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the **ABC** of **XYZ**
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THE GENERATION MAP

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in one generation often becomes the height
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The generations are for social researchers what the strata of debris are for archaeologists. The generations demographically represent a picture of the nation in their birth years, while their values and lifestyles are a hybrid of their formative era and the current times that we all share.

The demographics give us the society by numbers – the what and who – while the sociographics define how we interact and operate as a society – the how and where. Finally, the psychographics give insights into the values, motivators and behaviours of a population – the why. An understanding of each of these factors, as expressed in the generations, gives a great snapshot of where our society has come from – and a forecast of the shape of things to come.

Demographics

When studying our nation's demographics, distinct patterns can be seen across the decades, giving us insight into the generations – from the Feds to the young Zeds.

Education and employment

Australia has made considerable advances in education since the late 1960s when the majority of the Boomers were in either primary or secondary schooling – from a minority completing their secondary education in 1967 (20 per cent)¹, the year the Higher School Certificate (HSC) was introduced in NSW², to a majority finishing Year 12 today (75 per cent).³ This rapid growth had slowed by the mid-1990s but it will increase again as the Federal Government introduced in 2009 a national Year 12 retention rate target of 90 per cent by 2015.

The most likely pathway from school for Year 12 leavers today is university (30 per cent)⁴, with females representing the majority who go on to higher education. The gender shift in education from the Boomer era to that experienced by the younger Gen X-ers and the Y-ers is enormous. Gen Y have only ever known an Australia where more females than males complete Year 12 (81 per cent and 70 per cent respectively) and women outnumber men in tertiary education (57 per cent of university students and 52 per cent of all TAFE students are women). Within the teaching ranks of academia, the shift is also remarkable with 40 per cent of academic staff now women, compared to only 27 per cent in the late 1980s.⁵

Additionally, Australia's younger generations have grown up in an increasingly multicultural society. Their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, the Boomers and the Builders, lived under the White Australia policy, which was finally abolished in 1973. In only a few decades, Australia has gone from a largely European population to a mix of cultures, where more than one-quarter of Australians were born overseas. Of those aged under 30 this figure is closer

to one-third. In the USA, the high school graduation rate is higher than in Australia and has also been increasing, while American women are also doing better than their male counterparts. Eighty-eight per cent of women compared to 84 per cent of men aged 25–29 have graduated in the USA. Fifty-six per cent of undergraduate students are women, and one-third of American women aged 25–29 hold a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to only a quarter of American men.⁶

In the workplace women are also doing well. In fact the percentage of women in the workforce continues to increase while male participation has been declining since the early 1990s, from 73.6 per cent in 1994 to 72.1 per cent today.⁷ When most of the Builder women were in their 20s and 30s, less than a third worked outside the home (29 per cent). Today, the majority of women are employed (56 per cent).⁸

The Builders are often credited with a myriad of values such as work ethic and loyalty. Their well-noted value system stems from the great hardship they experienced and saw their parents experience when they were young. The Builders were young children and pre-teens when, during the Great Depression, Australia's unemployment rate reached the record high of nearly 20 per cent. The unemployment rate remained relatively high throughout their teenage years until 1939 when Australia experienced the lowest rates of unemployment ever. In the midst of World War II, less than 1 per cent of working-age Australians were unemployed because of the increase in labour demand resulting from the national war effort. Following the war it was the Baby Boomers, as children and young adults, who enjoyed possibly the most secure of times in Australian history.

From the 1970s until the early 1990s, Australia's unem-

ployment rate generally climbed, with a high of 11 per cent in the early 1990s when the X-ers were commencing their working lives.

By comparison, the Y-ers, like the Boomers, started entering the workplace in a time of low unemployment where they were in demand. The GFC and the increase in unemployment that followed challenged this security.

However, regardless of any short-term economic shifts, employers cannot afford to take their foot off the staff engagement and retention pedal, because the long-term demographic shifts will provide a tight labour market for years to come. Even after the GFC, in Australia skill shortages remained, prompting Opposition Leader Tony Abbott to propose banning the dole for those under 30 in an effort to entice them to fill labour shortages in the resources sector.⁹ Over the next four decades the supply of labour relative to the population will continuously decline. This is due to the ageing population, increasing retirees relative to the labour force, mass retirement of senior staff, higher turnover and the global war for talent. Consequently, regardless of economic shifts, the long-term demographic realities will remain.

Here are five reasons why:

- 1 *Ageing population.* In 1980 Australia's median age was 29 compared to 37 today.
- 2 *The ratio of workers to retirees will halve by 2048.* Treasury's *Intergenerational Report* states that while today there are five people in the working-age population for every person of retirement age, this will halve to 2.4 per retiree within four decades.
- 3 *Mass retirement of senior staff is imminent.* Forty per cent of today's middle and senior business leaders will be of

traditional retirement age within a decade. We are about to see massive leadership transfer.

- 4 *Trend of declining normative tenure.* In this era of geographical mobility and a demand for job variety, people stay a shorter time in each job role, and have more careers in their lifetime than was the case a generation ago. As late as the 1970s, national normative tenure was 12 years per employer compared to four years today. Generation Y will average 20 employers and six careers in their lifetime.
- 5 *Global and entrepreneurial.* A recent study we conducted into Generation Y found that more than one in four Australians aged 18–25 expected to be self-employed at some point in their lifetime. They are working in a global marketplace, with an entrepreneurial mindset and surrounded by technological tools which facilitate this. Therefore, employers are increasingly competing for staff internationally, and with a generation who don't see themselves as employees who need a job but as entrepreneurs who have options.

Marriage and divorce

Since World War II, marriage rates have steadily declined, from an all-time high in 1942 of 12 marriages per 1000 people per year (when the oldest of the Builders were in their early 20s) to a marriage rate of 5.5 in 2008. This is the highest it's been for decades, though, and has been increasing since 2001 when Australia recorded its lowest marriage rate at 5.3 per 1000 Australians.¹⁰

Now, as the Y-ers enter adulthood and the Zeds approach their mid-teens, there are only 2.3 marriages for every divorce (although the divorce rate, too, was the lowest in 20

years in 2008 and has been on the decline since 2001).¹¹ By comparison, there was less than one divorce for every 12 marriages when the Builders were in their 20s, less than one divorce for every eight marriages when the Boomers were in their 20s, and one divorce for just over every three marriages when the X-ers were in their 20s.¹² Divorce reached the all-time high of 4.5 per 1000 people per year in 1976 (it is currently 2.2)¹³, following the introduction of the *Family Law Act 1975*, which allowed for 'no fault' divorce.¹⁴

Generally, marriage declines during periods of depression or recession – times of financial uncertainty – and increases during times of war.¹⁵ During the Great Depression the rate of marriages dramatically fell from ten per 1000 Australians in 1920 to fewer than six in the early 1930s, and, as we have seen, increased to 12 during World War II.¹⁶ The rapid decline in marriages since the 1940s, however, is not due to recession or depression, rather to the introduction of the contraceptive pill, changing social values and increasing education, employment and options for women.

