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## First Person: Attracting Generation Y Talent to the Workplace

Johnson Controls is a global diversified technology and industrial leader with 130,000 employees serving customers in over 150 countries. Recently, the company's Global WorkPlace Solutions division completed a research study of Generation Y called OXYGENZ, Generation Y and the Workplace. Area Development discussed the study with Dr. Marie Puybaraud, director of Global WorkPlace Innovation for Johnson Controls.

Dr. Marie Puybaraud, Director of Global Workplace Innovation, Johnson Controls (Apr/May 10)

### Why did Johnson Controls decide to conduct a research study of Generation Y?


*Dr. Puybaraud:* Four or five years ago we started talking about Generation Y and how technology is going to change our world. Suddenly, in the minds of our clients, this generation has become an issue. I couldn't find reliable data on how Generation Y was going to impact the workplace environment, so we thought this study would be a chance to really understand that impact.

### Who participated in the survey?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* In 2009, we decided to look at a population of 18-25 year olds. We surveyed 5,375 respondents from the United States, India, China, Germany, and the UK. We targeted specific industry groups in engineering, media, finance, information technology, and art and design.

### What, specifically, were you hoping to find?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* Everyone talks about how transformational this generation is and how, demographically, we don't have enough of them; how challenging they are to manage; and how society is going to have to change the working environment because that's what they want. We wanted to understand how really different this group of individuals is from the generation of workers already in the workplace.

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### What are some of the things that are important for Generation Y?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* At the end of the day, they are looking for flexibility in their working environment; they want to be mobile. They have a strong focus on technology and collaboration and want to use less formal meeting rooms and more breakout spaces. They care about the environment and want their

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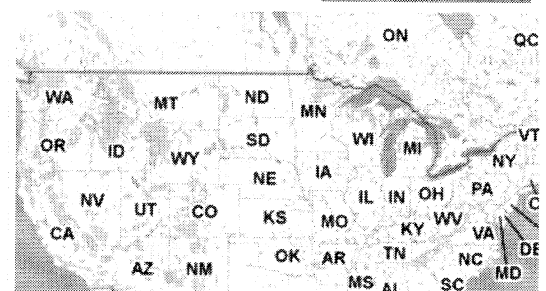
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Johnson Controls' Generation Y Study: OXYGENZ

emotional engagement with coworkers that is very strong; they want a community. On one level it's about physical space, but it's also about understanding very clearly the way they work: how they use space, how they communicate with each other.

#### You also found that they have a "green streak." What does that mean?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* They request to have not only an environment that is compliant with regulations, but also an employer who pushes beyond being environmentally friendly, and they want to see evidence of this. They want to see employers supporting recycling, green transportation, walking, and biking.

#### How do these insights impact property owners and developers?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* The message to property owners and developers is that it's time to rethink spatial dynamics. The space that you offer will need to be less conventional, more flexible and open, more adaptable to the needs of this generation. And we are talking about changes that will need to be taken into account within the next three to five years. We know right now that most workspace is not used efficiently. Most working environments are empty 40 percent of the time between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., so we need to look at how we can design a workplace strategy that allows for flexibility.

#### You also found that Generation Y is very technologically savvy. In what ways?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* Gen Yers are on Skype and they text because it's efficient. Yet, despite the fact that they like texting and using webcams, they still want to meet. They know how to play games online. There is more research on how to play games to boost performance in the working environment, and if we consider using games and gaming to boost performance in organizations, this generation will be ready for it. Employers who have a large population of Generation Y will need access to faster broadband and better technology.

employers to be green.

#### So a flexible workspace is a key component to their work satisfaction?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* They are very emotionally engaged with their environment. They want to be in the office, have their own desk, and personalize it. At the moment, the norm is for 70 percent use of desks and 30 percent collaborative space. In the future, that is going to have to be reversed. Desks will be used for shorter amounts of time, and the focus will be on people coming together to socialize and collaborate in the working environment.

#### What else will employers need to keep in mind to attract this generation?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* Generation Y wants to come to the office and have a high level of support. They see the workplace as being social, a place where they mix and interact. For them, work is about being with people, and that's the reason they choose an employer. They have an



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### Does Generation Y expect employers to accommodate these preferences?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* The gap between the preferences and expectations of Generation Y in some countries is large. We found that in the United States 67 percent prefer to work flexibly, but only 25 percent are expecting to be offered flexible work hours. Even though they want it, they know their employers are not going to offer them that level of flexibility. But if employers want to attract this generation, they need to think about incorporating flexibility into the work environment.

### How will Generation Y impact future worker shortages?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* China does not have enough people to sustain its growth right now, and Chinese employers are starting to recruit outside their own country. Germany will be facing a shortage of workers within the next 10 years because of the number of people retiring versus those who are about to enter the workplace. As a whole, there is a shortage of Gen Y, and employers will need to address this generation's preferences if they hope to attract them.

### How has/will the current economy impact Generation Y?

*Dr. Puybaraud:* It's probably going to be hard for this generation to enter the work force because of the economic climate we are in at the moment. We now see Generation Y working for six months for employers for free to demonstrate that they are capable. But most baby-boomers will be out of the workplace within the next 10 years, and they are going to be replaced by this generation. Generation Yers are our future leaders, and they are going to have a massive impact on the workplace.

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