

Managing Generation Y Employees

Dozens of articles and books have been written about the new generation of employees. We know why these twenty-somethings are different from Baby Boomers and what they want out of work and life, but what do we do with this knowledge. Here are three tips for managing Generation Y employees.

1. Use 'em or lose 'em. Generation Y employees have technology knowledge that is unsurpassed. In my most recent position, the bulk of my team was under the age of 26. As a result, I rarely conducted my own research, purchased office electronics, or crafted my own Powerpoint presentations. I could, but I had an office full of individuals who could do it better and faster. In fact, I would utilize them to investigate intern applications. They would uncover more candidate information in one hour via MySpace, Facebook, and Intranet sites than I could in any interview or reference check. More importantly, these tasks fit into their strengths and lifestyle.

2. Have fun. We keep hearing about Generation Y's focus on work-life balance. Well, it's true. When discussing office incentives and team-building activities, my staff would always choose fairly inexpensive, but time-consuming, leisure activities. Lunch and games at Dave and Buster's, Movie Day at the office, early dismissal during holidays, etc. Activities that allowed us to mix fun with work. Unlike some older workers, myself included, my team had no problem returning to work refreshed after two hours of video games and skeet ball.

3. Communicate clearly and consistently. By now, even older baby boomers are used to emails, text messaging, etc. Many of us, however, are still content with the weekly, or heavy-forbid, monthly staff meeting as a way to disseminate information. Gen Ys are used to a steady stream of real-time information. What am I doing, why am I doing it, and how am I progressing? Not the hand-holding or baby sitting that some accuse Generation Y of needing, but sincere and immediate talk about their work, life, and expectations. Do you want them to hear about company developments from you next week or some obscure blogger tomorrow?