



# The Boss's Guide to BYTs\* in today's workplace

\*Bright Young Things

**harnessing their energy to  
power your business**

Dr Harry Zaphir

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The Boss's Guide to BYTs in today's workplace  
- harnessing their energy to power your business.  
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## Contents...

Introduction	5	BYTs' Recognition of Institutional Failures	39
<b>1 - So, who are the BYTs?</b>	11	Promises, Promises	42
How to Spot a Bright Young Thing	11	Attitudes to Authority	44
Different Generations of BYTs	12	Laws of Attraction	46
It's All About Behaviours!	15	Walking the Talk, and Other Clichés	48
Influencing in all Directions	18	In a Nutshell	50
The Environment that Creates a BYT	21	<b>4 - Politics, Authority and BYTs</b>	51
In a Nutshell	24	The Relevance of Politics to BYTs	51
<b>2 - The Cult and Culture of BYTs</b>	25	The Changing Nature of Political Discussion	52
Influences and Behaviours	25	Authority, Relationships and Office Politics	55
Personal Characteristics	28	In a Nutshell	58
The Digital Generation	30	<b>5 - Managing the Expectations of BYTs</b>	59
Use These Characteristics to Your Organisation's Advantage	32	Tomorrow's Workplace Today	59
Some Myths and Realities about BYTs	34	What Do They Really Expect?	59
In a Nutshell	36	Some of the Most Important Expectations of BYTs Include	60
<b>3 - Values and BYTs</b>	37	How to Manage These Expectations	62
They Arrive With a Full Set of Values	37	In a Nutshell	66

<b>6 - Communicating with BYTs</b>	What's the Difference between Virtual and Real Social Networks?	67	88
Active Listening		67	
How Information is Gathered and Processed	The Overlapping of Social Networks	69	89
Instant Feedback and Gratification	Corporate Taboos and BYTs	72	91
Why Should I Have to Explain Myself?	A BYT's Picture of the Modern Workplace	74	94
In a Nutshell	In a Nutshell	75	96
<b>7 – Technology and its Influence on BYTs</b>	<b>9 - The Fast and Furious Lives of BYTs</b>	76	97
What is Technological Determinism?	It's Quite a Cracking Pace, This Living!	77	97
Technology and the Generations	Reining BYTs in...and Letting Them Fly	80	98
Mobile Technology for all Generations	Words of Wisdom from a BYT	81	100
The Technological Generation Gap?	In a Nutshell	82	101
Methods of Communication	Conclusions and Ideas	83	102
In a Nutshell	About the Author	86	106
<b>8 - BYTs and their Social Networks</b>	Index	87	107
Communicating and Connecting Within the Networks	Bibliography	87	109
	Further References		110
	Web References		111

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## Introduction

Thanks for buying this book. The contents have been designed specifically with the busy boss in mind. There are plenty of business books out there, and I'm sure that you have read many of them, as have I. What I discovered a few years ago was that benefits derived from business books were, up to a point, inversely proportional to the size of the book.

I have many weighty tomes that cause the shelves of my library to groan. These are, in the main, prescribed texts from my university days. The rest of the business books in my possession tend to fall between the aforementioned tomes at one extreme and some very slim paperbacks (usually involving Fish, Purple Cows, Cheese, One Minute, Effective Habits, Gung Ho! etc.) at the other.

This book deliberately falls in the middle of the two extremes. Each chapter is designed to be read in a single sitting, and concludes with a "nutshell" encapsulation of what are considered to be the main points. That way, you won't need to continually thumb through the book looking for some point that you considered noteworthy. You will also find, due to the "cross-over" nature of the subject matter, that there is some (necessary) repetition.

The book is the result of a combination of interaction with, observation of, and research and discussion around, Bright Young Things. A large portion of the following chapters focus on the so-called Gen Y/Millennial/i-Gen/Gen C members of

the workforce; those generational groups being the youngest currently employed.

This book is about talented people: what motivates them, what differences there are from one generation to another, what similarities there are, and how these individuals influence each other, and you as well. Most importantly, this book is about how to interact with and manage these BYTs.

If you have the type of business that continually renews itself by employing new BYTs at the bottom of the ladder (not that this current crop expect to stay, or even start there), then what do you do with the previous intake? And the intake previous to that?

