



Is Your Company Effectively Managing Its Multi-Generational Workforce?

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The modern workplace may soon have employees ranging in age from 18 to 80. With fresh-faced newcomers coming into the workplace where the established middle generation dominates the decision-making, can the workplace weather the inherent differences? Each generation in the workplace brings different value judgments, stereotypes and workplace-based aspirations. These differences form the basis for potential conflict. What can management do in order to overcome these differences and create a workplace that fosters productivity and intergenerational harmony? Knowing what motivates each group is the first step in the right direction.

Pre-Boomers, born between 1925 and 1945 comprise the first and smallest group represented in the modern workplace. This techno-challenged group is normally comprised of good team players, who are also loyal and hard-working.

The Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are generally focused on teamwork and collaboration. This group is not afraid of challenges and normally exhibits a strong work ethic. They are currently the largest group in the American population.

Generation X, born between 1965 and 1976, is the next group represented in the workplace. This is a techno-savvy group who desires independence and work-life balance. This group also yearns to be viewed as leaders.

The second largest group in the American population is known as Generation Y, aka the Millennials, born 1977 to 1994. This group is techno-supreme and is generally always connected. As a rule, this group values flexibility, independence and they want their work to matter. Now that we know the groups, what can management do to encourage the groups to work together?

A successful office environment must ultimately become a melting pot where each of these generations can thrive. For both Pre-Boomers and the Baby Boomer generation, one of their greatest talents is to build consensus and effect change. This desire to be respected and praised and seen as a valuable authority in the workplace are also significantly motivating for this group.

GenXer's tend to be motivated by and value independence and the potential for advancement at work. They tend to be comfortable with diversity and tend to focus on similarities rather than the

differences among those around them. This group also tends to value stability and tends to stay at jobs to build careers.

Much has been written about the arrival of the Millennials in the modern workplace. This group prefers a friendly and congenial workplace atmosphere. They also desire a diverse workplace. Based upon their techno-savvy skill set, this generation possesses a valuable skill that prior generations do not have in such a large measure. In addition to this measurable technological advantage, Millennials are also viewed as quick learners.

Although the differences are well documented, in the end, managers that focus on how to get the best from all employees rather than focusing on differences between generations, will see the best results. By overcoming stereotypes and viewing each employee as an individual, while simultaneously recognizing generational differences, employers can create harmony in the multi-generational workplace. Teambuilding can be accomplished by using the strengths of each group to develop teams with a clear expectation of goals and strategies. Management can use different communication styles to motivate employees based on their value preferences and technological capabilities. Get ready, the multi-generational workforce is here to stay.

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