (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(26%)	(38%)	(9%)	(18%)	(9%)

32. I prefer to work in an unsupervised atmosphere. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(41%)	(29%)	(15%)	(9%)

33. I want my employer to tell me how I am doing on a regular basis. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(50%)	(49%)

34. I was raised in a two parent household.

(Yes)	(No)
(79%)	(21%)

I am Black ( ), White ( ), Hispanic ( ), Native American ( ), Asian ( ), Other ( )
   (18%)   (74%)   (6%)   (1%)   (0%)   (0%)
I was born in 19___

I am Male ( )   Female ( )
   (71%)   (29%)

Composite Responses CJ/BLE

1. When you make a decision, how do you know it is morally right? (Belief)
   A. I feel/believe that it is right (81%) (65%)
   B. Most people say it is right (0%) (0%)
   C. The moral authority (Church, God) says it is right   (5%) (8%)
   D. It is legal   (5%) (12%)
   E. It produces the best results for the greatest number of people   (7%) (8%)

2. Training would help me keep my interest in my job. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(1%)	(3%)	(16%)	(51%)	(28%)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(44%)	(47%)

3. What a law enforcement officer does off duty should have no impact upon his career. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(29%)	(48%)	(8%)	(12%)	(3%)
(47%)	(44%)	(0%)	(6%)	(0%)

4. If I had a felony record I would still make a good law enforcement officer. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(20%)	(29%)	(24%)	(20%)	(6%)
(15%)	(41%)	(18%)	(23%)	(0%)

5. If I were attending a party and marijuana was being used I would leave. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(23%)	(17%)	(17%)	(14%)	(29%)
(0%)	(6%)	(0%)	(15%)	(83%)

6. If I were attending a party and cocaine was being used I would leave. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(2%)	(10%)	(9%)	(20%)	(58%)
(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(15%)	(83%)

7. Law enforcement officers are expected to maintain their personal lives to a higher standard than the   general public. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(1%)	(14%)	(13%)	(52%)	(20%)
(0%)	(0%)	(12%)	(47%)	(41%)

8. It is acceptable for a law enforcement officer to refuse to make an arrest because he feels that   the law is "unjust". (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(26%)	(42%)	(13%)	(16%)	(2%)
(35%)	(38%)	(18%)	(8%)	(0%)

9. There are times when it is alright for a law enforcement officer to lie in order to achieve the means   of getting a criminal off of the street. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(29%)	(30%)	(10%)	(25%)	(5%)
(38%)	(18%)	(12%)	(26%)	(6%)

10. I feel that law enforcement officers are in the profession because they want to make a   difference. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(2%)	(11%)	(17%)	(46%)	(10%)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(47%)	(44%)

11. I support the death penalty for certain crimes. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(6%)	(3%)	(6%)	(22%)	(54%)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(24%)	(68%)

12. I feel that the general public "likes" law enforcement officers. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)

(8%)	(31%)	(16%)	(43%)	(2%)
(0%)	(26%)	(20%)	(50%)	(0%)

13. I expect to remain with one employer for the duration of my career. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(11%)	(32%)	(30%)	(19%)	(8%)
(9%)	(12%)	(29%)	(21%)	(29%)

14. I believe that law enforcement officers should have at least an Associates Degree before they   are hired. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(3%)	(15%)	(10%)	(50%)	(22%)
(6%)	(18%)	(26%)	(50%)	(22%)

15. I believe that continued education is important for law enforcement officers. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(2%)	(3%)	(44%)	(52%)
(0%)	(0%)	(0%)	(18%)	(82%)

16. I would consider the professional standing of an employer before I applied for a position with that employer. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(3%)	(13%)	(57%)	(26%)
(0%)	(0%)	(6%)	(56%)	(36%)

17. I believe that rigid structure is an important element in a law enforcement agency. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(6%)	(18%)	(57%)	(18%)
(0%)	(6%)	(9%)	(62%)	(24%)

