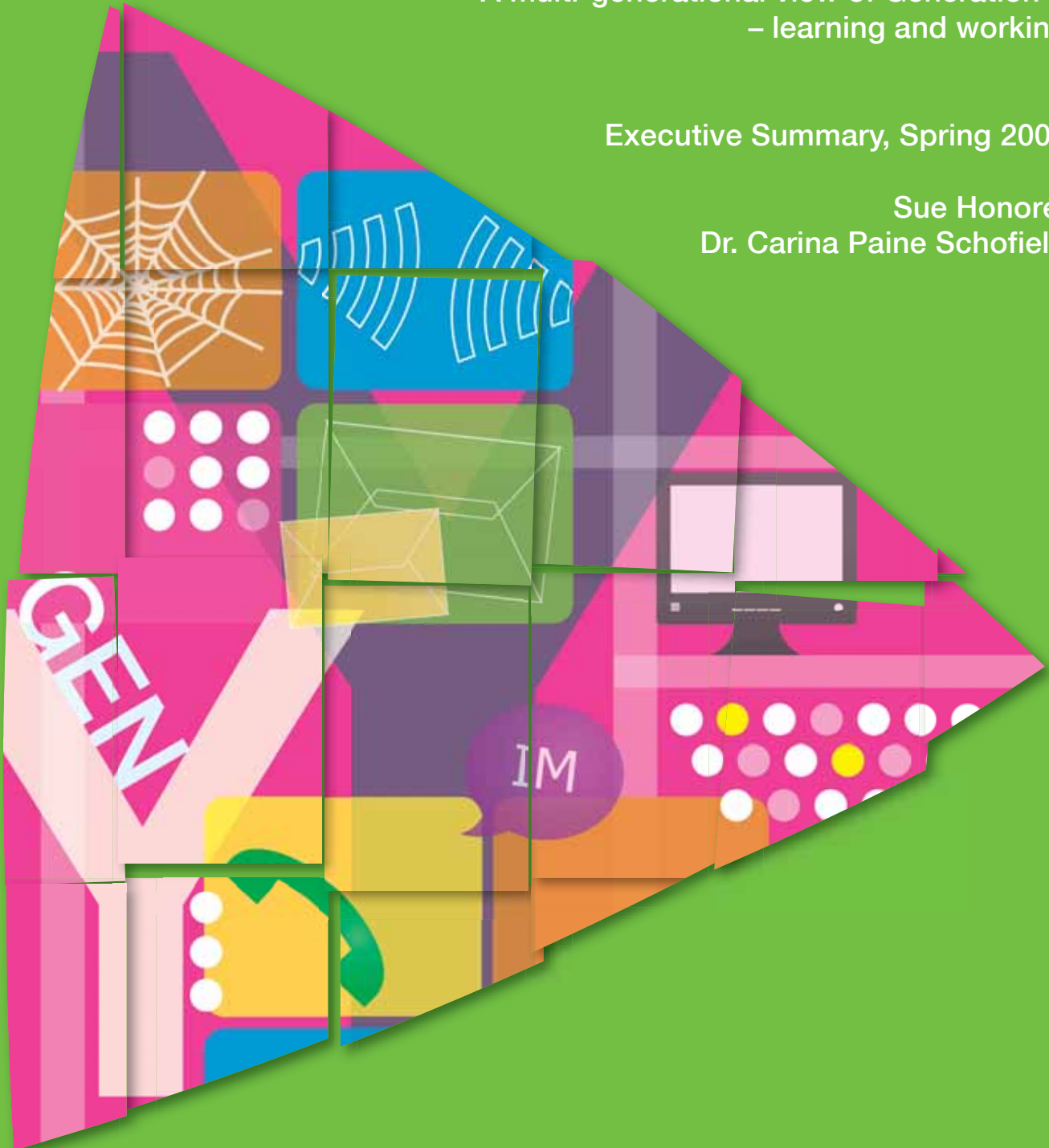


GENERATION Y: INSIDE OUT

A multi-generational view of Generation Y
– learning and working

Executive Summary, Spring 2009

Sue Honoré,
Dr. Carina Paine Schofield



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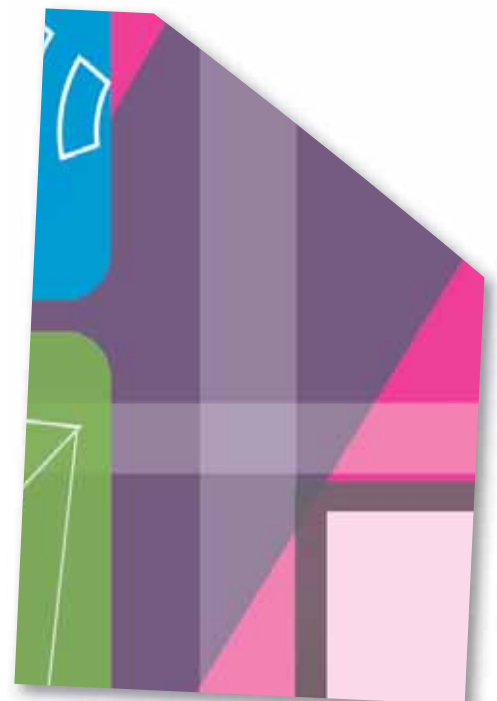
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an executive summary of research conducted by Ashridge Business School between June and October 2008. The focus of this research is on Generation Y (the youngest generation in today's workforce) along with the other key workforce generations: Generation X and Baby Boomers. The research aims to explore Generation Y in detail, to separate the myths from the real behaviours and needs of this generation. It seeks to understand how different generations view each other and explore what impact that has for work and for learning and development in a mixed generation environment, with the ultimate aim being to provide recommendations in order to assist with learning, teaching and workplace practices of the future.

Both qualitative (face-to-face interviews and focus groups) and quantitative (online survey) data collection methods were used to gather data from participants from *all* generations (from Generation Y to Baby Boomers) in order to provide an *in-depth, intergenerational viewpoint*. The research is strongly UK-focused although participants in the survey were global.



Participants consisted of:

Focus Groups/Interviews

59 companies/institutions

133 people aged 16-63+

Online Survey

692 respondents aged 16-63+

25% Generation Y;
27% Late Generation X;
30% Early Generation X;
17% Baby Boomers

55% females; 45% males

Kolb Learning Style Inventory

284 participants aged 16-63+

Key messages

The findings provide a fascinating glimpse of young people and those around them.

The key messages to emerge from the research are:

- **Media hype** has produced a largely untrue image of Generation Y, which may be restricting their potential in the workplace and society.
- Just like any other group of human beings, Generation Y is made up of **individuals**. There are wide variations in their attitudes and behaviour.

- The generational landscape is **complex**, with many different influences and variables. Teasing out real cause and effect is a challenge.
