

30 September 2006

## Are you a NEO?

*IF YOU thought NEO was an enigma from The Matrix, you haven't come down to earth yet.*

Ross Honeywill and Verity Byth, authors of a new book to be released next week, tell us that NEOs are a significant presence in Australia. Products of the New Economic Order, NEOs are 24 per cent of the population but control 54 per cent of discretionary spending. Liberal spenders, they are the antithesis of the price-conscious Traditionalists. NEOs don't care if they are living in good times or bad, they will buy if it buoys the spirit.

They are highly talented, imaginative and capable; they love their work so much they carry it in their minds wherever they go. And yet, they dislike the confines of the workplace.

"Anyone who offers NEOs a traditional workplace runs the risk of losing valuable employees. NEOs need a workplace culture that recognises and manages talent and imagination," the authors say in *NEO Power: How the new economic order is changing the way we live, work and play*.

One way of keeping NEOs is to pay them well. This may seem like a universal truth applicable to all employees, but NEOs also need the creative and imaginative freedom. "NEOs constantly want to be put to the test. They are intellectually and emotionally free to move, so if they are challenged they'll find a new organisation, or a new team, or a new task ... They don't make a distinction between work and other activities because their brains are always engaged.

"The experience is important; they seek experience as well as achievement, but don't want achievement at the expense of experience. A common comment from NEOs about jobs they have left is, 'The money was great but I was bored out of my brain'."

The authors say Traditionalists will feel uncomfortable in an office atmosphere created with NEOs in mind: "The Traditional 50 per cent of the workforce won't want change, will wait for instructions before acting, and will act only within the corporate or role boundaries set for them."