



LISTEN UP, GEN-Y

A YOUNG MILLENNIAL ON LEARNING FROM OTHERS



By TARCAYANI PREBAGARAN
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

AS individuals from Gen-Y, we are masters in the art of multitasking and have our own way of doing things. Sometimes, this can be a problem especially at the workplace where our colleagues or bosses may find us rude or disengaged.

Some of us prefer working with our headphones on and our bosses, especially if they are older, may find us looking a little distracted.

Quite often, we are also perceived by the older generation as a cluster who are more demanding, in terms of expecting flexible work schedules, benefits and desiring immediate gratifications. We are also deemed as having self-centred work ethics.

Of course these characteristics may apply to some of the young people out there but to generalise all young people is certainly a false notion.

There are indeed many young people who are eager to learn, grow and create an impact at their respective workplaces.

At work places today, there are four distinct generations, namely the veterans, the Baby Boomers, the Gen-X and the Gen-Y who are working together under one roof.

These four generations are inherently different in terms of the characteristics and the values that they uphold, motivation as well as aspirations and expectations at the work place.

Generational differences may be a serious problem especially at work places where this may divide the company and affect an individual's work ethics and productivity.

Before working on solutions on how to ease the conflict between generations, it is important to note why these conflicts arise. Essentially, these four generations are fundamentally different people.

For example, the younger genera-

tion thrive in a participative environment, expect immediate feedback, strive to do meaningful work and enjoy work-life balance.

On the contrary, older generations prefer formal engagement with more command and control.

For younger employees, here are some ways to improve our relationship with older colleagues:

1 VALUE AND RESPECT THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES

Older individuals obviously have been around for longer and they have seen and done much more. As the famous saying goes, experience is the best teacher. Newcomers can take many cues from older colleagues and learn from their experiences.

One of the best ways to progress at work is by having a mentor. Having an older and experienced mentor will be beneficial for the young generation as a wealth of knowledge and experience can be derived from them. Ask questions and really listen to them.

As both Baby Boomers and Gen-Y value relationships, a mentor-mentee relationship will create a family-like environment with the Boomers capitalising on their experiences and Gen-Y learning and getting feedback from a trusted source.

2 LISTEN, LEARN AND GROW

The best way for young people to move forward at work place is to listen and understand how the organisation operates.

Don't try to be the person who knows it all but rather learn how you can contribute to the organisation.

Adapt to different ways of doing things. If there is something that is bothering you, try listening and understanding things from your boss' or colleagues' point of view before dismissing the idea completely.

For example, if it involves using headphones while working, come to a

mutual agreement where you will not use headphones in some situations to adhere to professional etiquette.

3 EARN THEIR TRUST

The best way to bridge the gap between you and your boss or older colleague is to earn their trust by performing extremely well at tasks given to you. Show them what you can offer to the table without being arrogant about it.

Stereotypes cannot be avoided, but you can beat stereotypes by proving that you're different and worthy of trust.

Besides that, you can also earn their trust by admitting that you don't know everything but you are willing and prepared to learn.

Younger people are often perceived as confident. While that's all fair and good, sometimes, the power of admitting that you don't know something and asking for guidance shows integrity.

Here are some ways older generations can better engage with younger employees:

1 UNDERSTAND THEM

Understand what motivates and inspires young colleagues and act accordingly.

For older generations, it could be recognition in terms of job title and monetary rewards whilst for the younger generation, it could be more training opportunities or flexible working hours.

Gen-Y prefers using electronic means to communicate rather than face-to-face meetings. Understand that this generation is more technologically-savvy.

As young people get bored easily and are comfortable with change, consistently challenge them with new, unconventional tasks to stretch their capabilities and skill sets.

Besides that, Gen-Y values continuous feedback, and managers should

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provide them with an avenue to obtain feedback. Young people also crave to be appreciated and they need to be constantly encouraged.

This could be as simple as a pat on their backs to acknowledging that they are on the right track.

2 INSTIL A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

For young people to perform to their fullest potential, make them feel like they belong and they are part of the company. Empower them with a sense of responsibility.

When they believe that the work they are doing matters and they are valuable, they will naturally perform better with a stronger work ethic and a deep-seeded loyalty towards the company.

Older employees may have an added advantage in terms of years of experience.

However, younger employees may have a thing or two to teach when it comes to the digital world such as

technology and social media skills. Older employees can engage them to ask for assistance in this sense.

While instilling a sense of responsibility in them, do trust them with tasks and give them the freedom and independence to work.

Be sure to not micromanage them but rather empower them.

3 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM

Try creating a bonding relationship with the younger employees so they will feel comfortable in engaging with you for assistance and direction at workplace.

This can be done by being involved in social events to bridge the gap, so communication is not solely during work hours.

To further build relationships with them, demonstrate your sincere interest in their professional growth and success.

Bridging the gap with younger employees can be better done when they genuinely trust you.

Younger employees will feel much appreciated when they know and believe that their presence is felt in the company.

This can be done when senior employees simply show them that they care and encourage a more personal relationship between employer and employee.

All in all, different generations working together can be a great way to cultivate innovative solutions at workplace.

Respect is the key to effectively bridging the gap and creating a more harmonious work environment.

When there is a conflict due to generational gap in a company, you might win the battle but your company will lose the war.

The only way forward is to build a solid bridge that requires both sides to meet each other halfway without too much of a sacrifice on either side.