With marriage on the decline, de facto relationships have soared and cohabitation before marriage is now the norm. When the oldest of the Boomers were awaiting their 30th birthday and their X-er children were only a decade old at most, only a quarter of marriages were preceded by cohabitation. That figure has tripled to 78 per cent.¹⁷

With increased participation in higher education, delayed careers and increased cohabitation, increasingly marriage is being delayed. The average first-time bride is aged 28 and the groom is nearly 30. Of all first marriages today, there are more brides aged over 35 than under 25.¹⁸ So with Aussie women delaying marriage, the mother's age at first birth on average is 31 and more than 33 for the first-time father¹⁹,

making parents of the Zeds older than the parents of any other Australian generation before them.²⁰

Interestingly, in the USA parents of the X-ers were older than any other American generation. The average age for first-time American mothers today is a young 25.2, compared to 29 in 1970. This has, in turn, seen an increase in the nation's fertility rate. In 2008 we saw the TFR reach the replacement level of 2.1 for the first time since 1971.²¹ However, in the USA the percentage of older mums is again on the rise, while the percentage of mums in their teens and early to mid-20s is on the decline. In 2005, births rose four per cent among women in their early to mid-30s, six per cent for women in their late 30s and five per cent for women in their early to mid-40s.

The UK is also experiencing an incline in age of first-time mums, a trend that is in fact shared by all western nations. In the UK, the average age of women giving birth is nearly 30, compared to 28.6 in 2001. In Canada, it is now 29.7 and in New Zealand 30.7.²²

Religion and spirituality

Church attendance and religious affiliation has been declining for some years now and while it was the Boomers' dislike of organised religion that triggered this decline, the trend continues. Nearly all Australians identified themselves as Christian the year the oldest of the Builders were born. Today, fewer than 70 per cent identify as Christian.²³ As seen from the figures in Table 3.1, Generations Y and Z are less likely to identify with a religion than any other generation or age group. In fact, only five per cent of young adults attend church regularly. However, this disengagement with religion has hit its low ebb, and over the last few years there

have been significant signs of change with young people beginning to re-engage with religion.

Table 3.1 | Percentage of Australians who do not identify with any religion by age

15–24	23%
25–54	20%
55–64	13%
65	8%

McCrindle Research figures

Religion is one of the lowest priorities of young Australians, according to major polls, below having children, marriage and fulfilling parents' expectations. Though not identifying as religious, in our focus groups Gen Y-ers are quick to embrace the idea of being spiritual. As Hugh Mackay observes: 'no one seems to like being called religious'. However, 'spirituality is a really, really interesting subject'.²⁴

Gen Y-ers on spirituality

'I hope there is something more than this.'
 'I'm a spiritual person for sure ... not religion though.'
 'These days we take a bit [of spirituality] from many sources.'
 'I don't like the formal structures [of spirituality].'
 'My parents went to church but I'm probably more spiritual.'²⁵

The move away from organised religion and increasingly towards secularisation is a trend occurring throughout the West. The USA, however, remains a fairly religious nation with 70 per cent of Americans believing in the existence of God, compared to 22 per cent of Germans, 23 per cent

of the British, 24 per cent of the French, 32 per cent of Spaniards and 51 per cent of Italians.²⁶ While the percentage of those who identify with religions other than Christianity such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam is increasing, it does not necessarily mean that Australia is experiencing mass conversions to eastern religions and Islam. Rather, the growth mirrors demographical shifts associated with changing immigration patterns in modern Australia.

The church generally does not get a great review from young people we research. Their perceptions are of a big, structured institution rather than a community of people with a passion and a purpose. Coming of age in this incredible 21st century has created expectation inflation. Many had visited the virtual worlds like SecondLife yet found them wanting, and in a Web 2.0 world of MySpace and YouTube, where the marketing slogan is 'broadcast yourself', there is a yearning for something or someone bigger than themselves. Yet this spiritual search often does not include the church, or traditional religion in its gamut. Indeed, there is a perception from many that organised religion is one of the last places they'd expect to find meaning in their spiritual search. This most educated, entertained and endowed generation have experienced so much, so young, that they aren't amazed anymore. They live in a culture without awe and transcendence.

The corporate world has responded to these yearnings. Many companies have tried to create a culture that is more of a movement with a cause than a corporation focused on profit. Today, large corporations support workplaces giving programs and charitable work, provide personal development courses and life coaches, and issue reports on their social charter and corporate citizenship. This speaks the lan-

guage of today's young people who are post-categorical and don't separate their job from their values. Convergence in technology allows the mobile phone to double as a camera and a web browser. Similarly, convergence in life sees their work life merge with their social life and even their spiritual life.

Church attendance and an increasing interest in religion in general are affected by social and economic crises such as war, recession and depression. The GFC saw a significant increase in church attendance in America. This renewed focus on financial sustainability, in addition to the growing momentum of environmental sustainability, has created a significant backlash against rampant materialism and energised movements that offer a greater social benefit, including church groups, charities and environmental organisations. Interestingly, some of the social networking sites that seemed to offer community connection have failed to live up to the initial expectations. There is a sense from many that the blogging, messaging and twittering of modern life is more about posturing and positioning than belonging and being. The longing is for a community where they don't always have to be 'on', and hence the resurgence, even in Australia, of traditional church life which meets both spiritual and relational needs.

Table 3.2 Growth of selected religions since 1996

Christianity	0.73%
Judaism	11.00%
Islam	69.00%
Buddhism	109.50%
Hinduism	120.00%

McCrindle Research figures

Crime and incarceration

The rate of crime in Australia has rapidly increased since the 1960s, while police numbers and imprisonment rates have declined. Since the Boomers were young teens, crime has increased by 450 per cent, while the Australian population has only increased by 104 per cent.²⁷ In other words, crime has increased at over four times the rate of population growth. In the USA, the population has increased by 67 per cent since 1960, and crime by 237 per cent.²⁸ One reason for this is the increased availability and variety of illicit drugs and therefore drug-related crime. As Table 3.3 illustrates, young people are more likely to experiment with drugs today.

