



Generation Y: their call to service
should be your call to action

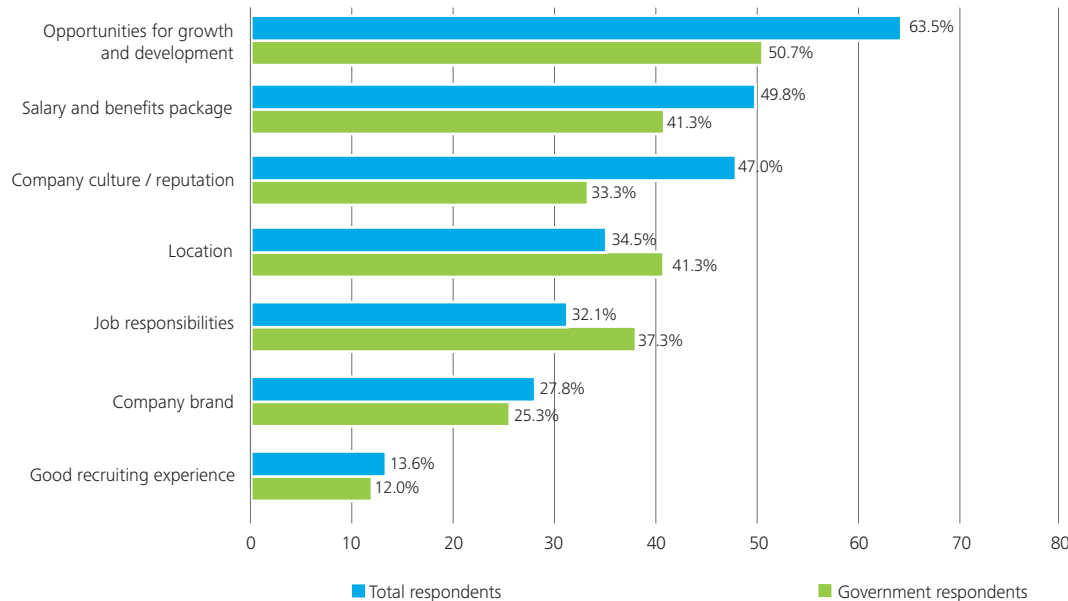
Tap this generation's skills and sense
of responsibility to support your
agency's mission

Government jobs may be exactly what Gen Yers seek

In many ways, Gen Yers in the federal government are like their counterparts in the private sector. They are enthusiastic, engaged, and eager to make a meaningful contribution. However, the respondents to our survey who currently work in the public sector² are very different from their peers in other important respects:

- **Different factors influence their choice of employers.** When asked about the top three factors that influenced their decision to work for their current employers, Gen Yers in government and the private sector both favored “Opportunities for growth and development” (64% of private sector respondents versus 51% of those in the public sector) and “Salary and benefits package” (50% versus 41%).³ However, Gen Yers in government also indicated that “Location” at 41% versus 35% of non-government respondents and “Job responsibilities” at 37% versus 32% were key factors. Based on anecdotal evidence from our conversations with government clients, we believe the stronger emphasis on non-monetary factors could be a sign of Gen Yers’ well-documented sense of social responsibility – their call to service. This presents an opportunity for government agencies to fill gaps in their ranks, both in terms of skill sets and, potentially, quality of candidates, since government agencies reported large numbers of applicants for most available job openings. At the same time, many government agencies acknowledge battling logistical issues involving their recruiting and on-boarding efforts – issues that will need to be addressed if they are to hold the attention of this sometimes impatient generation. Given that “Location” is a motivating factor, government agencies may need to consider options for greater flexibility in how jobs are carried out, such as telecommuting and satellite locations.

What factors influenced your decision to work for your current employer?



(Respondents were asked to select top three)

