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Managing in the Multigenerational Workplace

a MESSAGE from SYLVIA

The Manager's Coach

A number of years ago I was sitting in a bi-weekly team meeting with my staff. At one point we began planning a small celebration for a student intern whose contributions had exceeded our expectations. People were tossing around ideas, and I remember suggesting a cake. Suddenly, my newest staffer in her late twenties looked up at me and said, “Maybe this gal doesn’t like cake.” Her comment, surprising me, made me think. Maybe the intern really wouldn’t appreciate cake. Associating cake with celebrations, I hadn’t considered that. And if she wouldn’t want cake, then what would she like?

What does this little story have to do with generational differences? I think it illustrates that people in various age groups often view things differently. What Baby Boomers assume or take for granted, Millennials may reject. What Generation Xers accept as obvious, Traditionals may struggle to see. What Baby Boomers do naturally, Gen Xers may question. On and on this goes....Why? Each generation approaches life and work through a lens shaped by global/ national events, upbringing, and experiences. Each generation forms values based upon the collective impact of these things. One set is not necessarily better than another. But it’s our reality.

Currently, we must learn to deal with the differences among four generations. Keep in mind that the Homelanders, born after 9/11/2001, are growing up now—soon to present more challenges to the rest of us. In my feature article below I give you key information that you can use to reduce your frustration, improve communication, and actually enhance productivity in the midst of all of the diversity. With some knowledge, common sense, and a desire to succeed, YOU can find a way to work it out.

Sylvia

FEATURE ARTICLE

Use these generation descriptors in deliberate ways and observe positive changes in relationships, attitudes, morale, and quality of work. Seriously. YOU have the power to initiate change that can serve everyone.

TRADITIONALS (born 1927-1945)

- Strong work ethic
- Loyal
- Disciplined
- Structure focused
- Committed, sense of duty
- Conformists, conservative
- Patient
- Persistent
- Desire respect for their knowledge and insights

BABY BOOMERS (born 1946-1964)

- Strong work ethic
- Achievement oriented
- Optimistic
- Self important
- Individual growth focused
- Pleasers
- Desire to make a difference
- Need their opinions and contributions valued

GENERATION X (1964-1980)

- Independent, autonomous, resist rules
- Results focused
- Competent
- Technology savvy
- Creative
- Informal
- Survivor mentality; focus on short term
- Desire feedback
- Desire flexibility, interested in work/life balance

MILLENNIALS previously called Generation Y (1981-2000)

- Multi-taskers
- Technology savvy
- Committed to organizational mission
- Collaborative, team focused
- Big picture focused
- Open minded
- Optimistic
- Achievers
- Global awareness
- Givers to community
- High expectations
- Desire transparency
- Desire flexibility, interested in work/life balance
- Desire to advance career quickly

Check out the exercise which follows next and the tip after that for other ways to concretely apply these descriptors to actual practice in your workplace.

RESOURCES

Applying Generation Knowledge: An Exercise

If you supervise employees, you may want to try this brief exercise to

ASSESS your abilities related to motivating and inspiring a staff composed of individuals of all four generations. On a scale of one to five, with five representing the highest possible score, determine how you would rate yourself on each of the following:

- _____ I offer flexible work hours where possible and appropriate.
- _____ I proactively and regularly seek staff input on projects, events, processes, and procedures.
- _____ I go out of my way to show people how their behaviors, actions, and contributions impact the entire organization.
- _____ I recognize excellent work with handwritten notes, emails, phone calls, gift cards, and/or special certificates.
- _____ I provide many opportunities for staff to function in teams or on committees.
- _____ I permit reasonable, moderate use of cell phones, text messages, and social networks where appropriate.
- _____ I frequently invite employees to brainstorm creative ideas.
- _____ I give people a variety of opportunities to make contributions that have both short term and long term value.
- _____ I provide very clear direction, guidance, and feedback.
- _____ I give people more responsibility as they demonstrate their readiness and desire for it.

Now, add up your assigned points. There are two ways to use this information. First, if your total is 40 or better, you are indeed providing the flexibility needed for a multigenerational workplace. If your total score is less than 24, you should look at some of these managerial options today. At best, it may be you are creating more stress than necessary due to generational differences. At worst, you may be creating an environment that is less productive and less effective than desired if you have staff in different generational categories.

Second, divide the total by 10 to get the average score you assigned. Go back and note the reasons you assigned a value less than this average and then identify actions you could take to remedy this situation.

TIP

You can always ask.

If you are unsure about how you could best communicate with someone of a different generation from your own, simply ask that person what you could be doing that you are not. Create a safe, friendly, open environment for this conversation. Show that you are genuinely interested in learning, and that you care about the quality of the communication between the two of you. You can use this tip with virtually anybody. Feel free to initiate such a conversation with direct reports, peers, bosses, Board members, customers/clients, or other stakeholders. Just ask.

Where in the World is SYLVIA?

On November 8, 2011 Sylvia presented a seminar entitled, “7 Steps Toward a More Balanced Life for Busy Women”, to staff and community persons affiliated with Senior Commons at Powder Mill in York.

Sylvia presents at Powder Mill, November 8, 2011



In just a few weeks, it will be Thanksgiving followed by the winter holidays.

Sylvia is looking forward to wishing you Happy Holidays and Happy New Year as she makes plans to attend many social and networking events over the next several weeks. Be sure to say hello if you see her!



A Past Thanksgiving at Hotel Hershey Circular Dining Room

Offers and Opportunities

***** AVAILABLE IN JANUARY, 2012 *****

Launching Leaders With Sylvia: 5 Essentials for First Time Managers

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This Ezine is 1) to provide readers with valuable FREE content which contributes to both personal and professional growth and 2) to invite them to take next steps toward working directly with Sylvia.

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About SYLVIA

Sylvia Hepler, Owner and President of Launching Lives, is an executive coach based in South Central PA. Her mission is to support corporate and nonprofit executives and business owners as they solve problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives. Her background includes: nonprofit executive management/leadership, public speaking, business and freelance writing, teaching, and retail sales.

A [certified executive coach](#) through The Rescue Institute in Colorado and a participant in extensive continuing education, Sylvia is a platinum level expert author on ezinearticles.com. She has produced an audio CD entitled, “Making Change”, [three special reports](#) for persons in management positions, and an e-book entitled, No Surprises: A Business Guide for Starting Your Coaching Practice.

More information is available at her [Launching Lives Website](#)

[Click to contact Sylvia by Email](#)

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Launching Lives SERVICES

Launching Lives, LLC is an executive coaching company located in South Central PA. Its mission is to support managers and executives as they solve

their most pressing problems, develop leadership skills, and increase balance in their lives utilizing a holistic approach. Launching Lives, LLC focuses on BUILDING PEOPLE through individual, private coaching, group coaching, specialized products, seminars and workshops, and retreats. Most coaching takes place by phone.

Often people don't really know HOW they might benefit from coaching. Quite simply, ask yourself these questions: "What can't I seem to resolve on my own? What is keeping me awake at night? What am I missing when I look at a certain situation? How can I get to the next professional level? How can I learn certain skills quickly? How can I narrow my professional gaps? How can I motivate my staff? How can I communicate more effectively so I serve myself and others better? How can I reduce my work-related frustration? How can I develop a viable plan of action for myself and/or my organization? How can I obtain greater job satisfaction? Coaching can be the SOLUTION to any of these issues.

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