

## VIEWPOINTS

### Preparing for the Nexters

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They've been called "Generation Y," the "Millennials," the "Nintendo Generation," and most recently the "Nexters." The generation of children born between 1976 and 1994, are entering our classrooms in colleges of pharmacy, and beginning to practice within the profession. For the most part, they are children who grew up with hectic schedules filled with scouting, baseball, piano lessons, and dance classes. They are accustomed to fast-food dinners and weekend soccer tournaments. They are the children of "helicopter parents," a term coined because of the parent's hovering approach to parenting. The Nexters chat online while listening to music on their *iPods*, and expertly search the Internet for answers to a history question that they can not find in a textbook. They have a personal tutor, but he lives in India and they can access him anytime of the day or night through e-mail.

As educators, it is our job to prepare curricula that meet their needs and to provide experiences that help with their entrance into the workforce. In order to predict their needs, we first have to assess their special skills and abilities, and then address their deficiencies. In the book *Generations at Work*, the strongest asset of the Nexters is defined as their resilience.<sup>1</sup> They are characterized as optimistic, tenacious, hard-working, and civic-minded. They are technologically savvy and they easily adapt to change. On the flip side, previous generations sometimes describe them as self-absorbed, unable to entertain themselves, and not tough enough to handle the workplace.<sup>1</sup>

The first question for our colleges is how to recruit into our programs the best students from this generation. Our recruitment strategies should focus on a team-based approach to learning, technologically rich curricula, and opportunities for feedback and evaluation. Innovative colleges should consider recruitment strategies that include parents, as this generation not only listens to their parents, but actually considers them to be "cool."<sup>1</sup> These students are also looking for experiences that provide them with opportunities to serve, and to see other parts

of the world. They may also have a few liabilities that they bring into the workplace. They may be impatient, expecting to find answers quickly at their fingertips. In a customer environment, they may be easily intimidated by difficult customers since Nexters have experienced mostly cooperative relationships with parents and teachers.<sup>1</sup> As a generation that was pampered and nurtured as children, they may be unprepared for environments that do not provide a lot of positive reinforcement.

As we design curricula, it is important to consider the framework of these learners. They have been exposed to multimedia entertainment since the time they could hold a controller. They expect to be entertained as they learn. To hold their attention, we may need to consider having traditional lectures comprise a smaller part of the overall curriculum. Active-learning experiences, such as role playing, do not intimidate these learners and may help them improve their communication skills in negotiation, mediation, counseling, and consoling.

If we recruit these graduates into our academies, we should also be aware of a number of factors. They prefer flexible hours over many other benefits and expect competitive salaries based on market trends. They do not require a lot of supervision, like working as part of a team, and although respectful of authority, would not stay at a place where they sensed they were being micro-managed.<sup>2</sup>

The Nexters are better educated, more accepting of multiculturalism, and more civic-minded than their predecessors. They bring enthusiasm and high expectations to the classroom. Since today's pharmacy faculty members are members of the Baby Boomer generation and Generation X, we must stay mindful of the next generation's learning styles, values, and goals in order to best prepare them for careers in pharmacy.

## REFERENCES

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