

# GENERATIONS X and Y:

## MOTIVATING AND SUPERVISING THEM at WORK

If you are a Baby Boomer boss, face the fact that you cannot motivate and supervise Generation X and Y employees in the same ways you deal with generational peers. Born between 1965-1979 and 1977-2001 respectively, Gen Xers and Yers desire and demand very different things from YOU. If they don't get them, they leave. They won't hang around investing time in venues that don't inspire, block growth, and fail to respect their particular world view. *It's that simple.*

It's critical that you figure out how to work effectively with these two groups. If you miss the mark, your company continues to lose money. Staff retention problems are expensive in every case, and organizational productivity suffers over the long haul. In addition, young talent walks out your door, stalling your necessary succession planning process. The fact is that Baby Boomers won't run the show forever, and it's your duty to prepare the next generations for key leadership roles. If you choose to ignore this, you aren't doing your job. Face it: someday you won't be there. Don't you want mature, capable people filling your shoes?

**So what do you need to offer Gen Xers and Yers in order to keep them, motivate them, and supervise them? Consider the following:**

### Expand their horizons and develop their skills.

Educate them about the entire company, not just their department or their job. Help them to see how what they do fits into the whole picture. As a result, they invest more of themselves into the piece they contribute. Further, allow them to spread their wings by trying new tasks or new ideas as appropriate. Constantly stifling their desire to fly leads to chronic dissatisfaction, and chronic dissatisfaction leads to resignations.

### Answer their questions.

These people are curious, and they seek an open book. They want to know why something needs to be done a certain way or why they have to do it just like it's been done for twenty years. They want to know how doing something in different ways will impact the bottom line. Don't avoid these questions. If such questions threaten you, ask yourself why. Perhaps it's time for YOU to move on.

### Respect their values.

Their values may not be the same as yours in many areas. They aren't willing to work seven days a week, forfeit vacations, stay at the office until 10:00 PM, punch a time clock, or pay traditional dues. They rely almost solely on technology for completing tasks and projects. They refuse to work jobs they dislike. They rebel against climbing the corporate ladder. Whether or not you support these values, Gen Xers and Yers hold them near and dear to their hearts. If and when you try to change such values, expect to hit a brick wall.

### Individualize your management approach.

One size doesn't fit all—it never did. Recognize that employees, regardless of age, deserve to be treated as individuals. You can treat staff fairly without treating them alike. In fact, the fairest treatment actually acknowledges their individuality, their uniqueness. Different things motivate different people. Different rewards are needed for different people. Different challenges are appropriate for different people. Different styles of conversation are required for different people. Know that Gen Xers and Yers want to see evidence that you have trashed your cookie cutter approach to management.



### Increase freedoms.

Money alone won't retain these groups. They want flexible work hours, free weekends, time to attend their children's school plays, a few minutes to stop by the bank on their way home. While they expect reasonable financial compensation for what they do, they require much more. They require a life. Not just a job. Not just a paycheck. Not just a place to park themselves between 9:00 and 5:00. For them, work must be incorporated into their already full, rich lives.

### Create a teamwork environment.

Relationships and collaboration matter deeply to Gen Xers and Yers. Sitting alone all day in a cubicle with little or no interaction with others is not, in general, their cup of tea. They thrive on bouncing ideas off their colleagues and getting regular feedback. They love opportunities to demonstrate their creativity. Team meetings provide the venue for creative juices to flow and for people to make a real difference within the organization. Most folks in these two generational groups won't stay long in a sterile structure.

### Have a heart.

Gen Xers and Yers follow leaders and managers with a heart. Unlike Baby Boomers who tend to respect anyone with the title of "boss", these people have to believe in you. They have to feel intuitively that you are genuine, compassionate, and interested in them. You can't just tell them you are these things; they have to sense it about you. They know if you aren't walking the talk. They know if what you say to them is nothing more than lip service. If you really don't care about them as human beings, be assured that you won't cut it long term with Gen Xers and Yers. While they may finish their projects on time, they won't give you their very best. While they're working, they'll be visualizing themselves in the next job across town or in another state. It's just that way with them.

*By Sylvia Hepler  
Executive Coach and Advisor  
Sylvia@launchinglives.biz  
717-761-5457*