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### GEN-Y: Trying to keep spirits up while looking for work

BY BRIAN WOODDELL  
Special to the Star-Telegram

A compassionate soul found a typo on my portfolio Web site the other day. A tiny misspelling—a "v" instead of an "f"—right next to my résumé. No reason to get excited.

It almost made me cry.

For a twenty-something in search of a full-time career, such an error can be devastating.

I had agonized over that site, run spell-check, asked friends to proofread. That single mistake — one letter among thousands — destroyed my self-confidence. I remembered the four résumés I had just placed in the mail. Were there mistakes?

Now I'll be even more terrified when I click "Print" or "Send" or "Submit."

Searching for a career might be the most frustrating endeavor I've ever undertaken. And it's only made worse by the process' lack of consistency.

Various so-called experts disagree on the ideal length of a résumé. How-to books call for "punchy verbiage" that's full of "action words." The other day, I spent four hours poring over typefaces and graphic elements, making sure my letterhead, résumé and business card looked cohesive.

But as of now, the only one I've impressed is myself. What few responses I do receive contain apologies, not job offers. Responses are so rare, in fact, that a recent rejection letter became the highlight of my week. At least they cared enough to respond.

Coverage of our current economic situation only adds to my frustration.

President Barack Obama said in his recent news conference that the U.S. job losses in January alone roughly equaled Maine's entire work force.

The headline on my *Star-Telegram* on Feb. 18 proclaimed in five columns of big and bold type that GM is slashing 47,000 jobs and that the automobile industry is seeking yet another loan from our already-cash-strapped federal government.

I wish somebody — a White House adviser, a newspaper editor, a producer at Channel 11 — would stop and think about what news like that does to the psyches of people my age.

My household and my friends watched the president's address with great interest, wondering whether the hope he promised in his campaign would make an appearance.

It didn't.

My generation is in debt to universities and car companies. We don't have health insurance, and our savings accounts are less than adequate to hold us over until serious employment comes. It's not because we haven't worked and saved — many of us have — we just haven't had enough time to build our rainy-day funds.

Years ago, our parents' and grandparents' generations started pejoratively calling my peers and me the "Entitlement Generation." They said we want everything — vacation days, higher salaries, company cars — handed to us because we were spoiled as children.

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Perhaps it's time to reapply that moniker.

My generation isn't the one leading the charge for taxpayer bailout money or federal restructuring plans. We aren't demanding unreasonable retirement packages from our Detroit-based employers. We're not going to jail for multibillion-dollar fraud charges, and we're not sailing home on golden parachutes.

We just want a fair shake, a chance to become upwardly mobile. We want responses to our résumé submissions and job inquiries, no matter the outcome. We're tired of being told that all our education and hard work has made us "overqualified" for certain careers.

From our lawmakers, we need the occasional dose of optimism.

It's time for Obama to stop calling this "a crisis unlike any we've ever known" and start challenging us to overcome and push through, like Americans have done for decades.

And as a citizen in Texas, I'd like to hear what our governor is planning to do to help our state stay out of financial trouble. Austin has been disturbingly quiet through this whole ordeal.

Many of us Gen-Y kids are scared — terrified — and we're losing sleep and money by the day. It'd be nice to know that someone's on our side.

**Brian Wooddell**, 24, is a theology student at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth. [bmwooddell@alumni.tcu.edu](mailto:bmwooddell@alumni.tcu.edu)



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