MANAGING A MULTI-GENERATIONAL WORKFORCE

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DEFINITION OF GENERATION

- What is a Generation group?
  - Group defined by common values, attitudes, ambitions, and experiences
  - Group “programmed” at the same time by shared experiences
  - Group whose values, beliefs, and work ethics are formed by the same political, social, and economic realities
INTRODUCTION

• For the first time in history, we have **FOUR (4) generations** working side-by-side
  • What are they?
  • Do we have **FIVE (5) generations** working side-by-side?

INTRODUCTION

• We are encountering “generational diversity” in the workplace
  • Each generation tends to be shaped or influenced by its environment and experiences
  • It is important to narrow any “generation gaps” in order to work well with others

GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

• Traditionalists (born before 1945)
• Baby Boomers (1945 – 1964ish)
• Generation X (1965 – 1980ish)
• Millennials / Generation Y (1981 – 2000ish)
  • a.k.a. “Generation Me,” “Boomerang Generation”
• Generation Z (2001 – )
EXERCISE 1

• What were some of the historical and cultural factors that influenced people during the 30s & 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 2000s?
• Write down for the decades assigned to you:
  • Historical Events, Famous People, Movies, TV Shows, Music, Influences (U.S./Global)

My factors:
  • Historical – Oklahoma City Bombing, Columbine, 9/11, Iraq War, Virginia Tech, Great Recession, Obama
  • Famous People – Mark Zuckerberg, Jon Stewart, Steve Jobs, Obama, David Karp (Tumblr), Jessica Alba
  • Pop Culture – Napster, Myspace, Facebook, AOL, Will Ferrell/Amy Poehler/Tina Fey/Adam Sandler, Reality TV, Nirvana, GreenDay, Weezer, Eminem, Daft Punk, Radio Head, Rage Against the Machine, Jay Z, Drake, Kendrick Lamar, Outkast, Phish, Dave Matthews Band, Beyonce, The Roots

TRADITIONALIST

• Born before 1945
• Characteristics:
  • Loyalty
  • Respectful of rules / authority
  • Frugal
  • Reserved
  • Usually won’t speak their minds, question instructions, or abuse privileges
TRADITIONALIST

• Work Ethic
  • Conformer – work is an obligation
  • Hard working, stable, loyal
  • Avoids conflict
  • Dislikes change
  • Enjoys one-on-one communication
    • Technology is cold and impersonal, confusing
    • Feels "no news is good news"

• How to Communicate/Motivate
  • Respect their experience
  • Reward and value perseverance
  • Use expert endorsements or testimonials of those they trust
  • Promote patriotism, teamwork
  • Allow time for decisions
  • Use "top-down" chain of command approach
  • Provide detailed directions
  • Communicate face-to-face

BABY BOOMERS

• Born between 1946 – 1964ish
• Characteristics:
  • Optimism and involvement
  • Respect for power and accomplishment
  • Team orientation (holds lots of meetings)
  • Serious about work (works long hours and feels you should, too)
  • Not afraid of confrontation
  • Prefers traditional office environment

BABY BOOMERS

• Work Ethic:
  • Competitors
  • Driven
  • Workaholic
  • Work is a source of personal identity
  • Rewarded with “tangibles”
  • Live to work – career first
  • Must develop technological skills before they can progress

BABY BOOMERS

• How to Motivate/Communicate:
  • “You are valued, worthy, and needed”
  • Enjoy and need human interaction
  • Provide them with knowledge (the “big picture”)
  • Offer new ideas / proposals as a new experience
  • Provide multiple choices
  • Communication should focus on the future
  • Communicate through one-on-one or meetings
  • Seek them out as mentors
  • Use them as “sounding boards”

GENERATION X

• Born between 1965 – 1981ish
• Characteristics:
  • Independent & Resourceful
  • Accepting of Change
  • Comfortable with diversity
  • Expect a balanced lifestyle
  • Dedicated to people, ideas, and tasks
GENERATION X

• Work Ethic:
  • Not looking for longevity or lifetime employment (free agent)
  • Technology literate
  • Flexibility – work whenever, just get it done
  • Want to be developed, engaged, and appreciated
  • Challenger (a.k.a. skeptic)
  • Enjoys discretion
  • “Work hard, play hard”

GENERATION X

• How to Communicate/Motivate:
  • Cutting edge technology
  • Continuing education and development
  • Freedom to use their own resourcefulness
  • Involve them in projects of significance
  • Avoid micro-managing (offer to be a mentor)
  • No “hard sell” techniques – let them make a decision at their own pace
  • Provide a range of choice
  • Keep your promises
  • E-mail communication is expected
  • Suggest rather than order (but get to the point, no hinting)

