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Managing Millennials

Managing a diverse group of employees can pose an interesting challenge for companies. Not only are there individual personalities and work styles to take into consideration, but also sweeping generational trends that affect how different groups work and what motivates them to succeed. We've all heard about different generations co-existing in the workplace, but how do millennials fit into this picture? What strengths and weaknesses do they bring to an organization, and how do you manage them?

Millennials are a new breed of worker emerging in an ever-changing world. They are well-educated, achievement-oriented and thrive in team environments. They also require flexible hours, constant feedback and praise for their accomplishments. Some employers complain about their sense of entitlement and their desire to better themselves over remaining loyal to a company. Others admire their eagerness to contribute and their ability to utilize technology. Whether you feel their expectations are too high or you see them as a valuable asset, it is necessary to decide how to manage them and bring out their best attributes. As with any other generation, changes need to be made in order to adapt to their work style. You may question the need to alter your management techniques to accommodate the new kids on the block; however with a new group of employees comes changes in technology, economic trends and ideology. You need to work with the resources you have to keep your business competitive.

First and foremost, you must analyze your management style. Let's say you are gearing up to write an important document. You probably wouldn't use a typewriter much less a pencil and paper. Along the same lines, it would be unproductive to use management techniques that no longer function in today's world. Maintain only the practices that are effective in your current environment. Build on what has worked in the past by adding innovative methods to support the new workforce. As is true for children learning what they should and shouldn't do, those who learn from other's mistakes are better off in the long run. Use history to your advantage and adopt a management style you are comfortable with.

Managing millennials involves compromise on the part of new workers as well as managers. Both sides need to make accommodations and understand their respective roles within the work environment. New employees can't set down demands and expect to immediately reap the benefits that experienced workers have taken the time to earn. Likewise, managers can't disregard the strengths of millennials or their eagerness to be productive members of the organization. Training, mentoring, and coaching are the buzzwords associated with acclimating new employees. Millennials have a lot of potential, but in many cases lack on-the-job experience. Mentors are able to offer guidance and fill in the gaps by sharing what they've learned as well as how to handle different situations. By clearly outlining expectations and coaching the younger members of your team, your objectives will be reached as millennials ease into their positions.

phone: 920-432-7444
920-738-7055

2611 Libal Street, Green Bay, WI 54301
54 Park Place, Suite 200, Appleton, WI 54914

fax: 920-436-2966
920-738-1842

www.thehsgroup.com

Keep in mind that millennials typically respond better to coaching than direct criticism. Holding multiple jobs in the span of a few years is becoming more acceptable, and younger workers are apt to look for a new job if they are unsatisfied or feel disrespected. They aspire to having a career with meaning, not just holding down a job to pay the bills. There is always an opportunity to do something else, and Millennials aren't afraid to explore what that "something else" may be. As a manager, you need to balance what is best for your organization with the needs of your employees.

Within each generation there is a wide range of traits and work styles, and it's important to take that into consideration when creating your management approach. Although the aforementioned qualities can be seen in many young workers, not all millennials exhibit the same tendencies. For example, many acknowledge the need to start at the bottom and work their way up. Paying dues is not about doing grunt work that no one else wants to do. It's about immersing oneself in the company culture and learning about the organization from the ground up. Employees need a solid foundation if they want to move up the ranks and have the ability to lead in the future. That being said, it is crucial to create an environment that offers feedback and respect. Millennials are the future leaders of the company, and cultivating their strengths directly affects the success of the organization.

Managing millennials among other generations can be quite an undertaking; however Generation Y offers many positive attributes. They want to be challenged and are eager to be productive. The corporate world is already headed toward a highly-technological, connected and fast-paced environment. Millennials are well-suited for this type of atmosphere and possess the qualities that will allow them to succeed. Engage these young workers and develop their talents and strengths, and your organization will continue to grow well into the future.