

What Generations Want from Their Careers

Members of every generation want work that provides satisfaction. So a manager's job as a career coach should be easy, right? Not quite. Each generation has a distinct attitude and approach to careers. Savvy managers tailor their career conversations to the needs of the individual — keeping in mind some significant generational influences.

Here's what we've learned about the career needs of each generation, taken from the workshop Engaging the Generations™:

The Silent Generation (born 1933-45)

Members of the Silent Generation initially went to work in companies that valued respect for authority and adherence to rules. They achieved job and career success through their discipline, hard work and teamwork. In their work today they look for appreciation for their expertise and experience. Many are now retiring, taking their knowledge legacies and corporate know-how with them. A common misconception is that they've stopped growing and learning. In fact, most are eager to continue to learn and build their abilities.

In 2000, Congress eliminated the Social Security earnings test for workers 65 or older allowing them greater freedom to pursue employment after retirement. Instead of coasting on their ex-

isting skill sets, many Silents are eager to continue working and building on their abilities. Silents see themselves as vigorous, contributing members of the workforce and they appreciate help with career planning.

Tips

Value their experience by creating ways that they can mentor others

Provide part-time jobs and job sharing for those who want to continue to work

Consider phased-retirement options, which gradually ease employees out of the company at a mutually agreeable pace

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The Baby Boom Generation (born 1946-64)

Baby Boomers have had a huge influence on the corporate environments that we work in today. Boomers applied their competitive nature and industrious work ethic to building their careers. Their willingness and ability to sustain hard work through mid-career is the topic of much research. Today, as they face increasing responsibilities for the care of aging parents and growing children, they are re-examining their careers and looking for ways to bring new balance to their lives.

As Boomers take stock of their careers, many are seeking ways to revitalize themselves. Others are looking ahead to retirement or exploring their next set of career options (consulting, managing franchises, doing temp work, freelancing). Boomers are rewriting the retirement rules,

too — shuffleboards are out, spas are in. Many are looking forward to more time freedom, but a recent AARP poll found that 80% plan to work at least part-time in their retirement years.

Tips

Help them explore their next set of workplace options, and demonstrate how your company can continue to use their talents

Walk the talk on work/life balance by redesigning their jobs to accommodate multiple life demands

Encourage them to enrich their present jobs and grow in place if they need to slow their career pace

Generation X (born 1965-76)

Generation Xers went to work in a chaotic, no guarantees work world. For many, their independent childhoods led them to seek autonomy and independence in the workplace. Today they are seeking opportunities to make a visible difference and use their creative abilities.

Generation Xers absorbed the workplace lessons of the Baby Boomers. In the view of many Gen Xers, Baby Boomers devoted their lives to their work and corporations, putting personal fulfillment ahead of mar-

riages, families and balanced living. And Generation Xers have carefully watched the changing work environment. Their goal is to mitigate the possibility of layoffs in unstable corporations by putting their own skill sets first. They realize the need to be employable because no organization can guarantee employment. Generation Xer's career goals are often different than their older bosses. They value diverse experiences and are comfortable with job "hopping." They are also committed to work/life balance and see it as a priority.

Tips

Talk to them about their reputation, not just job tasks; they want your candid perspective and feedback

Acknowledge their ability to work independently and encourage them to leverage their entrepreneurial abilities

Help them get the most out of every job position by discussing what the job can do for them and what they can learn from it

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The Millennial Generation (born 1977-98)

As the oldest Millennials come into the workplace, they are seeking stable jobs and corporations. Their group-orientation and civic-mindedness are likely to continue in the corporate environment. They are being dubbed “the confident generation” at work.

When Millennials and their employers talk about career development, they are often speaking different languages. Millennials think in terms of their personal fulfillment, asking, “Is the job interesting and satisfying? Is the work meaningful and important?” Employers want to know, “How long will you stay and do the job?” Offer training opportunities to build basic business skills (beyond training for their current job), and help them find their best job fit early in their careers. Managers who help Mil-

lennials find a career path, or set of career paths, will be acknowledged as valued mentors. Researchers predict that Millennials will be loyal, committed employees as long as their organizations provide them with variety and opportunity. ✨

Tips

Demonstrate the stability and long-term value of your company. Also show how your organization is flexible and filled with learning opportunities for them

Provide work schedules that help them build careers and families at the same time

Make groups and teams part of their job