Generation Y in the Workplace: US, India & China

Research-led insights and concepts by Steelcase Workspace Futures
Why study Gen Y?

What trends do we see happening in the workplace?

US Gen Y workers will replace 75 million Baby Boomers by 2025

Is this similar trend in emerging markets?

What are Gen Y’s needs and expectations?

How will Gen Y influence the work and workplace of tomorrow?
Why study Gen Y in India & China?

India and China represent the largest emerging markets in the world today

China
2nd largest economy

India
4th largest economy
Who is Gen Y?

US Gen Y
1980 – 2000

India Gen Y
1980 – 2000

China Post-80s
1980 – 1990
Understanding Gen Y in context

Power Distance Index
Individualism
Masculinity
Uncertainty Avoidance Index
Long-term Orientation

Geert Hofstede’s Model of Cultural Dimensions

US        India        China

Understanding | Research | Findings
Where did we go?
Understanding GenY and Post-80s in context

**Culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nation of immigrants</td>
<td>Multi-cultural and multi-religious society for thousands of years</td>
<td>Confucian education = respect for authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme individualism is a strength and a weakness</td>
<td>Tremendous loyalty towards immediate family</td>
<td>“Guanxi” = relationships and social connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographics:</td>
<td>Cricket unifies a country of differing cultures</td>
<td>Brand recognition is key to most purchase decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmented and Local: sports, politics</td>
<td>Country of dreamers; everyone aspires to better themselves</td>
<td>Modernizing, but not Westernizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National: fast food, obesity, healthcare, etc.</td>
<td>Western aspirations in conflict with traditional values</td>
<td>Tech-savvy and urban, yet traditional Chinese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Last two pts on India come up together
Understanding GenY and Post-80s in context

**Politics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US</th>
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<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Switch between engagement with and isolation from the world</td>
<td>10+ political parties</td>
<td>Historically, government was isolated from world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s: space race, growing prosperity</td>
<td>Co-founder of the Non-Aligned Movement, and also a nuclear power</td>
<td>Return of Hong Kong, then economic reforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s: Vietnam war</td>
<td>1991 reforms opened India to global trade</td>
<td>Growing national pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s: Nixon</td>
<td>Politics are chaotic, with bureaucracy and corruption</td>
<td>British rule of Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s: Conservative</td>
<td>Influenced by illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and religious diversity</td>
<td>Hong Kong is “Special Administrative Region”; one country, two systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s: Iraq War 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Understanding GenY and Post-80s in context

## Economics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US</th>
<th>India</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Largest economy</td>
<td>4th largest economy; 1991 economic reforms led to economic boom</td>
<td>2nd largest economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rising prosperity since 1950s</td>
<td>Asia's largest outsourcing industry and auto industry</td>
<td>Removal of travel restrictions in 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a nation of savers – no future-thinking</td>
<td>Almost 3000 MNCs (37% are US companies)</td>
<td>More opportunities for higher education at home and abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 US Census Bureau reported over $886 billion in debt</td>
<td>Rising entrepreneurship, growing competition, and reduced political interventions</td>
<td>Growing middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong one of the three busiest ports in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong is world’s freest economy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding GenY and Post-80s in context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land of innovation and marketing</td>
<td>3rd largest higher education system, with focus on IT, Engineering and Research</td>
<td>Technology has opened doors to the world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM, NASA, Microsoft, Apple</td>
<td>IT sector is prominent</td>
<td>384 million internet users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4,861 colleges and universities</td>
<td>Mobile phones key to modernization; 706 million mobile phone users</td>
<td>98.3% growth rate in mobile phone access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.9% have access to internet</td>
<td>4th largest internet user base (81 million users)</td>
<td>Chinese providers serve more customers than foreign companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd largest group of mobile phone users: 255 million (2007)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hong Kong – 4.3 million internet users, 65% of population</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Human-Centered Design Process

U > O > S > R > P > M

- Conduct secondary research
- Conduct primary research
- Photography and ethnography
- Contextual interviews
- Engage users in exercises
- Look for patterns
- Develop design principles
- Develop thought starters
Timeline Activity – Any generation is more than just a set of dates
Generations are defined differently around the world

**US**

**Traditionals (1922 – 44)**
- Patriotism and respect for authority
- Children of the Great Depression: “Doing more with Less”