Table 3.3 Trends in illicit drug use in the population over 14 years by year

	1988	Today
Amphetamines	5.1%	9.1%
Cannabis	27.5%	33.6%
Cocaine	2.4%	4.7%
Ecstasy	1.3%	7.5%
Heroin	0.9%	1.4%
Inhalents	3.0%	2.5%

Australian Institute of Criminology (2004) *Illicit Drugs and Alcohol*, <www.aic.gov.au/stats/crime/drugs/prevalence/trendsuse-2004.html>, accessed 23 November 2008

Interestingly, as crime rates have increased, fewer people are being incarcerated. In 1964 there were 120 prisoners per 1000 serious crimes. That number has since plummeted to 30 per thousand.²⁹ There has been an even more marked trend away from custodial sentences for juveniles. In 1981 there were 1252 juveniles in custody compared to 564 by 2005, even though juveniles account for over 50 per cent of

all crime in Australia.³⁰ Despite this, there are 42 times more adults in prison than those under 18.³¹ Police numbers have only increased by 37 per cent since the 1960s³² and, given the increased population and crime rates the ratio of police to crime has also been declining, so it is unsurprising that today fewer crimes are being solved than in 1964 (today: 28 per cent; 1964: 40 per cent).³³ The Y-ers and Zeds may be some of the most financially secure generations, but they are not the safest. In one of our national youth surveys, Y-ers were most worried about getting cancer, followed by falling victim to crime and terrorism.³⁴

Housing and consumerism

Even though Australians are having fewer babies today and housing prices have never been higher, we want bigger, more elaborate homes. Rising housing expectations and prices are making the 'Australian dream' increasingly unrealistic for Australians to achieve, especially Gen Y-ers who have been called the Houseless Generation.

Since the 1950s the size of the average Australian home has more than doubled, while the average number of people per household has steadily declined from 3.6 to 2.6.³⁵ The average floor area of a new house increased from 115 m² in the 1950s to 170 m² in the mid-1980s and is now 289 m².

When many Boomers were buying their first house in 1972, they were only looking at paying, on average, \$23 000. As the X-ers were entering their teens in 1980, the average price of a house had more than doubled in the span of eight years to \$50 000. While we may be earning three times the salary of 27 years ago, average house costs have increased more than eight times from \$60 000 in 1982 to over \$500 000 today.³⁶ Consequently, the Y-ers have been

largely excluded from the housing market. In 1989 almost 65 per cent of 25–39 year olds had managed to buy their first home, compared to 54 per cent today.³⁷

With house prices increasing, Australians are now borrowing much more to buy a house.

Table 3.4 | Average amount borrowed to purchase a home (gross terms) by year

1982	\$29 000
1996	\$99 000
2005	\$215 000
Today	\$318 000

McCrindle Research, *30 years of change*. McCrindle Research figures (2011).

Following World War II, a buyer needed 104 weeks or two years' worth of earnings to pay off a house. In 1982 the average home cost 185 weeks of average gross pay, while today it costs 550 weeks.³⁸ The trend lines are clear: due to both lifestyle changes and affordability factors, fewer Y-ers and Zeds will own their own home compared to the X-ers and Boomers.

While it may be taking Gen X-ers and Y-ers much longer to pay off a home than it did the Builders and Boomers, it is taking them a little less time to pay off a car. In 1953, Holden released the FJ Holden at only £1074 – the equivalent of 68 times the average weekly wage. The average cost of a car today is \$27 800 – just over 25 weeks of the average wage.

Home loans are not the only form of credit to have increased. The ratio of household debt to assets has increased in recent years to 17.5 per cent, compared to just 5 per cent when the first of the X-ers were born. Household credit outstanding has risen from 20 per cent of gross domestic

product (GDP) in the 1970s to 30 per cent by 1990, and to around 100 per cent today.³⁹

Debt has always been part of life but when the Boomers were in their 20s it was life stage debt, largely limited to the beginning decades of one's economic life. Now it is lifestyle debt with Australians increasingly comfortable with massive levels of debt. While once people mainly owed money on appreciating assets like their home, now Australians, in these times of higher expenses, gadgetry, new categories of spending and higher turnover of technologies, owe increasing amounts of money on depreciating assets. Seventy-five per cent of Australia's Gen Y is in debt, most of which is lifestyle debt.⁴⁰ In fact, Gen Y is the most indebted generation ever for their age. Before Generation Y even begin their careers, they have a HELP (Higher Education Loan Program) or HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) debt into the tens of thousands.⁴¹

Health

Australians are enjoying better health and living longer than ever before. In fact, male life expectancy in Australia is second to Iceland (80), while female life expectancy is third to Japan (86) and Hong Kong SAR (85).⁴² Not that long ago, 'old age' referred to anyone aged over 65. In the early 1950s, average male life expectancy at birth was 67 and female life expectancy was 73.⁴³ Today, a 65 year old has a life expectancy of 14–19 years (males, 79; females, 84)⁴⁴, and by 2047 it is predicted that today's 26-year-old Gen Y-ers will have added another six years of life to the average life expectancy.⁴⁵

Despite living longer, Australians have never been more overweight. So while quantity of life has increased dramatically for many Australians, quality hasn't. Being

overweight is the biggest individual risk factor for morbid diseases. Today, nearly 60 per cent of men are overweight or obese, compared to 43 per cent of women.⁴⁶

While death rates ascribed to chronic diseases like stroke, diabetes, asthma and kidney failure are enjoying all-time lows, it does not mean that the incidence rate has also declined. Indeed, the amount of people living with diabetes, for example, has rapidly increased in recent years. The generations of today have a better chance of surviving these diseases because medicine is better able to prevent death. Similarly, cancer death rates have, due to better screening, detection and treatment, declined in recent decades, especially for females (from 180 per 100 000 in 1921 to 146 today).⁴⁷ However, cancer incidence rates have rapidly increased. In fact, Australia's incidence rate for cancer (not including skin cancer) is above the OECD average.⁴⁸

Contrary to common perception, Australia's suicide rate is much lower today than it was for previous generations. In fact, the current suicide rate for both males (13.9 per 100 000) and females (4.0) is close to all-time lows and has been decreasing since 1997.⁴⁹ However, according to the director of Australia's Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention, Dr De Leo, there has been a big spike in the number of deaths classified as accidental and undefined, some of which may have been due to suicide.⁵⁰ The fathers of the Builders were more likely to end their own lives than any other generation (24 per 100 000 in the 1930s), due in large part, to high rates of unemployment during the Great Depression.⁵¹ In 1967, when the oldest of the Boomer females were 21, more women died from suicide (11.1 per 100 000) than in any other year.⁵² The late 1960s were also the years where adoptions peaked in Australia,

reaching nearly 10 000 a year in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵³

While the death rate has plummeted since the Builders were young, the male death rate in proportion to the female death rate has steadily increased until recently when it decreased by two per cent.

