

Managing Gen Y

by Eric Papp

Ready or not, here comes Generation Y. Generation Y in the workforce can be anyone from the ages of 15 to 28. They are the largest generation (78 million) since the baby boomers and they will reshape the workforce just like the baby boomers. Employers and managers not yet educated about this generation and are facing many problems when it comes to managing Generation Y employees. They are a generation that brings to the workforce high maintenance but what employers are also seeing they can generate a high return from these high need workers. Here are five tips for managing Generation Y employees.

Generation Y are like homing pigeons. Gen Y are **goal oriented** and move very fast. Homing pigeons have the ability to find their way home. In some cases, 1500 miles away, and can travel from speeds varying 30 to 60 mph. This generation of young employers is like that. They grew up having information available to them in a matter of minutes. They were taught to set goals and aim high by their parents and their school teachers. As a manager of Generation Y employees, you have to show them what they are working towards and **why** their position is important. It is even a good idea to have two sets of goals for them. One being value driven goals and the other measurement goals. Value driven goals show them the integrity of your company and your commitment to something greater than just making money. This goes over very big with this generation. They have grown up volunteering and are concerned with working in an honest environment. The other set of goals would be measurement goals that are tangible. They can actually see the progress being made and accomplished. A great way to provide a motivating environment is to have clearly outlined goals that both you as a manager and the employee have agreed upon. "Do this, because I said so, or do this, because we have always done it like that" is one of the most de-motivating statements. This generation wants to see the why behind the work and know that the goals being accomplished.

Work is fun. Generation Y grew up with teachers that made learning fun. This can also be contributed to the reason that this is the most educated generation. After graduating high school, 60% of men and 64% of women go to college. (Source: the millennialists American born 1977 to 1994; Bureau of the Census, educational attainment 2002) ask yourself this question. Am I creating a fun working environment? Generation Y is not alone in wanting a fun work environment, but you can see the effects of all generations, wanting a fun atmosphere to work. This generation is different in that it is not asking. It is demanding a fun environment or they will go elsewhere. We don't have to look far to see the results this provides a company. Experts tell us in the "Fish" philosophy that productivity and profitability increase when people enjoy going to work. Some ideas for creating a fun environment are a dress-up day, creating a game room for break time, or music day, where employees give a presentation on their favorite type of music, and video game tournaments. There are hundreds of ideas on how to create a fun work environment. If you're having trouble just poll your Generation Y employees.

Feedback please! How am I doing? Am I making a difference? What is the social contribution of my job? How can I get better? These are just some of the questions that are going through a Generation Y's head. Keep in mind; this is also the most coddled generation in history. Many are children of helicopter parents and have always had mom and dad believing in them.

When feedback and evaluations are done on a quarterly or yearly basis, this rings uncertainty in the minds of Generation y employees. They want to know how they are doing

good or bad. This is a knowledge-seeking generation, and they want to know how to get better. You will lose them if you give limited feedback. Let me say that again, if you are giving limited feedback, you will lose them. What happens in a Generation Y mindset is, if no one tells them how they are doing or ways to improve, they began to think that they are not accepted or doing a good job and the search is on to find a new one. Giving feedback can be as simple as stopping them in the hall, praising them in a meeting, leaving a note on their desk, or sending them an email or text message.

Balance. This generation grew up with balance and a list of priorities. Some of them were running around to soccer practice two days a week, karate the other two, followed up by scouts on Friday. They did all this while still being involved in their school activities and not to mention had good grades. They know how to take on many tasks. Many are not fond of work trumping their life. The key to managing this generation is letting them know that they can have their balance that they were accustomed to. Understand what is important to them. Maybe this means creating six shifts to work as oppose to the normal two. If your company has a no personal calls during work hours make sure that these guidelines are made known and repeated to your younger employees. Try to aim where you have clearly defined objectives that still allow them to have a personal life at work. Maybe you condense their lunch break into two. Work with them to find the balance.

Listen. There is no quicker way to loose young talented employees then not to listen to them. To them success has no age. The reason being they are seeing their friends start companies or become self employed. As a manager it is critical to **Listen to them**. Get to know them. Ask them about their music or their advice on how they would do something. To engage followers and manage people you must first know them. This generation is holding managers accountable and won't allow bad managers to keep their positions. They have been listened to their whole life and they expect that when they enter the workforce.

Generation Y brings drive, enthusiasm, and creativity, much of what is lacking in many corporations today. They have not yet fallen victim to conventional style of thought. Some of our country's greatest ideas will come from this generation and the opportunity is there for companies to learn from them.

Speaker, Author, Consultant

Eric Papp travels the country speaking to business leaders and organizations. He helps them understand Generation Y employees and customers.

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Voice Of Generation Y 1242 Kingsway Rd. Brandon, FL 33510