**Baby Boomers (1945 – 64)**
- Experienced increasing economic opportunity, social equality
- Optimistic

**Gen X (1965 – 79)**
- Global Thinkers
- Technology innovators

- Tech savvy and connected
- Focused on social, environmental, and global issues
Generations are defined differently around the world

India

Freedom Fighters (1900 – 46)
Personal needs were sacrificed; country came first
Loyalty and adherence to “traditional” divisions of society

Older Generation (1947 – 64)
Adapted to Gandhi’s “Less is More” philosophy and lifestyle
Part of the Green and White revolution, building a nation

Gen X (1965 – 79)
Focused on education
Open to diverse perspectives but lack of opportunities led to brain drain

Global awareness around trends, brands, technology, innovations, entertainment, etc.
Crave for latest and greatest technology
Generations are defined differently around the world

**China**

**Traditionals (1928 – 45)**
Lived through war & independence,
survival was main concern

**Lost Generation (1946 – 60/64)**
Received little formal education
Understood there was “one way” of doing things

**Post-70s (1965 – 79)**
Grew up during first consumer society
Access to a wealth of new information from outside China

**Post-80s (1980 – 90)**
Have only known rising prosperity
Strong connections to trends and ideas from outside China
Generations: what memories do they share?

India
- Traditionals 1945-64
- Gen X 1965-80
- Gen Y 1980-2000


Technology
- IITs open
- TV
- iPhone

Culture
- India wins World Cup
- Ash Rai Miss Universe
- AR Rahman Oscar

Politics
- Indira Gandhi assassination
- Ayodhya Riots
- 9/11
- 28/11
- Obama election

Economy
- Non-Aligned Movement
- Nuclear tests
- Tsunami
- TATA cars

Understanding | Research | Findings
Generations: what memories do they share?

China

- Lost Generation 1945-64
- Post 70 1965-80
- Post 80 1980-2000


Technology

- Shenzhou VI – 1st Chinese Spacewalk

Culture

- Cultural Revolution
- Hong Kong returns to China
- SARS
- Beijing Olympics

Politics

- June 4th Event
- 9/11
- Macau returns to China
- Sichuan Earthquake

Economy

- Economic Reform
- China enters WTO
- Economic Crisis

Understanding | Research | Findings
## Key Characteristics of the Gen Y and Post-80s Generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
<td>Eager to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tech savvy</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially-minded</td>
<td>Hard working</td>
<td>Like to communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-taskers</td>
<td>Tech-savvy</td>
<td>Open-minded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overprotected</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek intertwined work and life</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Seek forward progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real time</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Trendy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Self-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easily-bored</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Losing Indian culture and values</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entitled</td>
<td>Self-centered</td>
<td>Willing to take risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowered</td>
<td>Quick Money</td>
<td>Can't endure hardship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk takers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dependent on parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td></td>
<td>Creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-long learners</td>
<td></td>
<td>Educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More active virtually than face-to-face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tech-savvy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key behaviors

**Gen Y generation**

Working without boundaries of country, culture, religion, race, time zones

Caring for common and higher causes: environment, poverty, peace, etc.

Technology is oxygen; success through social and peer-to-peer networking

High expectations of self – they believe that they can achieve anything

Collective effort by individual recognition; drive for meaningful and impactful work

Expecting mentorship and supervision; desire constant public recognition and encouragement

Life before work; family first, followed by friends & peers
Key behaviors

**Gen Y generation**

Open to new ideas and new possibilities; optimistic about their future

Desire and drive for entrepreneurship and making a difference

National pride; competitive regionally and globally; proving they’re not less than global peers

Always engaged in activities with peers: doing, sharing, discussing what interests them

Deep interest and pride in owning state-of-the-art technology

Passion for western lifestyle conflicts with traditional values; focus shifts from family first to me first
Key behaviors

China

Post-80s generation

Want to be active participants in the process, not just come to work to perform a task

Comfortable communicating via phone, email, IM, both locally and globally

Confident they can do anything they’re asked to do

Follow latest trends and brands, so will gravitate towards “cool” companies

Always looking to grow through “exploration;” any opportunity is a learning opportunity