MILLENNIALS / GENERATION Y

• Born between 1980 – 2000ish (Nation’s largest living generation)
• Characteristics:
  • E-learners
  • Used to instant communication (a.k.a. impatient)
  • Optimistic, confident in self
  • Sense of civic responsibility
  • Achiever
  • Family-centered
  • Concerned for environment
  • Most educated, most diverse, most tolerant
  • Wants balance of family, hobbies, and work
MILLENNIALS / GENERATION Y

• Work Ethic:
  • Technocrats
  • Work is a way to fill time between weekends
  • Not likely to seek out additional responsibilities
  • Difficulty understanding and accepting rules and protocols
  • “I’ll do the job you hired me to do, that’s all”
  • Goal/achievement oriented
  • Need mentorship

MILLENNIALS / GENERATION Y

• How to Communicate/Motivate:
  • Allow communication online for convenience
  • Consider using blogs, social media, text, IM-ing
  • Give PROMPT feedback on their ideas
  • Find ways to include and make them feel valued (but manage expectations)
  • Make sure YOU have researched the issue – expect that they have done so

GENERATION Z

• Born after 1995
• Emerging generation – The youngest cohort of Generation Y
• Global, well-connected, and have encountered a lot of uncertainty
• World’s first true digital natives
• Entrepreneurial spirit
GENERATIONAL STEREOTYPES

• Baby Boomers
  • Live to work
  • Can’t text / Out of sync with technology
  • Can’t tolerate change
• Generation X
  • Apathetic
  • Cynical
  • Disengaged


GENERATIONAL STEREOTYPES

• Millennials / Generation Y
  • Lazy
  • Entitled
  • Over eager
  • Technology obsessed
• Generation Z
  • Highly skeptical
  • Fact-check anything and everything
  • Short attention span
  • Technology obsessed


REMINDERS ON DEALING WITH WORKPLACE DIFFERENCES

• Don’t label or stereotype
• How do you want to be perceived?
• You’re a coworker, not a parent
• Focus on job performance
• Praise in public, punish in private

COMMON ATTRIBUTES

• Everyone is comfort seeking
• Most people resist change, but don’t like status quo either
• Everyone wants information, to be kept “in the loop”
• Everyone likes some level of control

SIMILARITIES WITH GEN X AND GEN Y

• Loyal to persons not the “employer”
  • Good Supervisors are Critical!
  • Get to know them on a personal level
  • Notice and comment on their successful efforts
• Need prompt (immediate) feedback
  • Evaluate performance constantly
  • Be wary of too much praise for Gen-X and be mindful that Gen-Y will likely have a harder time with negative evaluations

CLASH POINTS

• Agency loyalty
  • From organizational to individual
• Chain of command
  • From rigid to freedom
• Work ethic
  • From corporate to individual
• Workplace diversity
  • Diversity in the classic sense (race, religion, gender, etc.)
• Feedback and mentoring
  • Differences in communication styles
MINIMIZING FRICITION

• Eliminate the Stereotypes – do not assume that what you read applies to everyone
• Know your audience and understand the influences that shape each generation; how they think and what the expectations are
• Practice positive, constructive work habits in the workplace; work cooperatively towards a common goal
• Live up to the social contract; contribute to your fullest potential; strive for excellence
• Recognize and respect others and their individuality
• Think before you speak and be sensitive to others
• Talk about your differences and ask tactful questions about how people want to be treated

TO BRIDGE THE GAP, USE THE A-LIST

• Accept your “mutual rightness”
• Acknowledge your interdependency on each other/generation
• Appreciate what you have in common
• Assume responsibility for making your relationships better
• Adopt the “Platinum Rule”

WHAT IS THE “PLATINUM RULE”

• The “Golden Rule”:
  • Treat others the way YOU want to be treated

• The “Platinum Rule”:
  • Treat others the way THEY want to be treated
BRIDGING THE GAP WITH VOCABULARY

10 Key words to 1 Key word
10 – We have a lot more in common than I thought
9 – How can we help each other be more successful
8 – I’d like to share my ideas with you
7 – Neither of us can do it alone
6 – Please tell me what you’re feeling
5 – Let’s learn from each other
4 – What do you think?
3 – We’re both right
2 – Thank you
1 - We

HOW CAN EMPLOYEES BRIDGE THE GENERATION GAPS?

• Appreciate differences
• Appreciate what you have in common
• Accept and appreciate another’s perspective
• Take responsibility for making your relationships better
• Discuss expectations
• Inquire about immediate tasks
• Keep up with technology

DOs FOR EVERY GENERATION

• Accept that your generation type may influence your ideas and behaviors
• Give everyone the same “benefit of the doubt” that you want
• Be open and honest about your own “hot buttons”
• Focus on what really matters
• Accept the fact that you choose how to treat and deal with others
• Be flexible with your preferences
• Know that everyone wants to be treated with respect
BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAPS

- Remember that all generations want:
  - To be treated fairly
  - Work that provides personal satisfaction
  - Employers who understand personal lives are important
  - Work that is valued
  - A clear sense of purpose

QUESTIONS?