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Does Your Workplace Accommodate Millennials and Boomers?



Last month I attended a networking meeting where a panel of industry experts discussed how employees and leaders from different generations influence change in today's workplace. Jan Slater, Peter Nalbach,

and Mark Murphy brought us up-to-date on what companies can do to stay competitive, the needs of workers from diverse age groups, and why we need to adjust our expectations of how newer generations interface with those who are nearing retirement.

The foundation of the conversation was based on the two groups that make up the largest percentage of our working population: Boomers (b.1946-1966) and Millennials (b.1980-2000). Each generation brings unique values, communication styles, and work habits to the work place. The bottom line, as the panelists discussed, were the vast differences in priorities, and how they choose to integrate work into their personal lives.

Regardless of which group you identify with, it is vital to understand: what is important to you may not carry the same significance to a leader or employee from a different generation. They can do the same job, but are more comfortable using different methods to reach similar results. Boomers, for example seem to prioritize security, getting ahead, and the corporate ladder. They also stay with the same job for many years vs a 27-month average for Millennials, who view employment mostly as a way to pay the bills.

Millennials find more value in independence, challenging work, and a more equitable balance between personal life and their vocation.

They want jobs that allow for time management flexibility, and prefer to be judged on performance, not face time: a major philosophical difference between their generation and Boomers, who tend to believe being a workaholic is viewed as proof of commitment in the workplace.

Another sticking point for Millennials is a sensitivity to the demands of leadership. They embrace the necessities of deadlines and exemplary performance, but don't like micro-managers or receiving marching orders. The panelists agreed: quality of leadership is a major motivator. The number one reason they stay on a job is not money or security, it's having a good boss who gives them the flexibility to complete tasks on their terms.

Employees are attracted to companies that meet their needs, but the implied employment contract has changed. Twenty years ago who could have imagined a manager shifting work hours for your convenience, a benefit like paternal leave, or hiring someone based on ability rather than experience. These days, if employers want to maintain a full roster, they need to be flexible, and provide for the expectations of mixed generations.

The Device Alliance guest panelists were:

Jan Slater - Founder of CareerConnection

Mark Murphy, CEO Advisor & Vistage CEO Advisory
Board Member

Pete Nalbach, Director of Engineering of Sea Spine

Ron Sully is Omnicor's Director of Marketing
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