

Bridging the age-experience divide at work

July 26, 2007

The Modesto Bee

Discussions about today's multi-generational workforce tend to focus on age differences. In fact, the differences come from differences in perspective.

Daniel Godfrey, internet marketing coordinator at Branded Solutions L.L.C., in Pittsburgh, a promotional marketing company, received his Associate in Business from Pittsburgh Technical Institute in early July. Hired as a part-time intern, he's now full-time, permanent. Godfrey, who financed his own education, is the youngest among 11 other employees.

His boss, Daniel Weisberg, a mature worker, builds bridges constantly. They meet daily to discuss the previous day's work. "He'll let me pitch him an idea, explain why, go through the motions and play devil's advocate," Godfrey says. "When I fail, he doesn't say, 'Why did you waste my money and my time?' but 'What did you learn from this?'"

This is the company culture. When Godfrey goes to the other ten employees with questions, "They stop what they're doing, pay attention and work with me."

#### MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Laurence Stybel, co-founder Boston's Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire Inc., comes at the situation from the opposite direction. "This is a survival issue for me," he comments. "As my age cohort leaves the game of

business, I must be creative in building bridges to the next generation or leave the game myself." His career management services put him in front of many younger workers especially highly technically trained executives, attorneys, CPAs, and consultants.

Stybel has to communicate to them that his ideas are relevant. He tells young attorneys, "You want to work with us because we're not attorneys (of CPAs or engineers). We bring a different perspective. "

#### LINKS

Stybel says if you're older and think your younger co-worker might write you off as obsolete, Stybel suggests you say, "I very much respect what you've done, what you've accomplished. I am bringing a different perspective. It's not my project any more; it's not your project any more; it's our project. If we pool our knowledge, we'll come up with something better."

###