

In The Recent Block-Buster Movie *SPECTRE*, starring Daniel Craig as James Bond, the stodgy institution of the British Secret Service finds itself in the throes of reorganization and an international merger. The new leaders are installing innovative security technology that threatens to close down the traditional operations of the MI6 program altogether, and an aging, yet still brilliant, James Bond finds himself in the midst of the change. He is trying to do his job fighting the bad guys whilst adjusting to a new CEO and a new and younger “Q”, a baby-faced millennial who has dismal social skills yet is analytical and plugged into the cyber world.

It is a marvelous portrayal of our current generational conflict, but also a great commentary about the marvelous synergy which can occur when new technology and a younger workforce finally aligns in a cooperative model with the older, wiser generation in order to combat a common foe.

The issues and challenges in the movie parallel the great challenge in law firms of today.

- *The advent of Megafirms, one of which employs nearly 7000 attorneys*
- *Pressure for mid-sized and boutique firms to grow or merge in order to keep up with the competition and to retain clients*
- *Massive information overload and new technology*

- *Generational misunderstandings in the workplace*

My clients -- law firms and the professionals who work in them -- are suffering. I believe that corporations and law firms are missing a big opportunity in change leadership by neglecting three important opportunities to create corporate cultures that foster creativity, innovation and loyalty:

RECOGNIZING BRAIN TYPES *In an effort to increase understanding and awareness of personality in the workplace, the American Bar Association conducted a conference on Myers-Brigg tests in light of studies claiming over 50% of attorneys are introverts.¹ Although personality studies are valuable, nothing can predict emotional intelligence and resilience better than a working knowledge of at least 19 brain types that people exhibit. Attorneys who suffer with disorganization, procrastination and follow through, do so not because of personality, but brain conditions, including undiagnosed ADD, PTSD, brain trauma, depression and/or anxiety. They are guilt-ridden and operating at under capacity, and believe their actions are due to a character flaw, rather than a chemical construct. Our brain health coaching provides individual brain health assessments and recommendations*

¹ Gordon, Leslie, ‘Most lawyers are introverted, and that’s not necessarily a bad thing’ ABA Journal Jan.1, 2016

that can help individuals change their brains and change their lives.

BRIDGING THE GENERATION

GAP *According to Indiana Law professor William Henderson “some law firms could crumble after this generation because they don’t have a lot to sell to the next generation.”² His feelings are shared by practicing attorneys: “We can’t treat a lawyer like a member of a military platoon, like they did in the ‘good old day’” when we were young lawyers.” Comments Buck Lewis, a shareholder in the law firm of Baker Donalson, who also teaches a leadership course at the University of Tennessee College of Law. “Technology has increased in the practice of law, and the never-ending, grueling nature of legal work is causing people to give up and search for less fast-paced work,” he adds. As a result, some attorneys, staff, and even temporary independent lawyers, are rebelling against lower pay and heavier workloads.*

A case in point is a lawsuit recently brought against a major law firm by an attorney requesting overtime pay for reviewing 13,000 documents. The suit was brought under the under the Fair Labor Standards Act and New York law. This employee protested working for \$35 an hour for 57 to 60 hours a week and with an expectation to review 50 to 60 documents an hour³

² ABA Journal, Weiss, Debra Cassens, “Is there a generational divide in Big Law?” Nov.5, 2015

³ “Quinn Emmanuel Wins Overtime Challenge for Document Review, Hamblett, Mark,, New York Law Journal, December 31, 2015

Could this lawsuit have been prevented if there had been better indications he was appreciated, which studies suggest is a major need by younger associates?

CREATING TRUST-BUILDING GROUP DYNAMICS

Collaboration and cooperation may not be the same. Outdated “collaborative models” punish our best workers. These hard workers get called again and again to “collaborate” and end up burned out because not only are they carrying their own workload, but that of others. Therapeutic laughter exercises we institute in firms throw people together in uncommon experiences to establish common ground in a non-threatening and cheerful manner. These approaches appeal to a younger, energetic workforce that is looking for happier ways to find connection and cooperation with their bosses is that a big plus. Everyone wins.

Using these new tools may help you, your partners, associates, and employees overcome challenges and find joy in modern day law practice.

Please provide feedback on this article at debra@debranorwood.com and request the Laughter Lawyer USA white paper *Understanding Millennials, the enigmatic generation.*

Debra Chaves Norwood, Laughter Lawyer USA, is a principal at Creative Competitive Solutions

New Tools for New Times

By Debra Chaves Norwood
