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Tips for Effective Human Resource Management

Expert Q &A: Managing Generational Diversity in the Workforce

Posted by mgwhite / Guest Post by Sherri Elliott-Yearly, Gen InsYght



Sherri Elliot-Yearly

What challenges do today's HR practitioners face regarding generational diversity in the workplace?

Elliott-Yearly: Each generation's values are different so HR has to become more flexible in how they attract, motivate and retain each distinct generation. For instance, Millennials (age 29 and under) do not understand the word "No". They grew up with parents circling around them, scheduling their play dates and doing their homework, so the first time their Traditionalist (age 66-88) boss tells them they cannot have that new iMac computer, they feel hurt and want to share it with all their friends... so they text each other and send Facebook Wall comments and the employer loses valuable productivity.

What suggestions do you have for facilitating effective communication among the generations?

Elliott-Yearly: It is really important that the C Suite understands and values that people are their greatest asset and if they want to be the "Workplace of Tomorrow" they must find out what motivates and engages each of the four generations. For example, Millennials care about social and environmental responsibility, so they should be recruited via web sites and offered community days off once hired. Baby Boomers feel valued when they receive accolades for a job well done, so give them the trophy and trip if they meet their numbers or allow these "Knowledge Workers" the extra vacation they need to stop burning the midnight oil. And, while you're at it, take their "Crackberry" away from them. Gen Xers are known as the sandwich generation and they enjoy the flexible work schedule and ability to telecommute. They can job share and still add value to you and your customers. Office space is costly and it's time to get rid of the old mentality of "we need butts in seats" to be productive!

What do you see as best practices for effectively managing generational diversity?

Elliott-Yearly: Walk the Talk as the leadership and C level group. Gather a committee of various generations and bring up the issues that have been brought to HR for years – things like the Dress Code

Policy and whether employees can wear jeans. Is it time to revise or refresh the policy? How about the annual Christmas Party? Why not ask employees if they want the company to spend \$20K or more on a party they do not want to go to and would prefer to save the money on the dress, tux, shoes, cab, hotel and babysitter. Maybe they'd prefer a new camera or laptop or would like to give money to the local food bank to help the homeless.

Also, allow employees to decide how they want to receive their training. Set up Career Development Accounts. Give each employee say \$500 and allow them to decide if they prefer classroom style training, webinars etc. Large training departments are no longer necessary. Let your employees decide how and when they would like to receive training and everyone benefits.

About Sherri Elliott-Yearly

Sherri is the Founder of Gen InsYght, the CEO of Optimance Workforce Strategies, and the author of Ties to Tattoos. She's one of the few multi-generational experts in the U.S. who's also a full-time HR consultant, giving her real-world exposure to the challenges all four generations are faced with in the workplace. Her client's include La Quinta Hotels, Minyard Foods and The Chickasaw Nation, among many others. For more information, contact Sherri at 214.802.2345 [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting 214.802.2345 end_of_the_skype_highlighting](tel:214.802.2345) or at sherri@geninsght.com. Or, visit her web sites: www.geninsyght.com, www.optimancestrategies.com, www.sherrielliott-yearly.com and www.tiestotattoos.com.