 Desire to fulfill one’s own dreams conflicts with traditional Chinese values about family
How do Gen Y and Post-80s value work and the workplace?
Comparing values about the Workplace

US
- Collaboration
- Connectedness – constant communication
- Creativity
- Responsibility
- Speed
- Diversity
- Comfort
- Drive to do well
- Efficiency
- Fun

India
- Recognition and reward
- Growth opportunity
- Entertainment
- Convenience
- Sense of achievement
- Responsibility
- Teamwork
- Open Culture
- Commitment
- Low stress

China
- Good reputation
- Friendly environment
- Relaxed environment
- Personal office
- User-centered
- Happiness
- Culture of equality and support
- Work-life balance
- Learning
- Social events at work
Sites visited

U.S.
- IT/Engineering
- Finance
- Manufacturing
- Consulting

India
- Technology
- Consulting
- Manufacturing
- Finance
- Media
- Services

China
- Consulting
- Chemical R&D
- Technology
- Pharmaceutical
- Creative
- Manufacturing
- Services
What we heard and saw

Work
Worker
Work-Life
Environment
Work is 24/7 and global

US  India  China
Collaboration

US  India  China

Work
Social networking is an important part of work
What we heard and saw
Learning & growth are pursued as a means to further one’s career

US  India  China
Gen Y is eager to express their identity

US  India  China
What we heard and saw

Work-life
Gen Y gravitates to 3rd places – but not for the same reasons
Socialization is an integral part of work and work life

US

India

China
Gen Y expects their company to help reduce stress

US

India

China
What we heard and saw

Environment
Transparency for effectiveness and growth, not just information

US  India  China
Wanting to be modern is not the same as being Western.
Collage making exercise

Computer model
Participants select words and pictures
Illustrate current and ideal work environments
Collage making exercise

Current impressions

Ideal environment
Collage making exercise

Current work environment

**US Gen Y**
- **Top word choices**
  - Challenge
  - Meetings

- **Top image choices**

**India Gen Y**
- **Top word choices**
  - Fun
  - Knowledge

- **Top image choices**

**China Post 80s**
- **Top word choices**
  - Routine
  - Freedom
  - Fun

- **Top image choices**
Collage making exercise

Ideal work environment

**US Gen Y**

**Top word choices**
Active
Flexible

**Top image choices**

**India Gen Y**

**Top word choices**
Fun
Growth

**Top image choices**

**China Post 80s**

**Top word choices**
Fun
Shared

**Top image choices**
What we’ve learned
8 key shifts

Conformity ➤ Identity

Understanding | Research | Findings
8 key shifts

Conformity ➔ Identity
Training ➔ Growth

US

Understanding | Research | Findings
8 key shifts

1. Conformity
2. Identity
3. Training
4. Growth
5. Work
6. Work-life
7. Understanding
8. Research

Findings
8 key shifts

1. Conformity
2. Identity
3. Training
4. Growth
5. Work
6. Work-life
7. Collaboration
8. Connections

Understanding | Research | Findings
8 key shifts

1. Conformity ➔ Identity
2. Training ➔ Growth
3. Work ➔ Work-life
4. Collaboration ➔ Connections

Personal achievement is through my career ➔ Work does not identify me
8 key shifts

1. Conformity ➔ Identity
2. Training ➔ Growth
3. Work ➔ Work-life
4. Collaboration ➔ Connections
5. Personal achievement is through my career ➔ Work does not identify me
6. The office is my primary workspace ➔ The office is where “I” am

Understanding | Research | Findings
8 key shifts

Conformity ➔ Identity
Training ➔ Growth
Work ➔ Work-life
Collaboration ➔ Connections

Personal achievement is through my career
The office is my primary workspace
Technology is a tool

Work does not identify me
The office is where “I” am
Technology is an extension of me
8 key shifts

1. Conformity → Identity
2. Training → Growth
3. Work → Work-life
4. Collaboration → Connections
5. Personal achievement is through my career → Work does not identify me
6. The office is my primary workspace → The office is where “I” am
7. Technology is a tool → Technology is an extension of me
8. Trust is developed in person → Trust is developed online & offline
7 key shifts

Inherited identity ➔ Created identity
7 key shifts

Conformity  ▸ Identity

Job security  ▸ Growth

India

Understanding  |  Research  |  Findings
7 key shifts

India

Inherited identity ➔ Created identity 1
Job security ➔ Growth 2
Work-life ➔ Work-LIFE 3