Table 3.5 | Proportion of deaths

	1930	1950	1970	1990	Today
Male	55%	58%	61%	62%	60%
Female	45%	42%	39%	38%	40%

McCrindle Research figures

Table 3.6 | Generations: products of their times

	Builders	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Prime ministers	Stanley Melbourne Bruce James Henry Scullin Robert Gordon Menzies John Curtin	William McMahon Gough Whitlam Malcolm Fraser	Bob Hawke Paul Keating	John Howard	Kevin Rudd Julia Gillard
Iconic technology	Radio, 1923 Talking pictures, 1928	TV, 1956 Audio cassette, 1962 Colour TV, 1975	VCR, 1976 Walkman, 1979 IBM PC, 1981	Internet, Email, SMSing DVD, 1995 PlayStation/Xbox	Wireless technology mp3 players plasma and LCD screens
Children's TV & movies	Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs The Wizard of Oz Peter Pan	Pollyanna The Shaggy Dog Sleeping Beauty	The Muppets Show Benji Sesame Street	The little mermaid Teenage mutant ninja turtles Power rangers	Hi 5 The Wiggles Shrek

	Builders	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Celebrities	Elizabeth Taylor	Robert Redford	Boy George Elle Macpherson	Brad Pitt Kylie Minogue	Beyoncé Knowles Delta Goodrem
	Katherine Hepburn	Michael Cain	‘Molly’ Meldrum	Jennifer Aniston	Britney Spears
	James Stewart	Paul Hogan			
Social markers/ landmark events	Stock market crash, 1929	Decimal currency in Australia, 1966	<i>Challenger</i> explodes, 1986	Thredbo disaster, 1997	London Bombings, 2005
	Australia declares war on Germany, 1939	Neil Armstrong walks on Moon, 1969	Halley’s Comet, 1986	Columbine shootings, 1999	Hurricane Katrina, 2005
	Japan attacks Pearl Harbour, 1941	Vietnam War, 1965–73	Stock market crash, 1987	New Millennium, 2000	Beijing Olympics, 2008
	Australia, the USA and Britain declare war on Japan, 1941	Cyclone Tracy, 1974	Berlin Wall down, 1989	September 11, 2001	Michael Jackson dies, 2009
	Japanese bomb Darwin, 1942	<i>Advance Australia Fair</i> becomes Australia’s national anthem, 1974	Newcastle earthquake, 1989	Bali Bombing, 2002	Ash from volcanic eruptions in Iceland brings air traffic in Europe to a standstill, 2010
				Invasion of Iraq, 2003	Julia Gillard is elected Australia’s first female Prime Minister, 2010
Historical figures and iconic leaders	Sir Winston Churchill	Martin Luther King Jr	Mother Teresa of Calcutta	John Paul II	Benazir Bhutto
	Mohandas Gandhi	Superman	Spiderman	Saddam Hussein	Barack Obama

	Builders	Boomers	Gen X	Gen Y	Gen Z
Trends in fashion	Tailored short and straight skirts	Mini and maxi skirts	Shoulder pads	Neon colours	Low-rise jeans (men and women)
	Short jackets	Sideburns	White trousers (men)	Grunge	Skinny-leg jeans (men and women)
	Cardigans	Big collars	Big hair	Sports clothing	Body piercing
	Red lipstick	Bell-bottoms	Leggings	Body piercing	Big sunnies
	Shoulder-length, styled hair	The bikini	Leg warmers	Dockers	Thick belts worn with skirts and dresses
Fashion icons	Marilyn Monroe	Jackie Kennedy Onassis	Princess Diana	The ‘Rachael’ haircut	Mangy-dog haircut (young men)
	Grace Kelly	‘Twiggy’ Lawson	Cher	Cargo pants	
	Audrey Hepburn	Brigitte Bardot	Madonna	The ‘Rachael’ haircut	
				Designer sneakers	
Scientific discoveries and breakthroughs	Discovery of penicillin, 1928	Proposal put forward of the Big Bang theory, 1948	The first human heart transplant performed, 1967	Kate Moss	Lady Gaga
	Discovery of the neutron, 1930	The first man-made satellite to orbit the earth launched, 1957	Neil Armstrong is the first man to land on the moon, 1969	Liz Hurley	Victoria Beckham
	Proposal put forward that DNA is the inherited material for all living things, 1944	The first American space probe <i>Mariner 4</i> reaches Mars, 1964	The first test-tube baby born, 1978	Jennifer Aniston	Mischa Barton

Sociographics

If the Builders did not grow up in the Great Depression and war years, it is unlikely that they would be so reserved in their spending. Similarly, if Gen Y-ers and Zeds weren't so exposed to social networking technologies such as Facebook, MySpace and SMS they wouldn't be as peer connected and peer-group influenced. Put simply, generations are a product of the events, leaders, developments and trends of their times; they are shaped by their times, despite how they are raised or their socioeconomic status.

From digital aliens to digital natives

Writer Marc Prensky, in his much-referenced paper 'Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants', points out that while anyone can send a text message or access a podcast, Generation Y has been immersed in these new options since their early years and are comfortable with the digital language and technologies.

Generations Y and Z are technological 'natives', compared to, say, the Baby Boomer 'digital immigrants' who have migrated to these technologies later in life. Generation X, on the other hand, remembers their formative years with the emergence, rather than the omnipresence, of digital technology. They can be referred to as 'digital adaptives', as they took on board the technological changes that they could see taking place around the home, the school, the university and the workplace.