18. I feel that I should have the opportunity to move around within an organization rather than staying in the same job year after year. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(4%)	(8%)	(48%)	(21%)
(0%)	(6%)	(0%)	(35%)	(59%)

19. I would be content *not* to seek promotion during my career. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(68%)	(22%)	(5%)	(3%)	(2%)
(71%)	(21%)	(6%)	(0%)	(0%)

20. I think law enforcement officers should have the discretion to not arrest an individual even though a   crime has been committed. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(15%)	(27%)	(13%)	(32%)	(12%)

(21%)	(44%)	(0%)	(18%)	(15%)

21. Law enforcement officers should be treated like an ordinary citizen if he/she is stopped off duty for   a traffic violation. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(2%)	(24%)	(15%)	(32%)	(26%)
(21%)	(15%)	(21%)	(32%)	(12%)

22. A law enforcement officer should show a greater degree of discretion when faced with the   possibility of arresting another law enforcement officer for a minor crime. (Belief)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(8%)	(25%)	(20%)	(33%)	(14%)
(0%)	(18%)	(21%)	(35%)	(24%)

23. Job benefits (medical, retirement) are the most important things to me when applying for a   position. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(3%)	(34%)	(17%)	(33%)	(12%)
(6%)	(24%)	(15%)	(32%)	(24%)

24. The salary is most important to me when applying for a job. (Expectation)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(4%)	(25%)	(15%)	(38%)	(17%)
(6%)	(26%)	(21%)	(29%)	(18%)

25. I resent authority when it comes to my job. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(25%)	(48%)	(20%)	(6%)	(2%)
(53%)	(41%)	(6%)	(0%)	(0%)

26. I prefer to set my own destiny rather than have someone else determine it for me. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(1%)	(5%)	(8%)	(43%)	(42%)
(6%)	(6%)	(6%)	(35%)	(47%)

27. I am comfortable self-assessing my work performance. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(0%)	(9%)	(9%)	(65%)	(15%)
(0%)	(0%)	(10%)	(71%)	(18%)

28. If I had a preference I would accept no responsibility for anything other than myself. (Attitude)

(DS)	(D)	(N)	(A)	(SA)
(17%)	(72%)	(13%)	(19%)	(4%)

(32%)   (32%)   (21%)   (15%)   (0%)

29. My current job is a stepping stone to a better job. (Attitude)
    (DS)   (D)   (N)   (A)   (SA)
    (5%)   (13%)   (17%)   (39%)   (26%)
    (0%)   (15%)   (32%)   (26%)   (26%)

30. My personal life comes before my professional life. (Belief)
    (DS)   (D)   (N)   (A)   (SA)
    (4%)   (21%)   (19%)   (40%)   (15%)
    (0%)   (15%)   (18%)   (47%)   (18%)

31. On my days off, I enjoy "just doing nothing". (Attitude)
    (DS)   (D)   (N)   (A)   (SA)
    (12%)   (36%)   (8%)   (34%)   (10%)
    (26%)   (38%)   (9%)   (18%)   (9%)

32. I prefer to work in an unsupervised atmosphere. (Expectation)
    (DS)   (D)   (N)   (A)   (SA)
    (3%)   (26%)   (24%)   (37%)   (9%)
    (6%)   (41%)   (29%)   (15%)   (9%)

33. I want my employer to tell me how I am doing on a regular basis. (Expectation)
    (DS)   (D)   (N)   (A)   (SA)
    (0%)   (6%)   (17%)   (54%)   (22%)
    (0%)   (0%)   (0%)   (50%)   (50%)

34. I was raised in a two parent household.
    (Yes)   (No)
    (75%)   (25%)
    (79%)   (21%)

I am Black ( ), White ( ), Hispanic ( ), Native American ( ), Asian ( ), Other ( )
    (16%)   (70%)   (7%)   (1%)   (1%)   (3%)
    (18%)   (74%)   (6%)   (1%)   (0%)   (0%)
I was born in 19___

I am Male ( )   Female ( )
    (59%)   (41%)
    (71%)   (29%)

Discussion
The responses to this survey were analogous to many of the expectations set forth by

others that have studied this generation. There were, however, some very distinct departures from the generalized Generation X mentality in the law enforcement incumbent group.

