The Millenials
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Yesterday Fred Dust of IDEO gave one of the NeoCon 2004 keynote lectures, in which he delivered an insightful overview of the "next generation that will reshape our interior environments in a big way"... the Millenials.

Defined (loosely) as those who were born between 1980 and 2000, the oldest are have already entered the workplace and the youngest will be tomorrow's hottest new hires. Using IDEO's research findings, Fred created an accurate snapshot of this generation's unique work-habits, life-balance, and relation to technology. Whereas 'Gen-X' grew up with computers; the Millenials are growing up with pervasive mobile computing, which has drastically redefined their social norms. New kinds of etiquette have formed, such as 'dynamic scheduling'-- it's no longer rude to be late, as long as you are in constant communication via mobile phone or text messaging. Even when in the actual presence of others, it is not uncommon for the mobile phone to be of equal (or greater) importance. Fred saw this as a sign that this generation may be the first to see successful distance collaboration in a work context. Another observation is the 'total blur' the Millenials form between work & life. This generation is very good at multitasking and prefer to blur fun and work, and are able to tune out distractions when necessary. An example was given of an arcade that is concurrently used for doing homework-- and the students are able to segue from Trigonometry to Dance Dance Revolution (and back) seamlessly. A final trend to note is the emergence of 'evolved abilities'-- millenials have highly developed abilities in information management. Their abilities in non-linear thinking allow them to process multiple tasks at once and their comfort with technology allows them to expand their skill sets with ease.

Fred delivered an inspiring keynote that called out some important cultural phenomenon's that will fully take root in the coming years. Although the lecture was delivered in an office interiors context, the trends are quite applicable across the board from technology to culture. The Millenials are here. Resistance is futile.