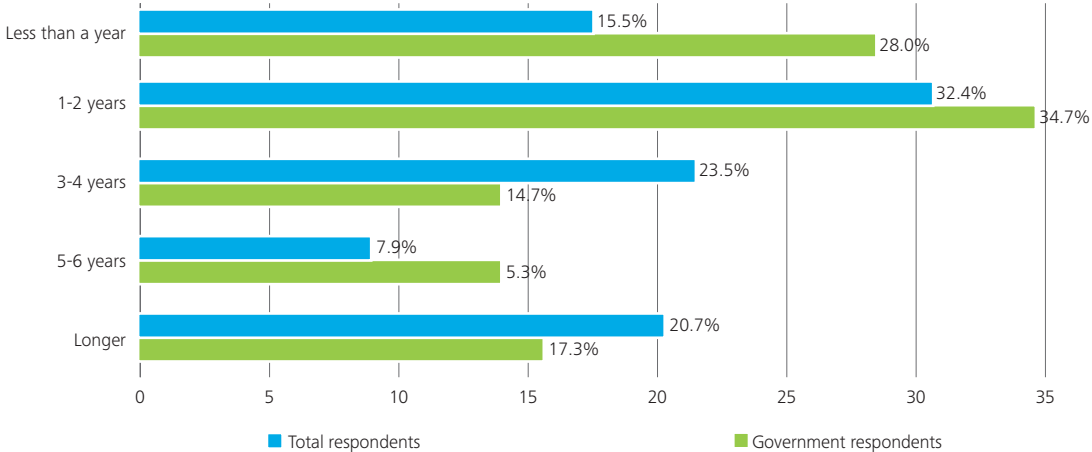
Data represents 75 respondents working in government agencies. These responses are from a total analysis of the views of 860 Gen Y employees (age 19-27) of Fortune 500 companies and government agencies, across 20 industry sectors, who responded to an online survey distributed by Zoomerang and by Deloitte between November 12, 2008 – January 7, 2009. No Deloitte employees participated in this survey.

² Survey responses are not broken out between federal, state, and other government workers – respondents merely reported working for the broad category of “Government.”

³ Because they could choose from seven different factors, the numbers total more than 100%.

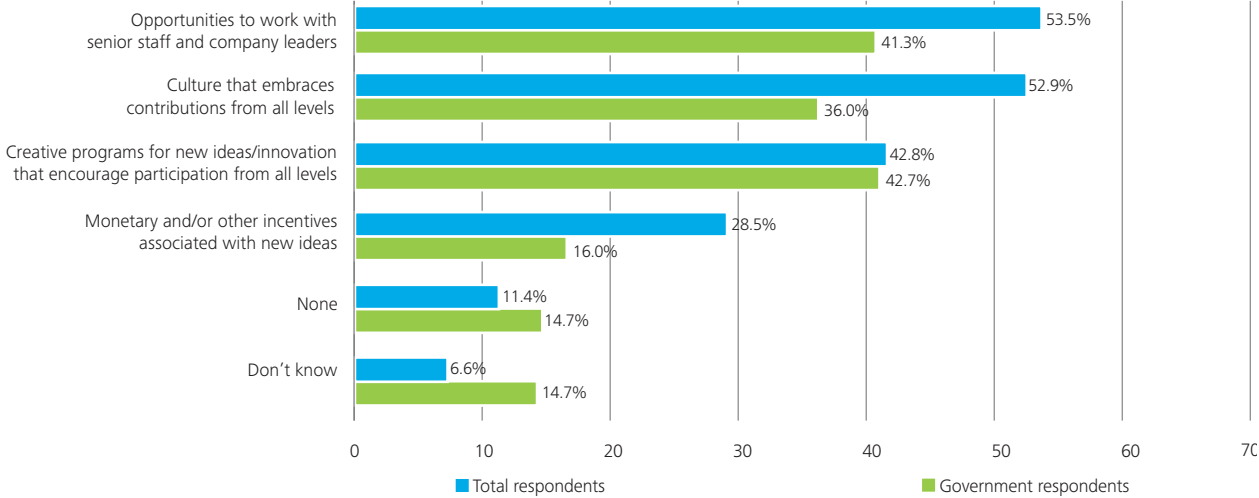
- They are on the move.** When asked how much longer they intend to stay with their current employer, 63% of Gen Yers in government said two years or less, as compared with only 48% of their peers in other industries. Gen Yers in government were also less satisfied with their current career paths. Only 48% of government Gen Yers indicated that they were “Very satisfied” or “Somewhat satisfied,” compared with 61% of their private sector peers. We think this is a sign that Gen Yers look for any opportunity to go to work in government, with the understanding that once on board, they can learn different skill sets and easily move around among agencies. Our government clients tell us that Gen Yers in their agencies are very concerned with developing marketable skills that will help them move into the types of agencies and jobs that excite them. Jobs that are considered “hot” right now by many applicants include acquisitions, cost-analysis, environmental and alternative energy engineering, health-care, and food inspection.

How much longer do you intend to stay with your current employer?