What has the implementation of new technology over the past couple of decades meant in terms of how you communicate with and retain people in general, and BYTs in particular?

This book is dedicated to all the Bright Young Things that it has been my good fortune and privilege to work and play with during my working life. I'm sure that some will recognise themselves from some of the stories contained within, and are of too generous a nature to resent being used as examples. In particular, my business partners, two of whom are Baby Boomers, and one who just made it as a Gen Xer, were excellent studies as BYTs. We had to grow each other as we grew the business, and they proved to me time and time again that just because the "young" tag may slowly recede, there's no need for "bright" to ever tarnish.

What qualities come to your mind when you hear the expression "Bright Young Thing"? Are you looking for: Enthusiasm? Attitude? Commitment? Energy? Does 'young' really relate to someone's date of birth? Increasing improvements in the health of the herd have led some to say that 50 is the new 30 and 80 is the new 60. Medical advances are giving people an extended physical lease on life. Our age doesn't necessarily determine how "young" we are at heart or in our attitudes. Is there a secret to staying mentally young?

Is the corollary of BYT to be found in BOT? Having never heard the expression "Bright Old Thing," you must wonder what happens to BYTs as they get older. You're more apt to hear an older employee referred to as an old fogie. So when does a BYT stop being a BYT? When they grow old? Perhaps the difference between being a BOT and a fogie lies in neoteny. If said employee has retained a child-like sense of discovery and play and possesses an open, inquiring, and positive mind, then the term BOT would apply. There's a huge difference between possessing thirty years of experience and repeating the same thing for thirty years. Everyone knows that as you pass through each stage of life your priorities, attitudes, and behaviours are subject to change.

The question that remains is, are these changes reactive in nature, or can they be managed, both by the individual and those that work with them, to produce the best possible outcome – best for both the person involved and the organisation in which they work? After all, age does not seem to make people any less bright, rather, age changes the way we perceive and label these individuals.

Even where the adjective “young” can no longer be applied, the attributes that make a BYT can continue to live and be nurtured. I have one colleague, aged in his 50s, in the financial services industry who was the first of his peer group to introduce a personal blog on his company’s web site. While initially taking some ribbing from his counterparts, his blog has been a runaway success and is keeping him in touch with both his customers and staff.

Another colleague in the same industry and of the same age group is also the most prolific exponent of the SMS text message this side of high school. He finds text messaging to be a quick, cheap, and reliable method of communicating short memos to his management team, and while he would not be in the hunt to make the Guinness Book of Records for speed in keying messages in, in terms of quantity of messages sent, he would have to be up there.

It would also be remiss of me not to mention a friend of mine who is an academic and a worldwide authority on non-profit organisations and philanthropy. Despite the stereotyping of university professors as stuck in the mire of the past, this particular BYT (okay, not so “Y” anymore) has been at the forefront in the implementation of technologies to further his field. You can sit in one of his presentations and be encouraged to use your mobile phone as a response controller in an interactive, real-time feedback session. When was the last time you were asked to turn your mobile phone **on** at the start of a presentation?

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What these people have in common is that they have enquiring and open minds, and a curiosity to find “better” ways of doing things. What they also have in common is that over the years, sometimes just a few years, sometimes over much longer periods of time, they have been encouraged by their parents, teachers, friends, supervisors, bosses, wives, girlfriends, lovers, siblings – people with whom they have come into contact and who have influenced them – to recognise and nurture this brightness.

The BOTs I have just recognised are of course, the exception rather than the rule. These people stick out in my mind because they are exceptional and have made a difference in my life, but there is a whole new generation of BYTs out there, ready to jump at the chance to make a difference and prove their worth. The majority of BYTs are indeed the younger generation – and that’s what this book is about.

If this book can give you an idea or two to help nurture BYTs and understand them or even help them understand themselves, then I believe that it will have been well worth the modest purchase price. How’s that for being objective? 😊

Truth is, if you can nurture and develop BYTs you will be repaid many fold, in terms of profitability, productivity, sustainability and a happy workplace. Now that’s a **real** bottom line!

Harry Zaphir  
Brisbane, March, 2008