

CREATING AN ATTRACTIVE WORKPLACE FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Managers of all types of organizations need to recognize that the work force is changing. The Baby Boomers are exiting the work force and new graduates are entering the scene and demanding more than ever. The following information will arm managers with the information required to motivate and manage the new demographics in the work environment.

The Generation Classifications:

Silent Generation	61-71 years
Boomers	42-60 years
Generation X	30-41 years
Generation Y	15-29 years

Here is what young professionals are looking for:

Corporate Social Responsibility

Young professionals are increasingly looking at CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) when considering which companies and brands they might work for. Many graduates value a 'caring and responsible' employer above their own salary, so it is important for companies to be socially responsible and to promote such efforts. They also have very high expectations of employers, with fair and direct managers who are actively engaged in professional development.

- ❖ Promote a sense of community
 - Walk the talk
 - Be transparent
 - Display core organizational values
 - Invest in organizational social activities and actively participate

Fast Pace

Those entering graduate jobs are on the 'fast lane' to speed up their journey to work, school or travel; with surveys showing that those pursuing a finance career are likely to be the most impatient. Young people generally prefer a fast pace. This generation has a high expectation of self, so they aim to work faster and better than other workers. They do not like to stay too long on any one assignment; things have to move fast.

Flexible Schedule

A large number of young employees favour working through their lunch breaks in order to leave work early. Many employees that we spoke to would prefer to work through their lunch so they can finish earlier. This can be accommodated by employers. For instance, employees could adopt an alternative schedule, if approved by their managers, where they can work from home one day a week or come in between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. and leave as early or late as they want, provided their work is done.

There is also the option to work from home. For any job that lends itself to routine operations or where there is a need for a lot of solitary time to dig into a problem, it is possible to work from home as long as it does not interfere with any planned meetings

Staff from generations X and Y were raised in the era of 24/7 connectivity, wireless access, and with the ability to be able to work wherever and whenever it suits them. The idea of trading in that flexibility for a structured workplace does not sit well with them. For them, technology is the enables people to get their work done independently, without having to be in a certain place for a certain period of time.

For young professionals, expectations of the modern work environment have changed; the daily commute, the 9-to-5 workday, and the cubicle farm are in the past. Certainly, with new technology, there is less of a need for the centralization of work production in an office, so long as the work gets done.

Path for Career Development

Highly ambitious graduates in the financial sector rate career development as more important than salary. In today's job market, workers are seeking positions that will keep them continuously stimulated. Companies need to take into consideration employees' ambitions and provide training and mentoring schemes that will allow employees opportunities to develop their careers, otherwise they may seek more enticing prospects elsewhere.

This is a young group of people that is driven and very eager to advance professionally. Companies should delineate career paths for entry-level positions, she says, so these young workers do not feel as if they are stuck in a rut. Notably, secondment programs, study programs, mentoring schemes, think-tanks for problem solving, networking with contemporaries, and training and development in topics relating to personal and career development are all great options.

Ability to Provide Input

The ability of the employee to speak his or her mind freely within the organization is another key factor in employee retention. Does your organization solicit ideas and provide an environment in which people are comfortable providing feedback? If so, employees offer ideas, feel free to criticize and commit to continuous improvement. If not, they bite their tongues or find themselves constantly "in trouble" - until they leave. Young workers believe in their own self worth and value enough that they are not shy about trying to change the companies they work for.

❖ Participation

- Involve others in goal setting
- Ask for input
- Provide a big picture perspective
- Give latitude
- Be open about finances

Recognition

❖ Recognize and Acknowledge

- Stop to recognize and acknowledge every three months
- Increase public recognition
- Acknowledge good performance often
- Pay for performance
- Deal with non-performers

(Small) Perks

Bonuses and healthcare remain the most popular form reward offered by firms, yet, according to the research, the most popular benefits include:

- Working from home
- Gym membership (or on-site gym with locker room facilities)
- Flexible work schedules
- Time off given as awards
- Recognition (e.g. Staff appreciation celebration every 3 months)
- Goodies in the mini-kitchens (such as free donuts & fruit)
- Opportunity to collaborate with senior management
- Subsidized parking and bus passes

- Flexible dress code
- Low-interest home loans
- Open competition process for all jobs
- Rewards for exceptional performance tailored to individual employees (e.g. trip to Amsterdam)

A Good Challenge

Many graduates do not believe that the stress of their job is a bad thing. Half of them claim that stress yields positive rewards. Keep in mind that young staffers can multitask unlike any generation before them. This means that they can send e-mails, talk on the phone, and compose memos at the same time while enjoying themselves in the process.