For much of the Builder generation, the world of digital technology seems alien and perhaps irrelevant. They struggle with such technologies as the Internet, wireless networks, podcasts, telephone banking and even automated teller machines (ATMs).

Here we build on Prensky's findings analysing each generation's response to the digital world:

- *Digital aliens.* The Builders were past middle age when the digital technologies came in. The Internet, podcasts, SMS, online gaming and wireless networks are largely alien concepts to them.
- *Digital immigrants.* The Baby Boomers are digital immigrants who reached adulthood without digital technology. While many embrace new technologies, some do so reluctantly.
- *Digital adaptives.* Digital technologies began to emerge (in a mass sense) largely during the teen years of Generation X – the late 1980s and early 1990s. Generation X-ers willingly embrace the technologies they saw evolve into consumer durables.
- *Digital natives.* The newer generations (Y and Z) have lived their entire lives immersed in digital technologies. For example, on a recent trip to a local primary school, a Generation X-er (with a Generation Z preschooler) witnessed six year olds learning Excel spreadsheets in computing class. There is a Gen Y t-shirt which says it eloquently: 'When I'm bored I Google myself!'

Psychographics

If the demographics and sociographics are the skeleton of each generation, the psychographics – personality, attitudes, lifestyle and values – are the flesh and blood. They are what make the generations unique. However, while the generational gaps are obvious, each generation is shaped by and reacts to the one before it. For example, the Boomers' propensity to work long hours when their families were young,

Table 3.7 | Traits of the Builders

Values	Attitudes	Lifestyle	Personality
Saving	Black and white, right and wrong	Experienced hardship in early years and prosperity in later years	Distrust change
Mutual obligation	It's not 'my relationship', it's 'our relationship'	Saved first, bought later	Stoic
Patriotism	Authority figures and one's elders should never be questioned	Have the largest share of wealth after their Boomer children	Reserved
Loyalty	You shouldn't buy something unless you have the money to pay for it	Spend the least of all age groups	Financially conservative
Commitment	Everything in moderation		Hierarchical
Moral responsibility			Pragmatic
Respect for elders	Children should be seen and not heard		Stable
Self-denial			Balanced

often at the expense of much-needed time with spouse and children, has transformed the way ensuing generations work. The X-ers, now with families of their own, have refused to work the often ridiculous and inflexible hours that their parents worked. Once again we will explore each generation in turn.

The Builders

Tough early experiences and years of austerity nurtured by the Great Depression and World War II influenced and forged the Builder generation. Their label gives insight into

their response to their times: they became builders of the infrastructure, the economy, the institutions and the organisations of their society. Core values and a strong work ethic were fundamental to them. Financial conservatism and delayed gratification were normative. Respect for authority figures and commitment to boss, industry, brand and nation were the societal values which dominated. The results of their labour – summed up by American author and television journalist Tom Brokaw in his labelling of them as the 'Greatest Generation' – led to the shift from an agrarian economy to a modern, industrialised one. It created the national wealth and social capital that the rest of us have been building on and living off ever since.

The Builders consider themselves to be the lucky generation on account of the prosperity that followed the years of hardship they experienced as children and adolescents when, in effect, the generations that have followed have been the lucky ones, enjoying uninterrupted years of relative comfort.

Parenting expert Michael Grose points out in his book, *XYZ: The New Rules of Generational Warfare*, that the Builders are the first generation of grandparents to have been deprived of contact with their grandchildren. Much of this is to do with the Boomers being the first generation to experience massive family breakdown. In cases of separation and divorce, children usually end up with the mother, so this deprivation has been particularly true for paternal grandparents. The Builders are also the first generation of grandparents to have played a major caring role in the lives of their grandchildren, as the Boomer women entered the workforce and looked to their parents, usually mothers, for childcare.

Table 3.8 | Traits of the Boomers

Values	Attitudes	Lifestyle	Personality
Work ethic	Free education, free love and free (easy) divorce	Working longer, retiring later	Experimental
Questioning	If you are unhappy in a relationship, exit it	The wealthiest living generation	Idealistic
Participation	Job status and symbols are important	Consumption and lifestyle take precedence	Materialistic
Informality	You only live once so enjoy it	Many downsizing and reverse mortgaging to release capital	Hard-working, energetic
Enthusiasm for causes	Put yourself first after a lifetime of hard work	Spending the kids' inheritance on travelling and leisure activities	Visionary
Individualism	Organise life around work not work around life	Many still have grown children living with them	Enthusiastic
	You have to work your way to the top	Many caring for grandchildren on a regular basis	Passionate
	If you've got it, flaunt it	Many doing the sea change and tree change for increased quality of life	Self-centred

Like their forefathers, the Builder men were providers, protectors and heads of their families. They worked the standard nine-to-five, five-day week at a time when business was open for only three hours on the weekends – Saturdays, nine to twelve. Sunday, of course, was a day of rest and a day shared with the family – tender memories made over the

Sunday roast which followed the obligatory church service.

The Builders were the last generation to live out their adult lives in gender-specific roles dictated by a society where duty rather than options, and where responsibility rather than personal wants guided one's work and life choices. These women were nurturers and carers, occupied by the domestic no less than the many generations of women before them. As one Builder mother and wife recalls, upon marrying she was expected to give up her much-loved nursing career. Of course, she did not question the zeitgeist of the day and so withdrew from the workforce at only 21. The Boomers, a generation which birthed the civil rights movement, changed all this, questioning and redefining female and male roles and the purpose of work. With the introduction of the contraceptive pill in the 1960s, such change was inevitable.

The Boomers

The Baby Boomers were the largest generation in history – the first to create lifestyles paid for on credit.⁵⁴ As Hugh Mackay points out in *Generations*, Builder parents believe they may have overindulged their Boomer children and not done enough to impart values and morals to them. They feel this led their children – and grandchildren – to view material possessions as ends, in and of themselves, and not means to an end – to provide for the comfort and security of the family.⁵⁵ As a result, this generation has been labelled self-absorbed and self-indulgent – and is often viewed as hypocritical, given the Boomers' rebellious, idealistic and sexually permissive youth and materialistic, over-worked and conservative later years.⁵⁶ Indeed, in abandoning the nine-to-five job in favour of the 50-plus-hour week, it was

the Baby Boomers who created the concepts of the ‘workaholic’ and ‘superwoman’.⁵⁷

The Boomer women certainly were super, juggling work life and family life, while their husbands were still trying to adapt to the concept of equality in the aftermath of the women’s liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Many Boomer males struggled to adjust to the changing roles of men and women, nostalgic for their mother’s home-cooking and warm greeting at the end of the day, a duty of ‘good’ wives in the 1950s.

