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Business watercooler stories

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Aug. 7, 2007 (Thomson Financial delivered by Newstex) --

(AP) - W.U. BOSS? If you're a college graduate making the transition from sweat pants to suits, prepare to collide head on with your baby boomer bosses.

Your expectations for your new job could prove wildly different from your employer's, according to business etiquette expert Mary Crane.

Before you text your boss to say 'What's up?', follow a few tips to bridge the generation gap.

-- Connect with your co-workers. You may be used to communicating by e-mail or instant messenger, but boomer bosses expect face time, Crane said.

-- Study the culture of your organization and adapt your dress and communication style. You might be able to get away with sneakers at Google Inc. (NASDAQ:GOOG), but not at a law firm.

-- Beware of your personal electronic devices, the downfall of many a Generation-Yer. 'They need to know when to turn the technology off,' Crane said. If a boomer sees you bobbing your head to your iPod as you work, he'll think you're slacking.

-- Don't bring mom to your interview. Your generation's parents were more heavily involved in their kids' lives than any generation of moms and dads before, Crane said, but cut the apron strings when it comes to your career.

INTERVIEWER IRRITATION: When it comes to interviews, job seekers aren't the only ones who should worry about making a good impression.

Two out of three applicants turns down a job offer as a result of an interviewer's bad behavior, according to Rich Wellins, senior vice president of Development Dimensions International, a global HR consulting firm. DDI recently conducted a survey with job Web site Monster.com about job candidates' impressions of interviewers.

Among the most commonly cited interviewer misdeeds are withholding information about the position, showing up late, being rushed or unprepared, asking questions unrelated to the job and turning the interview into a cross-examination, he said.

With the war for talent in full swing, interviewers should be promoting their business to attract the best candidates, Wellins said.

'They have to be selling as well as buying,' he said. 'They have to make it a two-way street.' Some interviewers have even been known to talk more about themselves than the candidate, Wellins said.

Many companies don't offer training on how to conduct interviews, so the expectations aren't clearly defined, he said.

'Act like you want each and every person you interview,' Wellins said. 'You can say no later.'

MEN'S MUSINGS: Labor Day is just around the corner, a long-awaited day of rest for working stiffs everywhere. As our jobs consume more of our waking hours, where we punch in has become as important as where we call home.

Here's a quick snapshot of men's thoughts on their professional pursuits, according to an upcoming survey in the September issue of Men's Health magazine.

A full 60 percent of men said they work 41 to 60 hours per week, while 82 percent said they take work-related calls after hours. At the same time, 24 percent said they spend half of their day or less actually working.

Employees feel more entitled to breaks during work hours because they're tethered to the office round the clock, said David Zinzenko, Men's Health editor-in-chief.

'Our definition of work has changed,' he said. 'We're much more likely to be connected to the office 24-7.' Among the survey's other results: 70 percent of men said it's important for their work to have social value, but only 37 percent say their jobs do.

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Nearly 75 percent of men said they would prefer to work for a man than for a woman. One reader's explanation: 'They die sooner.'
The survey was conducted in June among more than 1,200 men who visited <http://www.menshealth.com>.

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