Generally, the respondents exhibited attitudes, beliefs, and expectation that hallmark the typical Gen X thought process. The group was predominately comprised of white males with an average age of 26 years. Their belief system, when it comes to moral direction and acceptance of social taboos, is much more liberal that most generations. Most, over 80%, believed that their own moral compass determined the right or wrong in a decision as opposed to a moral or legal authority. This in itself is somewhat troubling when given the generational standards of being raised as latch key children with little parental guidance. The group in general displayed a tolerance to marijuana with 57% expressing their opinion that they would not necessarily leave a party if marijuana was being used. A lower percentage expressed the same thought when it came to cocaine. Law enforcement respondents were adamant in their decision to leave such gatherings with 98% stating that they would leave if either cocaine or marijuana was being used.

The group in general expressed strong support for the death penalty for certain crimes. In each population of respondents the support for this penalty exceeded 75%.

The respondents as a whole expressed support in education with over 70% stating that they believed a law enforcement officer should have at least an Associates degree before they are hired and over 90% stating that they believed that continued education was important for law enforcement officers.

When looking to the workplace, the respondents displayed some characteristic responses of Gen X as well as several responses that are antagonistic to published Gen X characteristics. Approximately 27% stated that they would remain with one employer for the duration of their career with another 30% not expressing their opinion either way. Most (83%) considered the professional standing of an employer before applying for a position with that organization. Most (69%) are looking for advancement and are not content to stay in one position for the duration of their career and many (45%) consider job benefits to be the most important things when applying for a job. Salary is more important (55%) for the general respondents than the law enforcement respondents (47%) but each agree that authority is important in the workplace with over 70% of both respondents denying that they resent authority when it comes to their job. Self assessment of work performance is a significant desire for each group (80% & 89%) for the general and law enforcement worker and each agree that they have a greater desire to accept responsibility for more than their self.

A majority of the respondents relish their employer giving them feed back on their performance, in fact an overwhelming majority (76%+) want this input. Dispelling the myth of laziness, only 43% of the general group and 27% of the law enforcement respondents admitted to wanting to "just do nothing" on their day off and a majority of each (55% and 65%) expressed a belief that their personal life comes before their professional life..

As mentioned earlier, the law enforcement group displayed responses that were more conservative (drug use, criminal records of applicants, moral decisions, and discretion) than the general population and their decisions on many matters were more dramatic than the criminal justice group as a whole. Most law enforcement officers believed that they must maintain their personal lives to a higher standard than the general public (88%). Most believed that is was improper to lie in order to make a case (56%) and most felt that they were in the profession to make a difference (91%). They were strongly in favor of the death penalty (72%) and felt that they were liked by the public (50%).

In the workplace, they were comfortable with authority (94%) and they agreed that their present job was a stepping stone to another one (52%). They held high the belief that rigid structure was important in law enforcement (86%) and they want the opportunity to advance or move within their organization (94%).

The results of this survey are significant in that they allow for some distinction between the generalized responses of persons in the criminal justice field and those of persons focused on the law enforcement profession. A comparative analysis of the results does not show a striking *difference* of opinion in workforce issues but rather the presence of *strong* opinions in a majority of the questions asked. Mindful of this presence, law enforcement leaders must recognize that things that matter to this workforce in general *significantly* matter to the workforce that is upcoming in the law enforcement profession.

Several areas need to be addressed in light of the findings reflected in this survey.
1. The Workforce As A Group
This group does embrace the totality of the organization and has expressed their concern over the team rather than the individual. It is incumbent upon each of us to foster this team approach and reward the members with the simplest of things; a challenge, participation, input as to their progress or lack thereof and an organizational expectation that the workforce is somewhat content to stay but not in one place for too long. They do not despise authority and they expect that the organization will have a degree of rigidity in structure but the structure should not be so rigid that they cannot advance and they seek the 'creature comforts' that make the career worth enduring.

