Understanding Generation Y – The Key to Leading a Workforce of the Future

While leading today’s multi-generational workforces, many business leaders recognize two things: First, the organization needs to develop worker strategies taking into account the differences among generations, and second – older generations are constantly losing their stereotypes and gravitating towards adoption of characteristics of generation Y. This happens because individuals like comfort zones (particular to stereotypical generations) and because individuals also adapt continuously to remain relevant (conforming to generation Y characteristics).

The longer an individual lives and works in a millennial environment, the greater accumulation of millennial characteristics occur in the person and attitudes. So, to lay the basis of a highly productive workforce, business leaders and strategists need to understand the characteristics of millennials or Generation Y and rather than treating millennial traits as problems, they need to recognize such traits as assets. This article takes a look at common millennial traits that are assets to organizations.

Privileged and Sheltered Children

Almost all research have found millennials to have been a sheltered group from birth – much more sheltered and privileged than earlier generations. This is a part of reality and needs to be taken into consideration while devising strategies for today’s workplaces and employee management.

Generation Y has been continually praised by their parents during their formative years and reminded that they are special. Few people from earlier generations can claim to have received recognition for participating, or just showing up at school sports events, but millennials can.

Therefore millennials have a constant need to receive feedback. And they also recognize providing feedback as a constant and important duty. Rather than being problems, if you look at it in the right manner, these are huge assets for organizational workflow.

In employee management strategies, it needs to be understood that when a millennial employee does not receive constant feedback on work done, he/she can often interpret it as an indication of having done something wrong.

Used to Working in Teams

Millennials grew up working in teams. The education processes changed a lot during the lifetimes of older generations and school assignments were often done collaboratively. Compared to this, earlier generations developed the habit of working and delivering individually during their formative years. This is an asset of millennials as today’s modern workplaces thrive and survive on teamwork.

Used to Being Constantly Busy

Employee strategies need to take into account the fact that millennials are used to having busy schedules right from their formative years. They develop excellent multitasking skills, which are assets, but they are accustomed to having little free time – meaning they quickly get bored or lose interest if they are not kept busy with challenges. When working with millennials, work schedules and work strategies need to take this into account to prevent vacillation. It is a challenge of the manager in supervision of millennials to keep supplying workplace challenges without overloading a millennial or affecting his/her self-esteem in the process.

Millennials Are More Concerned with Work-Life Balance

Managers and supervisors are often dismayed when they find that millennials, despite being extreme hard workers when it comes to attaining target objectives, are consistently ready to place personal obligations over work responsibilities. This happens to some extent due to them being more conscious of work-life balance, but also because their internal clocks do not match that of older generations. Millennials are used to working in a 24/7 virtual world with unlimited access to information. Millennials are more oriented to delivering work against deadlines than maintaining scheduled work hours. They are happy as long as the work gets done before deadlines, rather than working against scheduled hours of a day.
Geeky, Techy, Ready to Embrace New Technology Every Day

Millennials are the most tech savvy generation as they have grown up with sophisticated technology. There is a significant difference between how older generations and millennials view technology – something that workplace managers and employers need to take into account: while older workers are used to viewing technology as a tool to do a task, for millennials technology is a way of life and part of their identities.

Expectation of Instant Solutions

As we discussed earlier, millennials are dismayed by lack of feedback, and this issue extends also to instant feedback. The technology-filled world in which millennials grew up provided the Internet, text messaging, cell phones, microwave and other instant solutions from their inception. They are used to instant solutions and responses. This is a major trend observed by human resources departments and recruiting departments which have embraced technology like instant e-mail acknowledgements and call backs within 24 hours, and decisions within days to tackle the millennial workforce.

Always Visualize Themselves as Customers

Millennials have grown up in a customer-centric environment, and they view the world as such. They come in with the expectation that organization leaders are automatically interested in their ideas and what they have to say on a matter. They are buzzing with ideas and often feel dismayed, and dejected when they sense that no one is listening to them. Workforce managers have to cater to this need of millennials and put into place employee suggestion systems and systems to offer ideas as also feedback.

High Desire to Do Meaningful Work

Even when millennials are saddled with huge student loan debts, they are attracted more to mission-driven organizations and organizations that exhibit high degrees of corporate social responsibility. This is entirely in line with the modern work environment, but to woo and keep millennials on the workforces, strategists need to take this factor into account.

In this article we have not delved into workplace characteristics of millennials, but into their general traits that can help human resources to devise better policies looking towards a workplace for the future. We have discussed the general traits, because these traits are regularly being picked up by individuals belonging to older generations as long as they continue to live and earn in the modern workplace.

Reference: