

The New Challenge in the Workplace

We have four generations working together in today's businesses. As a result, leaders must adjust their management style to fit the individual needs of employees from each generation.

The old adage of, "treat everyone the same, or treat everyone like you want to be treated," is passé. The new mantra must be, "treat everyone as they want to be treated."

The four generations are defined as follows:

- Silent Generation those born between 1925-1945
- Baby Boomers born between 1946-1964
- Generation X 1965-1981
- Millennials 1982-2000

Each generation has unique wants and needs, so managers need to adapt their leadership style accordingly.

It's a leader's responsibility to know how to motivate each generation. The key is to understand the cultural work ethics and attitudes inherent in each generation.

The Silent Generation places duty before pleasure and is most apt to commit a lifetime of employment to a single company. They were taught to work at a job even if they hated it because the most important factor to them was to provide for their families.

The Boomers were the inventors of the term "Workaholic." They placed their careers ahead of their families so they could earn more and make the lives of their children better than what they experienced growing up. It is hard for Boomers to understand why others won't put work ahead of everything else in their lives.

Generation X'ers have a tendency to be independent and skeptical. They have adopted these traits because they have seen their Boomer parents work their butts off for the good of the company only to get downsized as their reward for years of dedication.

The Millennials value positions where they can advance rapidly based on their skills not on seniority. Also of importance is that the work must be interesting and they expect to be trained on a regular basis which will enable them to advance.

So given that everyone is driven by different goals you need to utilize various strategies to maximize each person's potential. This is a real challenge because leaders have a tendency to treat people the way they want to be treated.

An example is if the Boss is a Baby Boomer "workaholic" it is very difficult for them to understand why a Millennial would rather go to a concert than work overtime to complete a project. It is just as difficult for a Boomer to try to comprehend why a Gen X'er wakes up everyday thinking, "this might be my last day at work."

So what are some strategies to keep everyone happy? The Silent Generation wants to understand what is required of them, receive fair pay and maintain the status quo. Change is the Silent Generations' enemy. The Boomers want to be given clear and specific goals then get out of their way while they accomplish them. The Gen X'ers will perform based on what you do rather than what you say. You can't expect them to do more than you are willing to do. Leading by example is the best strategy for managing an X'er. Millennials have their own unique needs. They need to be praised daily and recognition is very important, which isn't surprising given they are the first generation to receive trophies for "participation" not winning.

It is going to get more and more challenging to attract and retain good employees regardless of which generation they represent. Understanding your employees' core needs is key to building an effective staff.

Courtesy: ***HBMA***