2. The Workforce As Individuals
As individuals they exude a conservative approach to life. They are generally intolerant of lawlessness and drug use and they are reliant upon their own internal compass for moral decision making. They want to determine their own destiny and they value their personal time and they personally believe that they are there to make a difference. A motivator is their salary and the ability to advance.

So where do we, as law enforcement leaders go from here with this generation workforce?

We begin by recognizing the internal dynamics of what makes this workforce tick. They share many of the same published characteristics of Generation X but they still do have a commitment to what we in public service need; an individual that is team oriented and one

who possesses core values of trying to make that difference. Our solutions may be in exaggerations of the direction in which corporate America has journeyed for almost a decade; participative management and a team approach to solving our organizational problems.

The generation is not set upon sleeping through the 21st century. They want to work and they want us to tell them how they are working. The organization cannot remain static in terms of direction or position. The bar must constantly be raised and the flexibility for movement within the organization is a mandate. Job sharing, cross training, and task rotation will serve to break the monotony and lead to not only happy employees but an organization that has flexibility in filling positions during vacations or sick leave.

Rather than trying to change the generation perhaps we should focus on change within our organizations, change that will harness the desires of a generation that posses innate independence and confidence, one that seeks a balance between their personal and professional lives, and the only alternative that we have.

CaptainTerry Sanders is a long time member of the Volusia County Sheriff's Office

References

Abraham, Kurt S. (1998). Need for U.S. majors to balance workforce is apparent. World Oil, V219.

Caudron, Shari (1997). Can Generation Xers be trained? Training and Development, V51, 20-4.

Coupland, Douglas. (1991) Generation X.

Cutler, W. Gale (1997). Derek hires his first twenty-something. Research Technology and Management, V40, 53-4.

Dunne, Matt (1997). Policy leadership, Gen X style. National Civic Review, V86, 251-60.

Flynn, Gillian (1996). Xers vs. Boomers: teamwork or trouble? Personnel Journal, V75, 86-9.

How do you train Generation Xers? (1995) Training and Development, V49, 22.

Jamison, D., & O'Mara, J. (1991). Managing Workforce 2000. San Francisco: Josey/Bass.

Kaplan, Stacey L., & Jones, John M. (1998). Workers are seeking employers of

choice. <u>Chain Store Age,</u> <u>V74.</u>

Kennedy, Marilyn Moats. (1996). When a boomer meets a buster.... <u>Across the Board,</u> <u>V33,</u> 53-4.

Losyk, Bob. (1997). Generation X: what they think and what they plan to do. <u>Public Management,</u> <u>V79,</u> 4-9.

Lynch, Sharon L. (1998, September 7). Survey: Generation-Xers need work training. <u>Boston Globe.</u>

Mariotti, John. (1997). Coping with cyber-age lingo: much of the Generation X slang describes the world of work. <u>The Management Magazine,</u> <u>V246,</u> 22.

Miniter, Richard. (1997). Generation X does business. <u>The American Enterpise,</u> <u>V8,</u> 38-40.

Schrammel, Kurt E. (1996). A comparison of two generations: employment and earnings of young adults in 1979 and 1994. <u>Occupational Outlook Quarterly,</u> <u>V40,</u> 23-9.
The Twenty Somethings. (1996) <u>Supervisory Management,</u> V41, 1-3.

Tulgan, Bruce. (1995). Managing Generation X. <u>HR Focus,</u> <u>V72,</u> 22-3.

Tulgan, Bruce (1995). <u>Managing Generation X</u>. Santa Monica: Merritt.

What L.E. Executives are saying about supervisors. (1998). <u>Street Survival Newsletter,</u> <u>V238</u>.