

## **GEN Y - THE “RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW” GENERATION**

They are your children or your grandchildren - those are born between 1980 and 2000 according to R. Zemke. They are referred to as Gen Y or sometimes, Millennials, the iGeneration, Generation@ or even Net Generation. You love them, even when they do foolish things. Remember you were young once and some of your choices could possibly have been better.

This is the largest group of educated and most connected generation in history. In fact, by 2025, it is expected this group will become 75 per cent of the global work force. Add to this the fact that more and more of these young people are moving into management positions and you need to understand more about how to work with them.

### **CHALLENGES**

The latest statistics by Stats Canada indicate Gen Y's represent approximately 36% of Canada's labour force with almost 7 million individuals between the ages of 15 and 34. Yet, when employers call for recruitment they often say, “Don't send us anyone young!” When the reasons are explored you will likely hear things like:

- They don't show up
- They're prima donnas
- They're lazy
- They want too much money
- They want to start at the top

Are these things true of Gen Y? Yes! And they are also true of some of the individuals in

other cohorts! These challenges are not just related to one age group. Recruiters and hiring employers find these challenges right across the board in the Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y's.

### **MAKE LIFE EASIER**

Let's look at how we can work best with the Gen Y cohort. These are individuals who like:

- Flex time
- Flexible working conditions
- Social connections/functions
- Type of culture (open door, closed door, casual, formal etc.)
- Holidays

The Gen Y group has grown up following their OWN passions – not those imposed by society or someone else. Thus, as an employer it is important you understand what the passion is for this young person working for you! If you understand it, then you know how to connect your organizational objectives to their passion – this is the key! Actually it is the key to working with anyone in your organization, it is just more critical for the Gen Y's.

The best way to find out anyone's passion is to ask – simply say, “What would you do for free because you love it so much – finding this out puts you way ahead of most employers.

One of the critical questions to ask a Gen Y employee (actually any employee) is “what is most important to them in the workplace.” Then, do your best to provide an answer that fits their needs. Some Gen Y might say “time

off when I need it” while another may say “I wanna bring my dog to work.” Listen carefully and decide what you can accept. Always remembering what you do for one makes it fair game for another.

Once you know their passion you can help them, help you find meaningful tasks for them. This is a group who wants to know what you expect and then wants to be left alone to meet those expectations – rarely do you see anyone, and especially this generation, wanting someone hovering over their shoulder as they carry out their assignments.

In order to help them you must be very specific – this is not a group who easily picks things up by osmosis. You need to lay out what is:

- The expected dress code
- The expected hours of work – if there is a start time and a finish time tell them
- The way things are done – and explain why as they will question why something is done in a certain way when they may have a better way
- Flexibility and where it can be incorporated (and cannot be incorporated) into daily work

Remember, this is the first generation who has grown up with the internet since they were babies – they’ve got it. Those of us who are older have adapted to the use of the internet, I phones, etc., while the Gen Y individuals have used it since they began to walk and speak. Provide them with the tools they need – whatever that might be. Once again, ask them what they need!

This generation, like all generations needs training – the challenge is that it is sometimes things you think they should already know.

Provide Gen Y with training in:

- Time Management
- Communication – as in email, face-to-face
- Meeting Etiquette
- Presentation Skills

This is a generation who wants, no, demands feedback – they will come to you on a regular basis asking how they are doing. For anyone from the Traditionalist or the Baby Boomer generation it just feels weird! Yet, it is a must if you want to have Gen Y’s who are happy with their work place. Each Gen Y wants to see where they need to grow and what the path will be to get the growth and then where it will land them.

Possibly the biggest area employers leave out with Gen Y is the big picture – the vision of their company or department. Gen Y’s have so much knowledge and they can provide a great amount of insight when they know where the organization is headed. All too often though, employers and managers hold this information close to their vest. And that, dear reader drives Gen Y’s ballistic.

Remember, they are self-assured, yes, sometimes to the point of it being a fault. However, with their self-assuredness and their non-conformity they are keen to help you make a difference – in your organization as well as in society as a whole.

Gen Ys are an important part of the future of every company. Disregard them at your peril. As a larger cohort than Gen X, you need

these people to keep business moving forward as the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers contemplate retirement. Show them their career path within your organization and stick to your plan and you just may have someone who will stay with you for years.

What are you prepared to do?

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