

## News

### Starting young

Ankita Shreeram

Posted On Friday, May 27, 2011 at 03:04:09 PM

The Indian workplace scenario is beginning to mirror the west where youngsters begin their careers at the young age of 16. Initially limited to internships, youngsters now are beginning to take up jobs earlier than ever before. This brings us to the issue of the ideal age to begin one's working life.

#### The right age

Starting too young may result in an inadequate skill set as Nikul Shah, president - global HR and corporate services, Omnitech InfoSolutions Ltd. points out, "If we have to talk about the right age of working, I think it is 18 years, which is followed in most of the nations. Although, I personally feel even 18 years should be reconsidered if we look at the fact that our education system completes its term of being a graduate at the age of 21. Therefore, in order to have the right skill sets, it is essential that the right working age should be minimum 21 years. Further, we cannot ignore the fact that in countries like India, young people who are still at school work in their spare time; may be part-time in a shop or café to earn some money."

Of course, it is not only about industry requirements. India is culturally extremely different from the west and that reflects on the employment sphere as well. "There are different schools of thought and to a large extent, the societal norms and cultural expectations play a huge role in determining what the 'right' age should be. There is no right age defined to start working except for government set ups. The right skill set, knowledge and qualifications determine when someone can start working," says Ramakrishna Karanam, VP - global head - HR, Intelligroup. "At Corbus, we believe that an ideal age to start working is between of 22-23," says Niladari Sarkar, manager – talent acquisition, Corbus.

#### Implications

There are both positive and negative aspects to a younger workforce. "I don't think in India we encourage working below the age of 18 years, and that seems to be right. On the other side, we should see working as a good way for young employees to gain occupational experience. It is a positive activity that keeps young people on the right track. It can also help young kids to discover what occupation they may pursue as they grow. Moreover, working allows youth to feel the pride of earning a pay-check and helps them to be independent. The pay-check is also a teen's first dose of reality check that makes them learn how to spend that hard earned money," says Shah.

Sarkar believes that a certain level of maturity is required to handle the pressures and responsibility that come with working life. "In today's corporate world, it is imperative for an individual to have a certain level of maturity to deal with the increasing job pressures. This maturity comes with age, and if the age is pushed back further and further, the maturity, responsibility and ownership of work will not be there in a candidate. This will ultimately affect both the employers and employees objective and aspiration," he explains.

Younger employees may have ideas that conflict with the mindset of the older employees. "Organisations have to deal with extreme caution where an associate is too young; the aspirations and maturity levels need to be handled carefully. It is important hence to understand the Gen-X and Gen-Y phenomenon and sensitise managers about handling different generations," explains Karanam.

Thus, the industry consensus seems to be that while internships are acceptable at any age, a full-time job is a responsibility that a person can handle only after a certain age.