- **Generational boundaries** of about 20 years do not accurately represent the backgrounds and behaviours of cohesive groups. Instead, Generation X and the Baby Boomers are better represented by being split into two ten-year cohorts, and the same may be true of Generation Y as it matures.
- **Viewpoint** is important. How each person sees him/herself and how others may see that person is often different and leads to stereotyped images of Generation Y and of older generations by Generation Y.
- Many of the attitudes and behaviours of people are more a reflection of their **age** than their generation.
- The current **education system** is largely failing this generation in terms of preparation for the workforce, especially concerning communication and numerical skills, approaches to learning, creativity, working with others and rewards and development.
- **Core behaviours and attitudes** that need focus when working with Generation Y include: confidence, ambition, self-awareness, communication, resilience and maturity.
- Generation Y are very adaptable in terms of **technology** but have as varied skill levels as older generations.
- It is more critical than ever before that the [Generation Y] individual and the organisation or group where they work are matched in terms of **culture and attitude** to ensure success.
- **“Give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man.”** Many of the issues with Generation Y highlighted in this report have been created when they were very young. The focus has been to blame Generation Y for their bad behaviour and yet the older generations have the ultimate responsibility. All generations need to work together to gain maximum value from this generation.

The findings from this research will be of particular interest to those in education at secondary and tertiary levels and in business, especially in HR and line management. It should provide a knowledge base which can be used to inform and initiate discussion on educational policy, parenting, recruitment and staff development.

To purchase a copy of the 80 page preliminary report please complete the order form inside the back cover.

For further details regarding this research please contact Dr. Carina Paine Schofield email: carina.schofield@ashridge.org.uk or visit www.ashridge.org.uk/GenYResearch

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