Generation Y workers place a higher value on self fulfillment. Therefore, a challenging workplace with moderate stress can yield great results. Many large organizations that hire in large numbers do not give younger employees a chance to recognize their potential, since they are given insubstantial work in the beginning under the pretext that they are inexperienced – and, inevitably, they tend to lose interest with time.

- ❖ **Motivate and Empower**
 - Turn tasks into challenges
 - Promote autonomy
 - Inspire
 - Instill a sense of ownership
 - Provide context to daily responsibilities

Strive for Work/Life Balance

Employers need to be mindful not to set a precedent that workaholics are favoured more than others when it comes to promotions or pay raises; particularly when employees' health is at risk or staff have to miss significant family events such as christenings, holidays or funerals. Unlike boomers who tend to put a high priority on career, today's youngest workers are more interested in making their jobs accommodate their family and personal lives.

They want jobs with flexibility, telecommuting options and the ability to go part time or leave the workforce temporarily when children are in the picture. Work/life balance is not only for being able to spend time with a family; this demographic also wants time to pursue personal passions. Young employees fill their lives with many activities — sports leagues, social groups, classes, time spent with friends. They work hard, but they are generally not workaholics. Home, family, and friends are often their first priorities.

- ❖ **Balance Work and Family**
 - Focus on what is fair and just
 - Push for performance
 - Capitalize on particular talents
 - Be understanding and aware of their life conditions
 - Show empathy for their well-being

Benefits Education

Educate your staff on the perks of employment. When most people start a job, they do not have enough knowledge on the employee benefits. It is important for a company to provide education about such things in order for people to be able to appreciate them.

Camaraderie

For young workers, the workplace needs to be fun and employee-centered. They want to enjoy their work and their workplace, and they want to make friends with their colleagues. This means going out to lunch with

other employees, laughing and joking with staffers during work hours, and being involved in planning company events. They also value a workforce environment where they enjoy good rapport with bosses and co-workers.

Coaching & Mentoring

Young employees want to learn from you and receive your daily feedback. They want your leadership and supervision, to learn about how the company works from the source. You should understand this when you hire them, and plan to spend time teaching and coaching them. Young employees will return your investment in them with their enthusiasm.

Coaching is also one of the best methods for retaining Generation Y employees because it allows them to thrive in an environment designed to enable their success. It takes advantage of their potential by playing to their strengths while helping them understand their weaknesses. This includes building trust, garnering loyalty, and harnessing all that youthful energy with challenging but reasonable work. Give them honest feedback and gradually increase their responsibility.

To this goal-oriented generation of employees, training may be the most important aspect of workplace coaching. It may be even more important to some young employees than bonuses and stock options. Provide them with a variety of training options, including online, on-the-job and classroom learning. It is also absolutely vital that you are consistent and vigorous with feedback, whether it is constructive criticism or praise. Make sure any corrective feedback is to the point yet non-threatening. Be very honest and clear with young employees: State the specific behavior and why the behavior is wrong, allow responses, mutually establish desired goals, and decide specific ways to avoid future problems.

❖ Go from Boss to Coach

- Enable and remove roadblocks
- Lead by example
- Co-develop
- Provide ongoing real-time feedback

Dress Code

In the workplace, conflict and resentment can arise over a host of issues, even seemingly innocuous subjects such as appearance, as a generation used to casual fare such as flip-flops, tattoos and Capri pants finds more traditional attire is required at the office. This is what Generation Y – and its ultra-casual culture – is bringing to the office, where style and technology are more woven in than ever. It is neither a Generation Y dream nor a human resources nightmare but rather something in the middle, where adjustments and concessions are made by young people and their employers alike.

This shift to a more informal gadgetized and employee-centric environment is due in large part to the expectations of today's crop of college interns and recent graduates. A flexible dress code can make young professionals feel more comfortable at work and allows them to make choices about what reflects their personality and individualism.