

For Immediate Release

## **Limited Interaction Among Generations in the Workplace Identified as Key Indicator of Coming Skilled Worker Crisis**

*Changes in the workplace reveal new realities for multi-generational workforce*

**ATLANTA**, May 27, 2008 – There is increasing debate about the changing economy, shifting workforce demographics and, of course, over the reality of a future skilled worker shortage. Randstad USA's annual 2008 *World of Work* survey, however, uncovers a critical factor that will contribute to a very real talent shortage. According to Randstad, the four generations of workers that comprise the U.S. workforce, Gen X, Gen Y, Baby Boomers and Matures, rarely interact with one another and often do not recognize each other's skills or work ethic.

As a result, U.S. businesses risk a shortage of skilled labor – not because of the lack of manpower in the wake of retiring Baby Boomers, but because of the limited transfer of knowledge. In fact, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Gen Ys in today's workforce (79.8 million) outnumber Boomers (78.5 million) who are perceived as retaining the bulk of working America's institutional brain trust.

With this pending generational shift in the workplace, businesses need to focus on building professional relationships with their employees while developing employees' skills, something Randstad calls "employership." Central to successful employership is encouraging employee collaboration to achieve company goals, which relies, in part, on employers recognizing employee value, cultivating mutual respect and generating trust throughout the organization. Randstad's 2008 *World of Work* survey suggests that companies which maintain an ongoing focus on employership, regardless of demographic or economic changes that impact the workplace, are better able to successfully meet employee expectations and achieve business goals.

### **Generational Divide**

Although Boomers and Matures have much to offer Gen Y in regards to knowledge and experience, 51 percent of Boomers and 66 percent of Matures report little to no interaction with their Gen Y colleagues. And three of the four generations say they have little to no interaction with the most experienced workers – Matures (Gen Y, 71 percent; Gen X, 67 percent; Boomers, 58 percent).

"The workplace is on the verge of real change," said Eric Buntin, managing director, marketing and operations for Randstad USA. "At Randstad, we believe companies that enact a culture of 'employership' can successfully navigate the changing workplace, regardless of economic and demographic shifts. By focusing on and encouraging the professional contributions of all employees, employers can help close the knowledge gap by instituting ways for each generation to recognize their strengths and value to all colleagues."

### **Softening Expectations**

Despite being perceived as the overly-demanding generation, Gen Y, along with all employees, is lowering expectations. Specifically, Gen Y is establishing more realistic views of the workplace, and their once idealistic job expectations are maturing. "The declines among Gen Y's expectations

regarding hard and soft benefits are, on average, more dramatic than among employees as a whole, perhaps because Gen Y's expectations started out higher and more out of reach," said Buntin. "In fact, Gen X and Boomers are actually somewhat more interested in soft benefits than younger generations."

According to the survey, when it comes to staying in current jobs, employees from each generation associate varying levels of importance toward soft benefits.

Soft Benefits	Gen Y and Decline since 2006	Gen X	Baby Boomers	Matures
<i>Percentage points</i>				
Satisfying work	59%, -21	65%	71%	81%
Pleasant work environment	57%, -28	69%	70%	82%
Liking the people they work with	57%, -17	65%	62%	70%
Challenging work	42%, -17	52%	59%	71%
Flexible hours	44%, -11	48%	51%	46%

### Closing the Gap

The survey shows that each generation sees itself as playing a distinct role in the workplace and, for the most part, employees describe the personality of coworkers' in their same generation with fondness. It is their view of colleagues' work ethic and abilities that is in question. For example, traits such as makes personal friends at work (49%), sociable (48%) and friendly (35%) are among those which Gen Y workers are most likely to use to describe coworkers in their generation. However, only 29 percent of Gen Y workers rate their generation as competent.

Gen X workers describe coworkers in their cohort as capable of interacting well with all age groups. "Based on their self-described generation personality, Gen X has the potential to bridge the generational gap between the youngest and oldest generations of workers," said Buntin.

"Leveraging this knowledge about generational strengths and value is part of employership, and something employers should act on to be a great place to work."

Top Ranked Terms Used to Describe Coworkers in Same Generational Cohort			
Gen Y Chief Friendship Officers	Gen X The Doer	Baby Boomer Moral Authority	Mature Moral Authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes personal friends at workplace</li> <li>Sociable</li> <li>Thinks out of the box</li> <li>Open to new ideas</li> <li>Friendly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confident</li> <li>Competent</li> <li>Willing to take responsibility</li> <li>Willing to put in the extra time to get a job done</li> <li>Ethical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong work ethic</li> <li>Competent</li> <li>Ethical</li> <li>Ability to handle a crisis</li> <li>Willing to take on responsibility</li> <li>Good communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong work ethic</li> <li>Ethical</li> <li>Committed to the company</li> <li>Competent</li> <li>Confident</li> </ul>

For more information or for a copy of Randstad's 2008 *World of Work* survey results, please visit [www.us.randstad.com](http://www.us.randstad.com) or contact:

Rebecca Johnson  
Director of Branding & Communication  
Randstad USA  
Work: 770.937.7055

### **Survey Methodology**

This survey was conducted online within the United States on behalf of Randstad USA between December 14, 2007 and January 16, 2008 among 3,494 U.S. adults (age 18 and older), among whom 1,295 were employers and 2,199 were employees. The sample for employees consisted of U.S. residents who are currently employed full-time or self-employed in a company with at least five employees. The employer sample consisted of U.S. business professionals who make or strongly influence strategic Human Resources decisions and have been doing so for at least six months. The employee universe is segmented into three categories: small (5-49 employees), medium (50-499) and large (500 or more) companies/organizations; and four generational categories born between the respective years: Gen Y (1980-1988), Gen X (1965-1979), Baby Boomers (1946-1964) and Matures (1900-1945).

The data from this survey was weighted to "match the characteristics of" and to remove potential biases so that the data is "projectable to the population of interest." Propensity Score weighting, a proprietary weighting technique, was used to adjust for differences between the online population and the offline population to ensure that the data is representative of the general populations in question

With pure probability samples, with 100 percent response rates, it is possible to calculate the probability that the sampling error (but not other sources of error) is not greater than some number. With a pure probability sample of 3,494 adults, of whom 1,295 are employers and 2,199 are employees in the United States, one could say with a ninety percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 1.4 percentage points. The sampling error for employers is +/- 2.3 percentage points, and for the employees is +/- 1.8 percentage points. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

### **About Randstad USA**

Headquartered in Atlanta, Ga., Randstad USA is a leading employment services provider with more than 600 branches and client-dedicated locations in the United States. Randstad USA's 3,000 employment experts put an average of 65,000 people to work each week. Randstad fulfills all aspects of commercial and professional employment for temporary, temporary-to-permanent and permanent placement including Office, Executive Office, Industrial, Call Center, Finance & Accounting, Technical & Engineering, Creative, Healthcare, IT, Education and Legal as well as other HR services such as payrolling. For eligible employees, Randstad provides skills assessments, career counseling, training, health coverage, paid vacation and 401(k) matching contributions. More company information is available at [www.us.randstad.com](http://www.us.randstad.com). Investment information is available at [www.randstad.com](http://www.randstad.com).

### **About Harris Interactive**

Harris Interactive is one of the largest and fastest-growing market research firms in the world. The company provides innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com)

###