Plan ahead even the night before, to have a delicious meal ready, on time, for his return. This is a way of letting him know that you have been thinking about him and are concerned about his needs. Most men are hungry when they come home and the prospect of a good meal (especially his favorite dish) is part of the warm welcome needed.⁵⁸

To some degree, the Boomer males resented the new-found freedom of their wives.⁵⁹ Credited with being the first generation of fathers to be more than just providers to their sons and daughters, the reality was that the Boomer males struggled to adjust to a more active fatherhood role. In many ways the X-er fathers have truly redefined fatherhood.

The Baby Boomers have been, much like the older, successful child, the favourite generation of whom much has been written and said. When the Baby Boomers were young, there was so much hope surrounding their potential that *Time* magazine gave them its Man of the Year Award in 1967. As Claire Raines points out in *Beyond Generation X*, ‘never before in history had youth been so idealised as they were at this moment’.⁶⁰ When Generation X were born

Table 3.9 | Traits of the X-ers

Values	Attitudes	Lifestyle	Personality
Work-life balance	Nothing is permanent, nothing is absolute	Married in their late 20s and early 30s	Reactive
Independence	Trust no one, especially governments and employers	On two incomes and have an average of two kids	Pessimistic
Family before work	Seek the truth	Mortgage stress – struggling with the mortgage in the face of rising housing costs	Innovative
	The Boomers have made it hard for our generation	In considerable debt	Sceptical
	Willing to work hard, but not without proper reward and at the expense of family	Many are living above their means	Seeking
	Whatever	Very active in their children’s education	Adaptable
		Work hard but make sure they have time for family	Well grounded

it had much to aspire to and in some aspects has always been overshadowed by the Boomers, criticised as ‘slackers’, ‘busters’ and ‘whiners’ in their youth.

The Boomers, of all the current generations, have perhaps had the best opportunities. They were born into the post-war boom, enjoyed an idyllic childhood, entered the workforce without struggle, were able to afford a house, set money aside for savings and invested in property as young adults. University came free, they profited from soaring housing prices that have seen their children unable to enter the housing market, escaped current rising living costs, retired with a large superannuation fund, and enjoyed travel

on their investment profits. In the economic downturn, many Boomers, ready to enter retirement, had their superannuation radically reduced. However, some would argue that, compared to other generations, they were unscathed by the financial crisis. It will be their children and grandchildren who will have to help repay our country's massive debt as the consequences of an ageing population and climate change begin to manifest. The Boomers won't have left much inheritance for their children to compensate for this, many currently enjoying spending their money on travel, earning themselves labels such as SKIers (Spending the Kid's Inheritance), the Grey Getaways and the Grey Nomads.

Generation X

The X-ers have lived their entire lives in a time of relative peace and economic prosperity. They were the first generation to have had computers in their homes and schools and were the first to grow up without a large adult presence, with both parents working.⁶¹ This, and the fact that their Boomer parents were the most divorced generation in Australian history, explains why the X-ers were more peer-oriented than the generations that went before them.⁶² These experiences also made them an adaptable and fiercely independent generation.

Although the X-ers were given much materially as children, they always felt they never had the more important things, such as valuable time with mum and dad. Consequently, as parents, this generation has tried hard to balance family and work life.⁶³ Statistics for divorce show this. Since the Boomers were young, the number of divorces has halved.⁶⁴

Though they are willing to work hard, the X-ers see it as only one part of life and secondary to their personal lives. In contrast to their parents and grandparents, they believe in work-life balance as opposed to work ethic. Having entered the workforce at a low point and witnessing their parents getting laid off after years of loyal service⁶⁵, the X-ers are not confident that hard work and loyalty are fairly compensated. As an X-er pointed out in our research, being an X-er is like arriving at the party a few hours late – there is a sense that it was once buzzing, but all that remains are a few cold sausage rolls and some flat punch. Many an X-er can relate to the sentiment of a recent newspaper headline: 'Generation X-cluded'.

The Boomers often boast about their radical past and achievements in youth. However, as Australian demographer and author Bernard Salt points out, the X-ers were the true radicals; they did as much or more than their parents to impact on the nation's mood and values. Unlike the Boomers, the X-ers achieved this not through major causes and movements but through a subtle shift in values. As the X-ers matured, a new set of social behaviours was seen. For example, during the 1990s it was the X-ers who decided to postpone marriage from the early to late 20s.⁶⁶

Likewise, while the Boomer women reinvented the concept of the working family, their X-er daughters made dual-income families the norm. Over two-thirds of partnered mums of children under ten are currently in the workforce.⁶⁷ Further, as we have seen, they were the first to outnumber men in Year 12 and the universities.

Generation Y

The Y-ers grew up during the best economic times Australia has ever seen; they have never known total war, economic depression, high unemployment or inflation. They are used to extravagances like two-plus cars per family, dinners out and huge family homes.⁶⁸ As a result, the Y-ers are an optimistic generation, yet not as resilient as generations past. During the economic crisis, Gen Y's confidence in the economic security of the future was knocked for the first time.

In our research on Gen Y and the economic crisis, we found that they were the most fearful of an impending recession with 82 per cent of Gen Y ranking a recession as the issue they most feared, compared to only 49 per cent of older Australians. Gen Y-ers were also more concerned than older Australians about the impact a recession would have on their lifestyle. But they were still spending, would rather get a second job than limit lifestyle expenditure, and only one-third ruled out applying for credit at that critical time. Gen Y, more than any other generation, have a high tolerance of debt and a strong demand for the lifestyle that it funds. In 2007, Australia's Gen Y spent \$48 billion on lifestyle expenses.⁶⁹

As we mentioned earlier, Generation Y have experienced 'expectation inflation' – expecting to start their economic life in the manner in which they have seen their parents finish their economic life. Their experience of economic security provided by parents and others has delayed the adulthood milestones, creating a generation with an external locus of control. Having not been shaped through tough formative experiences, many Y-ers lack the character and life skills to face adversity and take responsibility.

