

My father grew up on a dairy farm in Wyoming, his parents suffered through two World Wars, the Depression and some pretty intense poverty. Dad worked his tail off his whole life to make sure he would never have to worry about money like his father did. He is part of the baby boomer generation, and like partners at modern law firms- his dedication to his work as a surgeon is uncompromising. His patients always come first, and even though he has been a great father and is one of my best friends- he has made a lot of sacrifices to become one of the finest surgeons in America. The panel at last week's Superconference entitled "Dealing with Generation Y at Work" really hit home for me. Here were some of the highlights.

"Generation Y is entitled, lazy, selfish, tech savvy, and incompetent," is how [Scott Greenfield](#), one of the finest criminal defense attorneys in NY, started off the panel.

"I had a summer associate call me and ask me, 'So that my girlfriend and I can coordinate our showers in the morning- can I schedule to come in at 9:30 instead of 8:30 to work?'" added the moderator [Dan Hull](#).

This can't be representative of ALL members of Generation Y? (According to Wikipedia Generation Y represents individuals born somewhere between the early 1980's and 2000)

Just at this moment the voice of my generation stepped in, "I spent years as an associate, I hit all my metrics- but I didn't want to become partner. Its no secret that focusing on making as much money as possible ruined many of these older partners' personal lives." said [Anthony Zana](#), he is now Corporate Counsel for Intergraph Corporation- where he left behind the billable hour.

"I've seen too many successful partners on their 3rd and 4th marriage- and I did not want that to be me." Anthony added. "Even the ABA reports that depression, suicide, divorce, and alcoholism rates are higher for attorneys that work those types of hours."

"I think the problem is that they don't know how to work, our firm has hired 15 attorneys in the last few years from Generation Y, and not one of them is still working for us." said [Dan Hull](#).

"Well, I have had a totally different experience at my firm. As far as I can tell when I give greater flexibility to my Gen-Y attorneys, they are willing to repay it ten-fold, and make the sacrifices that are needed," said panel member William P. Morelli, General Counsel at Ingram Industries Inc. in Nashville.

"Flexibility? I built this firm, I'm not going to let Gen Y dictate the terms of their employment." [Scott Greenfield](#) fired back. "Generation Y uses this term life-balance as an excuse for their incompetence."

Dan agreed, "we have a very clear written policy at our firm, work - life balance is the attorney's problem, not the firm's."

At this point I raised my hand, "If an attorney works 2,000-2,400 billable hours a year, there is not much room left for balance."

"But the attorney that works over 2,000 hours a years, is going to learn to be a pretty damn good attorney," [Dan](#) added.

And there we have it, the bottom line. Being an attorney is a tough, demanding profession and many of the partners believe that to be the type of attorney that can zealously serve the client, it requires a total sacrifice- putting the firm first.

"I just don't see how *that* can be the reward for all that hard work. You want the best and brightest- those who have worked and sacrificed to prove they are brilliant- and now their reward is a job that requires 70-80 hours a week?" I asked.

"If they don't want to work hard, they should not become lawyers," one of the panel members added. (This went on and on, back and forth, but you get the idea.)

Partners, you don't understand us. Let me tell you a little bit about our generation (both X and Y). We grew up in the suburbs. We came home from school to empty houses. You may have heard of us being referred to as the "latch-key" generation. We had two cars, and in most cases money to buy all the food and clothes we needed. We would have traded it all just to have parents that were around more. We don't want to make the same mistakes our parents made.

We are not motivated by money. At least not as much as our parents were. The currency we are most interested in is lifestyle. Some of us are brilliant and hard working, but you have to dangle the right carrot in front of us.

Adrian Dayton is an attorney licensed to practice in New York. His latest book, [Social Media for Lawyers: Twitter Edition](#) was published internationally by the ARK Group and Managing Partner Magazine in September of 2009. To get a free copy of the first chapter, go to <http://adriandayton.com> or you can follow Adrian on Twitter @adriandayton