



Generation Y in the workforce

What is the Generation Y

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The definitions of the Generations are:

Generation Y born between 1979-1994

Generation X born between 1965-1978

Baby Boomers born between 1945-1964

Generation Y currently numbers 4.65 million or 21% of the workforce. By 2020 Generation Y employees will double to 42% of the workforce. Generation Y's have grown up in relative affluence with major advances in technology and multitasking has become a habit. Their attention span is less and they are more easily bored. They prefer interaction and expect respect and rewards instantly and believe menial tasks are beneath them. Generation Y expect to enjoy their jobs. A new understanding of employee values and attitudes is needed.

Job Satisfaction

There are many facets to job satisfaction and satisfaction shouldn't be confused with motivation or performance. Job satisfaction describes the extent of the pleasure one gets from the job. More employees feel that if they are able to express their preferred selves at work the more they will invest in their work role and organization. Also if they assume additional responsibilities they feel a higher enthusiasm in their role. So it is not enough that it pays well and offers future opportunities it has to keep them interested/engaged in their work.

Another aspect is the "intention to quit" Once they have made up their mind to switch jobs they don't put as much effort/energy into their job. Job switching doesn't relate to how they do their jobs it is an attitude they have..... They want a change when they have learnt all they can where they are.

The final aspect is co-worker performances. If their co-workers aren't performing to standard they will follow suit. Generation Y are more influenced by their peers than the expectations of employers.

It is also assumed that Generation Y are better at multitasking because of new technology but recent studies have shown that they are "skimming" jobs. That is they are jumping from one thing to another without completely finishing tasks.

Their interest/concentration isn't as long as previous generations that is they expect everything to be achieved instantaneously. For example with new technology they can "google" a question and have the answer quickly. They are also in constant contact with their friends and/or family and transmit information immediately.

Ten Recommendations for Managing Generation Y

1. Get it right from the start - Consider how the potential employee will fit in with the organization. Don't assume because the candidate has the skills required they can develop with the job. What is their attitude to work. You can develop the specific skills in the right person and they will feel rewarded by learning these skills and reciprocate by enhanced commitment and positive behavior. Constantly reinforce their commitment with appraisals and recognition.
2. Get them engaged. Involve Generation Y in how and why the business operates. Don't just give instructions, explain how and why this is necessary. Give your employees the opportunity to experience how it feels to be a customer in your operation so they can learn how a customer feels. Actively seek feedback from Generation Y on customer service issues and operational processes. You may not be able to action everything but at least explain why.
3. Build a company culture that is nurturing and collaborative. Generation Y places great value on relationships and trust.

Encourage and support teamwork by establishing work values and form teams.

Reward those teams with incentives.

4. Encourage opportunities for learning and growth. Generation Y thrive on learning and development. They bore easily but will remain interested if they are developing. Change them from one section to another so they can learn new skills. They see themselves as equal to older employees. They want to be challenged to stop from becoming bored.
5. Do not assume Generation Y has had the same upbringing as past generations. Maybe because of technology Generation Y aren't as adept at face to face communication skills. Role play training and etiquette is more necessary than previously thought especially with older customers. Customer dissatisfaction or supervisor interactions can put Generation Y off their job but this can be avoided if they are taught about expectations.
6. Use technology to improve communication with staff. Rather than use verbal or written messages send SMS and email the roster to staff as well as put it up in the kitchen. Putting an old computer with internet access can allow staff to use technology in their break but most phones now have internet access.
7. Revitalise your old reward/recognition programs. Get supervisors to recognize the employees
e.g. 'thanks you did really well today'
or employee to employee recognition
e.g. employee of the month and don't just put their name on a plaque
give a meal voucher or bottle of wine.
8. Be more Flexible

Cash isn't always the prime motivator for Gen Y so you may need to redesign incentives eg flexible time, vouchers or customized rewards, let the employee choose which they want.

Uniform and grooming standards can be a deterrent to Gen Y , be more flexible in hair colour maybe allow modern colours/styles, piercings and tattoos.

You have to be aware of OH&S and customer standards too.

9. Find ways for the old to learn from the new and visa versa. The Baby Boomers will mostly retire in the next decade so leadership will be passed to the new generations.

Mentoring provides the perfect opportunity for passing on knowledge and while doing this the Baby Boomers can learn more about technology and discover new methods and ideas.

10. Recognise and respect individuality. We are all individuals so the one size fits all method won't work. Stereotyping because of age can be a mistake but research does demonstrate indications of attitudinal differences in people from different generations. Nevertheless research also demonstrates that social and economic status can have an effect on attitudes regardless of generational grouping. Although Gen Y like to follow trends and be part of a technically connected social network. They value their individuality and the freedom to voice their opinion.

Bibliography: University of Queensland