Table 3.10 | Traits of the Y-ers

Values	Attitudes	Lifestyle	Personality
Fun and enjoyment	Outcomes not processes	Short term not long term	Confident
Tolerance of diversity	Enjoy the now	Enjoyment before commitment	Cynical
Social awareness	Sexuality is a fluid thing	Have limited or no savings	Assertive
Friendship	Organise work around life, not life around work	75% are in debt	High maintenance
	Why should I have to work my way to the top?	Half still live in parental home	Demanding
	When it comes to respecting elders: 'Whatever! Prove it!'	Lifestyle not life stage	Sociable
		Juggling hectic work and social life	Optimistic
		Friends are the new family	Values driven

As one Y-er said in a focus group, 'When I make a mistake, I just look for the undo button.' So for a generation that has not had to fight in a war or even dodge one, an economic downturn at the start of their earning life may well have a positive impact on the rest of their lives. As we recently wrote in a research report with a nod to Paul Keating's words in 1991, this may prove to be the recession that Generation Y had to have. While the recession Gen Y had to have did not quite arrive, the downturn still helped in shaping attitudes.

Michael Grose believes the difference between youth of the past and the Y-ers is that the latter tend to do things to

extreme, reflective of the excessive times in which they live. He cited reality TV programs *Big Brother* and *Australian Idol* which, at the time of his writing, were into their eighth and sixth seasons respectively, and the current problem of teen binge drinking as examples.

The prosperous times have nurtured a spirit of expectancy in the Y-ers, with so many of this generation reportedly demanding reward before effort, unlike their workaholic parents. And again, unlike their Boomer parents, Y-ers, Australia's most travelled generation, think short term, not long term. Still living at home with their parents, the Y-ers move from job to job and partner to partner, astounding their parents with their speed and frustrating them with their lack of commitment.⁷⁰ Indeed, many parents of Y-ers doubt whether they will ever have grandchildren with so few of them in serious relationships.

The current rising costs of living, however, are beginning to impact this otherwise perfectly comfortable and content generation.

- 'I'll never afford a house and the cost of rent, food, petrol are going up way faster than my salary so I'll never have a social life because I can't afford it.' (aged 22)
- 'Everything is going up in price and we are struggling with payments as income stays the same. I have been buying clothes from the \$5 rack for three years now because we cannot afford to enjoy life.' (aged 26)
- 'I want all the luxuries living in the 21st century has to offer, but I don't know if I can pay the price of jeopardising my sanity to get there. It seems you have to slaughter yourself today if you really want to get somewhere.' (aged 21)

Being a techno-centric generation, Gen Y-ers are outcome oriented rather than process oriented. They are clever multi-taskers who can work at several major projects at one time without feeling stressed. Often accused of being anti-social due to their regular use of technology, Y-ers are the most social generation we have seen, using technology to keep in frequent contact with friends. Like the X-ers, the Y-ers came from dual-income households, which helped shape them to become peer-focused. It is because of technologies like SMS and chat that Gen Y is more peer-oriented than their older siblings, the X-ers. In 2009, one in four Y-ers sent in excess of ten text messages per day, with the majority of these text messages sent to friends (rather than family). In fact, to highlight the growth in text messaging, in 2009 Australians sent 7 billion texts over the Telstra network, which is more than 19 million per day, and a three-fold increase on 2005.⁷¹ For now, at least, among Generation Y friends are the new family.

Generation Z

2009 marked the end of Generation Z, the world's first 21st-century generation. The Zeds – the current child gen-

Values, personality traits and lifestyle

Empowered
Task-focused
More options than ever
Most educated and provided-for generation
Mature beyond their years
Sophisticated
Serious

eration with its oldest members in their mid-teens – is the most planned for, most molycoddled and most materially endowed generation to date. Born to older mums and dads, they live highly organised lives with little freedom and have the fewest siblings of any generation.⁷²

As the most formally educated generation in Australian history – starting their schooling younger and projected to stay in it for longer – it is unsurprising that they live largely indoors; after all, their parents place priority on homework, coaching and extracurricular activities over a carefree childhood. Furthermore, given fears about child predators, parents are cautious about letting their youngsters play with friends on neighbouring streets and in nearby parks.

The Zeds are the ‘up-ageing’ generation because they are growing up faster. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that children are beginning puberty three months earlier every decade.⁷³ They are also in education earlier and are exposed to marketing younger. Despite the environmentally conscientious times, the Zeds are the most marketed-to children of all time and the biggest consumers of any generation of children.⁷⁴

This Internet-savvy, technologically literate generation has been shaped to multitask. They move quickly from one task to another, often placing more value on speed than accuracy. They have only known a wireless, hyperlinked, user-generated world where they are only ever a few clicks away from any piece of knowledge. The world is an open book to Gen Z.

The following recent letter in ‘Column 8’ in the *Sydney Morning Herald* demonstrates just how technology has shaped these digital natives. ‘During breakfast the other day,’ writes Paul of Northbridge, ‘our six-year-old son Lachlan

decided to make himself some toast. So grabbing a piece of bread, and at the point of placing it in the toaster, he said to his mother, “Mum, how do I put the bread in – is it landscape or portrait?”’ A Year 1 boy apparently wrote at school: ‘Today Wii played on the swings.’ While incredibly technologically savvy, this generation, with their digital mindset, evidently struggles to do some of the most basic activities.

In addition to being the most technologically-centred generation, the Zeds will also be the most empowered. After all, within a decade they will be entering the workforce in an era of declining supply: more people exiting the workforce than entering it.⁷⁵

Morality and manners: from the personal to the practical

Since the time of the Builders, what we consider immoral has changed. We are not so much offended by sexual choices once considered taboo, as by pragmatic wrongs such as watering one’s garden in drought-stricken times and owning an environmentally unfriendly 4WD. Essentially, we are falling away from the belief that there are moral absolutes and leaning towards the belief that morality is relative to one’s culture and times. Survey results indicate that the younger the generations, the less likely they are to believe ‘there are definitely some moral absolutes’: 70 per cent of Builders agree there are moral absolutes, compared to 63.5 per cent of Boomers, 54.5 per cent of X-ers and 53.8 per cent of Y-ers.