- Money isn't the only motivation for them.** We asked respondents to select their top three choices from 11 actions that employers can take to retain them. After "Increase your salary and/or bonus," which many respondents noted as desirable, more Gen Yers in government chose "Provide appropriate recognition for contributions" (36%), "Offer flexible work hours" (31%), and "Promote a better work/life balance" (25%) than did their private sector counterparts (30%, 23%, and 21%, respectively). Interestingly, when we asked "What key enablers encourage you to participate in innovation efforts or initiate new ideas for your employer?" Gen Yers in government placed "Monetary and/or other incentives associated with new ideas" (16%) at the bottom of their list, distantly behind other choices that involved working with senior staff and acceptance of creative contributions from all levels of the organization. We believe that these results again point to Gen Yers' gravitation toward the non-monetary benefits of federal employment, including tuition reimbursement and training programs, as well as the perceived stability of government jobs in today's economy. This notion, especially about perceived job stability, is reinforced by respondent answers to the first question in our survey: "What impact does the current economy have on your marketability in the workforce?" Fifty-two percent of Gen Yers in government answered "No impact, my marketability is the same" versus only 34% of their peers in the private sector.

What key enablers encourage you to participate in innovative efforts or initiate new ideas for your employer?



(Respondents were asked to select all that apply)

How can federal employers capitalize on these findings?

Given the findings cited, especially when blended with insights provided to Deloitte by our government clients, we believe federal agencies have a different opportunity in the midst of the current recession to strategically enhance their workforces – especially the Gen Y segment. Those agencies that do should be able to make significant strides in their transformation and modernization initiatives, ultimately leading to improved execution of their missions.

What specific actions should you consider taking to achieve these outcomes? Here are a few ideas:

Consider Gen Y in your Human Resources (HR) modernization and workforce planning initiatives. Many federal agencies are in the process of modernizing their HR functions, especially how they use technology, to deliver greater value to their employees while using fewer resources. Even straight out of college, Gen Yers are highly familiar with the latest technologies, especially everything Web-based and mobile. You can leverage this innovative resource to supplement and extend your legacy intellectual capital and technology capabilities. Likewise, as you analyze the composition of your workforce of the future – especially the skill sets, job structures, and competencies you'll need – consider the role Gen Yers will have in mission support and execution. Baby Boomers may be staying on longer today, but they still will retire. When they do, you can have a well-prepared and highly motivated group of workers ready to fill their shoes.

Reinforce your “brand” – both externally and internally. Improving and promoting your image as an agency in which Gen Yers can fulfill their call to service while at the same time enjoying the desired level of work/life balance is critical. This starts with improving your recruiting and on-boarding capabilities and carries through to the types of job and career track opportunities you make available to Gen Yers. Certain agencies are likely to have an advantage here because they are perceived to be hotbeds for technology development, provision of health-care, and green, sustainability initiatives. Yet other agencies may be able to level the playing field by engaging younger workers earlier as leaders and more aggressively exploring technology-based initiatives, such as telecommuting and social networking, which appeal to the work and leisure preferences of Gen Yers. These types of activities can set you apart in your recruiting and retention efforts.

Use talent management strategies to integrate Gen Yers into your workforce and boost organizational performance. In separate research focused on industry talent trends, we have found that only one out of two organizations has defined the skills needed for future success.⁴ Developing effective talent management strategies is a three-step process that includes aligning your talent strategy with your agency's mission, using analytical data to understand talent needs versus the available talent supply both inside and outside your agency, and differentiating your workplace by offering talent management solutions and career paths that appeal to the different needs of an increasingly diverse workforce. Although government agencies are impacted differently than private businesses by the economic downturn, they still need to leverage the silver lining of the current crisis: the opportunity for separate themselves from the pack as an employer by attracting, developing, and retaining high talent employees, including Gen Yers. Certainly, budgets for these activities may be tight, even scarce. Yet the right talent management approach can help government agencies cost-effectively distinguish themselves.

Embrace diversity of thought. It may be difficult to harness the full potential of your workforce, especially the youngest members, unless you offer opportunities for growth and development, and to contribute to the way your agency executes its mission. In essence, it means developing an infrastructure that values the contributions of all workforce segments of your population. Evidence of the potential of this concept is in the pivotal roles Gen Yers played in the 2008 presidential election through their skilled use of communications and social networking technology. Government agencies can tap these capabilities by engaging Gen Yers in strategy and operations decisions, making sure their voices are heard in meaningful enough ways that they really have an impact. The beauty of this approach is that it doesn't require costly transformation. Instead, it relies on refinements to your existing organizational structure, recognition and, possibly, rewards programs, and your emphasis on training and development.

⁴ “Competing for Talent Survey,” Deloitte, February 2008

Don't let this opportunity slip away

Whatever your approach to Gen Y, it's important to start now, especially during the economic downturn. Government agencies currently have important advantages when it comes to attracting and retaining top talent – both from the commercial sector and straight out of college. Yet who knows how long this advantage may last? Federal employers that use their advantage to seek out high-performers among existing Gen Y talent and position themselves to attract new waves of Gen Yers as they come to the market are likely to achieve significant strides toward becoming the government of tomorrow.



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