Understanding | Research | Findings
7 key shifts

- Inherited identity
- Job security
- Work-life
- Connections

- Created identity
- Growth
- Work-LIFE
- Collaborations
7 key shifts

Inherited identity
Job security
Work-life
Connections
Service

Created identity
Growth
Work-LIFE
Collaborations
Core competencies

India

Understanding | Research | Findings
7 key shifts

India

Inherited identity → Created identity
Job security → Growth
Work-life → Work-LIFE
Connections → Collaborations
Service → Core competencies
Local → Global

Understanding | Research | Findings
7 key shifts

- Inherited identity
- Job security
- Work-life
- Connections
- Service
- Local
- Workplace as an expense

- Created identity
- Growth
- Work-LIFE
- Collaborations
- Core competencies
- Global
- Workplace as an investment

India
6 key shifts

Harmony > Identity

China
6 key shifts

Harmony ➔ Identity

Security ➔ Growth

China

Understanding | Research | Findings
6 key shifts

Harmony ➔ Identity
Security ➔ Growth
Work & life ➔ Work & living

China
6 key shifts

Harmony ➔ Identity 1
Security ➔ Growth 2
Work & life ➔ Work & living 3
Teamwork ➔ Collaboration 4

China

Understanding | Research | Findings
6 key shifts

Harmony ➔ Identity 1
Security ➔ Growth 2
Work & life ➔ Work & living 3
Teamwork ➔ Collaboration 4
Supporting the work ➔ Supporting the worker 5

China

Understanding | Research | Findings
6 key shifts

Harmony ➔ Identity
Security ➔ Growth
Work & life ➔ Work & living
Teamwork ➔ Collaboration
Supporting the work ➔ Supporting the worker
Worker ➔ Explorer

China
## Key shifts compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Work-Life</td>
<td>Job Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>WORK-life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement through career</td>
<td>Work does not</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office is primary workplace</td>
<td>The workplace is where “I” am</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology is a tool</td>
<td>Technology is extension of me</td>
<td>Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust is developed in person</td>
<td>Trust can be developed offline &amp; online</td>
<td>Supporting the Worker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Understanding**

- **Research**

- **Findings**
Design Principles
Design Principles

Design for Identity

**US Identity**
- Provide spaces that reflect “Me”
- Provide environments that are socially conscious

**India Identity**
- It’s about recognizing the individual
- It’s about supporting individuals in the process of change

**China Identity**
- It’s about encouraging employees to express their identity
Design Principles

Design for Growth

**US Growth**
- Provide organizational transparency
- Support personal growth through constant feedback and mentoring opportunities

**India Growth**
- It’s about actively helping employees in their development
- It’s about providing opportunities

**China Growth**
- It’s about providing environments for learning
- It’s about actively helping employees in their development
- It’s about being transparent
Design Principles

Design for WorkLife Balance

**US WorkLife**
- Reflect work-lifestyle integration (intertwine work & life)
- Match cognitive intensity

**India WorkLife**
- It’s about providing flexibility and tools for working outside the office
- It’s about creating social opportunities for families at work
- It’s about acknowledging the personal life of employee

**China WorkLife**
- It’s about supporting life beyond work
- It’s about adding fun to work and work-life
Design Principles

Design for Collaboration

**US Collaboration**
- Leverage social networks
- Design with technology in mind

**India Collaboration**
- It’s about transparency
- It’s about providing for networking opportunities
- It’s about promoting the expression of ideas

**China Collaboration**
- It’s about allowing teams to be together while maintaining individual privacy
- It’s about providing various team settings
- It’s about fostering social interaction as a team
- It’s about encouraging and allowing people to share their points of view
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
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</table>

| US | India | China |

Understanding | Research | Findings
Growth

US

India

China
WorkLife balance

US | India | China
Collaboration

US  |  India  |  China
Where do we go from here?
Business is global

Gen Y is our customer, employee and future employer

To get the best out of them we need to design environments that are in sync with local needs and behaviors
Business is global

How can you attract – and engage – the best talent around the globe?
Are you leveraging new and emerging behaviors to foster collaboration – and innovation?
Gen Y is our future.