

Membership Matters

Seven Ways to Engage Young Professionals

by Misti Burmeister

Last year was a milestone for baby boomers, as they began to turn 60 and move toward retirement. The organizations that employ this generation—the largest generation in history—are beginning to realize the importance of “knowledge transfer” or “succession planning,” and are beginning to ask, “How do we recruit and retain the next generation of leaders?”

The answer lies in the approach to understanding, motivating, and mentoring this generation that grew up with/in an environment of instant gratification and a lack of parental guidance. Recognizing these differences, and the way they view the world is critical to meeting them where they are and developing them into the next generation of leaders.

I hear frustration from organizational leaders that the younger generation has an “entitlement mentality,” they lack loyalty, and don’t want to pay their dues. Generally, they do have different values which create those perceptions. Organizations and leaders can respond in a number of ways: they can churn these employees until they find some with the “proper” attitude; they can hire them and try to mold them into the corporate structure; or they can avoid hiring them.

The most successful companies will be those who can attract young professionals, create an environment in which they can thrive, and learn to shape their differences into assets for



the company. Just as successful companies have learned to respond to market threats and opportunities, they too will find the opportunity provided by the perspective, attitudes, and skills of the new generation.

The following tips will help foster a greater understanding of Generation X and Y employees; what they may be looking for, ways to gain their commitment and loyalty, and how to tap into their uniqueness.

1. Mentorship

As an organization leading this generation, you must make a commitment to creating effective mentoring programs. The younger generation is impatient, raised in a fast-paced world dominated by technology and instant gratification—they need guidance.

While the younger generation is screaming for balance in their lives, they are also craving challenging work. They want the challenge and they need the guidance.

2. Coaching—Communicate and Connect

Separate and distinct from mentorship, coaching goes to a much deeper level. While mentoring is about showing the way, sharing experiences and transferring knowledge, coaching is about helping them get to know what they want, who they are and what experiences might serve their needs best.

Providing feedback and support to this generation is essential—they want to grow—AND—they want to know what they can do to contribute to their company and their community.

3. Provide Training and Development

Much like the baby boomers, young professionals love to learn. In fact, many experts label this group as the most education-oriented generation in history. If we do not provide training and development to this gen-

Misti Burmeister, president and CEO of Inspirion, is a life coach and consultant to major corporations and companies on generational issues in the workplace. She can be reached at mburmeister@inspirioninc.com.

eration, they will quickly lose interest and become disengaged in their work.

4. Design a Plan

With both parents working, this generation was raised by institutions and the media. Now they are in the workforce, which requires them to know how to manage their time, set goals for their future, and manage their career. They do not know how to do this.

Help them to create a plan for their future will help them to be present and motivated in their current role. Without a plan they will not understand why it might be good to stay a few extra hours to complete an assignment—they need to see and be excited about the bigger picture.

5. Be Flexible—Balance

Encourage their values. The younger generation has seen what

working 80 hours a week can do to their health and their families. They desire a workplace and a workload that will allow them to have the flexibility to balance the many different components of their lives, thus an 8 to 5 work day may not work for all employees.

Truth be told, some people do their best work at midnight so why not let people work during the times they are at their best? Set expectations and goals for each project and meeting and let them figure out the rest. After all, getting the work done well is the key outcome.

6. Opportunities to Give Back—Volunteer

This generation has an intense desire to make a difference in the world. Allow them to take paid time away once or twice a month for community service. It will increase their loyalty and provide a positive outlook the community will have on your company!

7. Responsibility

This generation seeks freedom and desires responsibility; they want to be a part of the decision making process. Assign a project, set a deadline, be available for questions/support and then let them figure out how to get it done on time. If they can't manage to get their work in on time, you might ask how you can help them reach their deadlines. 🏢

Below are some messages to motivate our youngest talent (Zemke, 2000):

- You'll work with other bright, creative people
- You and your coworkers can help turn this company around
- You can be a hero here
- Do it your way
- We've got the newest hardware and software
- There aren't a lot of rules here
- We're not very corporate



DRITHERM®

Underground Pipe Insulation Corrosion Protection

- Over 300 miles of Piping Protection Since 1967
- Closed Cell - 100% Hydrophobic Product
- Creates Dry, Stable, System Environment
- Ideal for New Piping Systems/Repairs/Tanks
- Engineered Design for System Reliability

 **DRITHERM
INTERNATIONAL INC.**

339 Changebridge Rd. - Suite 1B • Pine Brook, NJ 07058
Phone: (973) 808-2255 • (800) 343-4188
www.dritherm.com