The latter can also be applied to contemporary manners. Much of modern-day etiquette is based on the inconvenience certain behaviours cause other people rather than

Table 3.11 | Moral concerns of the times

Builders	Boomers	X-ers	Y-ers & Zeds
Premarital sex, cohabitation	Gender equality (Women's Liberation Movement)	Gay rights	Watering your garden, hosing down your car and having a long shower
Unplanned pregnancies	Sexual freedom (Sexual Revolution)	Cultural diversity and equality	Climate change
Mixed race relationships and gatherings	War (anti-Vietnam, Just War debates)	World poverty	Refugee detention centres
Abortion	Working mums	Sexual responsibility in the wake of the AIDS crisis	Driving a 4WD
Indecent images and literature	Access to abortion and contraceptives	The ozone layer, pollution	Moral issues associated with new technologies (illegal song/movie downloads, censorship)

a particular morality. At one time there was complex and socially accepted etiquette for such things as letter writing, travelling, dining, courting, attending dances or visiting people. Today, rules of etiquette are very different. There are rules for emailing and using a mobile phone and even YouTube.

Titles

Australians are now more relaxed in addressing people they are unfamiliar with. In mid-last century, it was considered unacceptable to address someone by their first name unless

Table 3.12 | Taboos of etiquette

Now	Then
Discriminating against somebody on the basis of race, sex, creed or sexual orientation	Swearing in the presence of a lady
Using racist, sexist or homophobic names	Staying seated when a lady was standing
Answering a mobile phone while engaged in a business matter	Not removing your hat in the presence of a lady
Smacking your child in public	Not standing up when a woman entered the room
Smoking (especially dropping cigarette butts on the ground)	If a child, speaking when not spoken to
Watering your garden with a hose	If a child, addressing an adult by their first name
Using social networking sites for business or marketing purposes	Talking about politics, money or religion in a social setting
Speaking loudly on a mobile phone while on public transport	Failing to introduce two people with whom you are acquainted
Listening to loud music on your mp3 player while on public transport	If a woman, dressing in a revealing fashion (such as exposing underwear)
Sending an SMS when talking to somebody	To address somebody unfamiliar to you by their first name

(2004) The new taboos, *The Age*, <www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/01/07/1073437344837.html>, accessed 2 July 2008

one was well acquainted with that person or was considered an ‘equal’. Now, the only time when we do address someone by title is in some formal contexts (courts, official speeches), some professional situations (interactions with doctors, police officers) and at school (child to teacher).

Children

Children were once taught to address adults as Mr, Miss, Mrs, Sir or Ma’am. Today’s children commonly refer to and address adults by their first name. Perhaps the only exception to this is seen in the classroom where children are still expected to address teachers by way of formal title – and even then many high schools and senior secondary colleges prefer a more casual first-name approach. Only 22 per cent of parents insist that their children always refer to adults as Mr, Mrs, etc. Over half (51 per cent) only insist their children address adults by formal title if those adults wish to be addressed formally.⁷⁶ ‘Undefined equalitarianism’ has led to a breaking away from seniority-specific courtesy, evidenced in the recent demise of formal titles. The respect and courtesy we now show one another is mutual (and this is reflected in the *Values Education* national program for schools introduced in 2005). Recent social changes have rapidly transformed long-held civil norms. Such changes have impacted on the authority and social standing of certain positions; examples from our research include the clergy, politicians and medical professionals.

Marital status

When the Builders were young, the title of a woman advertised her marital status. Today, the default title is ‘Ms’ whether unmarried, married or divorced, while many young women keep their ‘maiden’ name when they get married.

Customer service

It is now uncommon to be referred to as ‘Ma’am’ or ‘Sir’ by a waitperson, shopkeeper or check-out operator. Once it was ‘Will there be anything else, Sir?’ Now it is simply ‘Will there be anything else?’ (or not infrequently ‘Anything else, mate?’) Only one-third of Australians say they are regularly referred to as ‘Sir’ or ‘Ma’am’ by customer service people (one-fifth say they are ‘never’ addressed in this manner).⁷⁷

Relationships

Young people (and, indeed, many older people) no longer refer to their significant other as their boyfriend, girlfriend or, if married, spouse, husband or wife. ‘Partner’ is the new term – and so someone you go into business with is now clarified as ‘business partner’. The term ‘partners’ through relatively recent law reforms has come to mean:

- coupled parents, whether living together or not
- a married couple
- an unmarried couple who have lived together for a period of more than two years.

The definition of spouse has also been changed in law. It now means partner, married or not.⁷⁸ The term partner equalises married and unmarried, committed and uncommitted relationships.

Many no longer see marriage as a sacred institution and a foundation of society (particularly the young). To many, it is ‘just a piece of paper’ (or an excuse for a party) and, for this reason, no different from any other committed and loving relationship.⁷⁹ A number of factors have contributed to how we now view marriage and relationships, including a decline in church attendance and marriages and an increase

in cohabitation, changes in legal definitions, civil unions and divorce.

With a solid definition of the generations behind us, we now move forward to look at the emerging generations in the home, school, workplace and marketplace.

4 PARENTING AND TRAINING

'Parents often talk about the younger generation as if they didn't have anything to do with it.'

Haim Ginott

As the Boomers begin to enter the retirement phase of their lives, a new generation of parents has emerged: Generation X. Called 'slackers' when they were younger, the X-er parents, older and more financially secure, are certainly not slack parents. In fact, they have given birth to a generation more materially endowed, educated, planned for and mollycoddled than any past generation. But while the Zeds have been a privileged generation, these children of an information-saturated and increasingly competitive world have not enjoyed the leisurely and lengthy childhood of previous generations. For their parents, the times have added to the pool of parenting concerns and challenges. As of 2010, the X-ers now share the parenting reins with Gen Y. This was the year that the Y-ers began to turn 30 and enter the peak childbearing years. The year 2010 also welcomed the start of a new generation: the Alphas, who will largely be the offspring of the Y-ers.

The family has undergone many changes since the 1960s. However, while the following trends show a move

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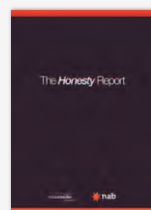
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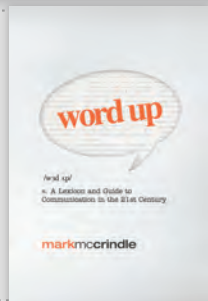
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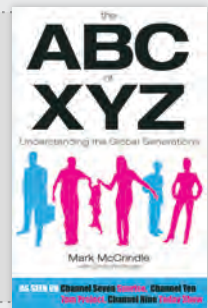


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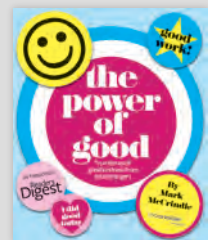


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