

How To Get The Best Out Of Your Multiple Generational Work Place?

Talking about generation gaps, it cannot be more drastic and obvious today compare to any point in the mankind history of civilisation. Given the greater life expectancy and the speed of change enabled by exponential advancement of technology, it is not uncommon to find workplaces with the presence of multiple generations. My own office for a start boost with representatives from the baby boomers, the Gen X, the Millennials (Gen Y) as well the Centennials (Gen Z) and it is getting more bottom heavy as the majority is naturally the younger ones. It is unfair to really put a years of birth as a benchmark of categorisation as it also got to do with the unique progress of each specific location (ie. the third world are generally not as fast as the first world) but the world is getting generally flatter as we speak. There is not much difference between Kuala Lumpur City Centre than Downtown New York. Generally, we do get a common idea when we mentioned about these stereotyping of the various mentioned generations and their unique behaviours shown in the workforce.

Instead of cruelly sweeping all the unique individuals into a generational genre with a tag, let us understand the rapid changes of the background that shapes the commonly found characteristics of these identifiable groups. The Centennials that are born into a world of internet and social media can never understand the TV generations of the Baby boomers and the Gen X. The appreciation of pen and paper as well as anything hand written and handmade stitches by stitches is also different. As a result value judgement are differing based on the background that we respectively grown up in and grow into. The abundance of information and materials today is unprecedented too and in fact, unheard of for the recovery years after World War II. Superman would have struggled today to find a functional public phone booth to change into his superhero gear. Even the Man of Steel needs to adjust to this fast evolving world today, before he too will be a relic in the past.

Our main challenge today is therefore how to ensure effective communication in the work place so that the entire organisation can be driven forward by a common direction and a consistent

message through out the multiple generations workforce. Acknowledging the the differences within the workforce is a good start, while accepting it would be the leadership's commitment to do something about it.

So, what is the "How" in this entire equation of a motivated multiple generation work place? My apology as there is no such thing as the industry gold standard but there are know hows to get to your unique how for your organisation. Here are some evergreen "Golden Rules" to the organisational leaders and senior management team:

1. You don't have to know all the communication technics, but you must master all the key facts conveyed to you from your team members. Almost everyone cutting across every generations enjoyed being appreciated and being importance. Therefore, paying attention to their message as a genuine friend who cares is of utmost importance. In fact, the key to their hearts. Getting the facts wrong only creates suspicion from the subject team member of your intention thus render their resulting reservation in a frank communication for any potential solution.

2. Be conscious of your pride and prejudice, be open and avoid stereotyping. The truth is everyone is unique in his or her own right and we all want to be appreciated and accepted for who we exactly are and not the the year and era of our birth. Someone from Kuala Pilah who is born in the late 80's could still behave like a Gen X, not exactly like his or her Millennial compatriot in Kuala Lumpur who is born around the same time. And obviously, even within the same harsh categorisation that you "pigeon holed" your team members, they are all still unique individuals respectively.

3. Constantly and genuinely build trust and relationship with your team members to the extend that they are open to you without any resentment and reservation. The bridge to any form of good communication is a good rapport.


4. Accept the fact that you cannot make the sudden changes in anyone and start by changing ourselves first. When the

square pack can no longer be moulded into the round hole, you have to learn to let go. Patient is only a great virtue, when you set yourself a tolerable limit and enforce it fearlessly.

5. Be flexible in your approach will let you have better control of your desired result. You must be able to generate options and choices with each of your unique team members, information is the key to the abundance doorways of options. The younger generations are generally quick to decide given that they are used to be overwhelmed to select and make decisions all the time. One size fits all is so old school and a legend found only in the Industrial Age.

6. Be patient and listen attentively are the best way to gather relevant information that helps you to generate any potential new options. A good leader speaks last and resist the temptation to jump into any conclusion prematurely.

7. Create a safe environment to allow everyone to be brutally honest with your team members at any given time and space. Never deliver any criticism directly but make it as a collaboration proposal for common improvement together.

Many commentaries today are guided by the need to understand the younger generations in the work place but not many have spoken on how the older generations should equally adjust themselves in respond to these emerging new participants into our rapidly growing economy. There should be more information on how the younger generations can learn to adopt to the older generations. The whole idea is to ensure that we must respect each other for who we are regardless of our age, gender, preferences and ethnicity, certainly not the generational stereotype that is commonly practised and even widely accepted in this globalised community of ours. We must grow up from our childhood days that derive joy in "Calling Names". 

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