

Seven Tips for Managing *Generation Y*

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A new generation, or group of like-minded employees composed of similar ages, arrives every twenty years into the workforce. Every time a new generation enters the workforce managers tend to struggle to understand the new group. As the next generation enters the workforce, managers must adjust their management techniques to get better results. The new generation is about understanding that everyone sees the world their own way, a concept that is crucial for managers to understand. Each generation has unique experiences that shape their behaviors and attitudes. Generation Y views the world much differently than the previous generations.

INTRODUCTION

According to Howe and Strauss (2007), a new generation, or group of like-minded employees composed of similar ages, arrives about every twenty years into the workforce. Like clock-work, every time a new generation enters the workforce managers tend to struggle to understand the new group (Gelbart & Komninos, 2012). As the next generation, referred to as *Generation Y* in this paper, enters the workforce, managers must adjust their management techniques for *Generation Y* in order to get better results (Tapscott, 2009). According to Sheahan (2005) “the key to managing [*Generation Y*] is about understanding that everyone sees the world their own way” (p. 205), a concept that is crucial for managers to understand for managing generational differences. Each generation has unique experiences that shape their behaviors and attitudes (Bannon, Ford, & Meltzer, 2011). *Generation Y* views the world much differently than the previous generations and management techniques should be adjusted for this generation (Balda & Mora, 2011).

Baby Boomers, *Generation X*, and *Generation Y* are the three generations currently in the workplace (Tapscott, 2009). Baby Boomers are those born between 1946 and 1964 (Beekman, 2011) and they number around 76 million (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). *Generation X* are those born between 1965 and 1980 (Beekman, 2011) and there are about 60 million of them (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). *Generation Y* is defined as those born between 1981 and 2000 and are the largest cohort, numbering around 88 million (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Meister (2012) claims that *Generation Y* “will be roughly 50% of the USA workforce by 2020 and 75% of the global workforce by 2030” (p.1).

Gelbart and Komninos (2012) noted the debate between some managers over *Generation Y* “being labeled lazy and filled with a sense of entitlement” (p. 20). The debate continues to be between whether or not employers should adjust to this generation or whether *Generation Y* should adjust themselves to the current workplace culture.

In recent interviews conducted by this researcher (Heinz, 2012; Kendall, 2012) with individuals who manage *Generation Y* employees, parallel generational differences were noted by these managers, including differences in education, salary expectations, autonomy preferences, management techniques, communication, workplace styles, and work-life balances. However, the key to managerial success is the acceptance of the new generation (Meister, 2012; Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010). Managers should not ignore these differences, but should embrace them in order to get the most out of this new generation in the workplace (Meister, 2012; Tulgan & Martin, 2001).

“There are plenty of concerns and criticisms of this generation that are voiced by everyone from parents to frustrated employers” (Tapscott, 2009, p. 3). Tapscott (2009) reported the top ten cynical issues he found academics, journalists, and experts had with *Generation Y* including the following:

- (1) They’re dumber than we were at their age.
- (2) They’re screenagers, Net addicted, losing their social skills, and they have no time for sports or healthy activities.
- (3) They have no shame.
- (4) Because their parents have coddled them, they are adrift in the world and afraid to choose a path.
- (5) They steal.
- (6) They’re bullying friends online.
- (7) They’re violent.
- (8) They have no work ethic and will be bad employees.
- (9) This is the latest narcissistic “me” generation.
- (10) They don’t give a damn (pp. 3-5).

Tulgan and Martin (2001) stated that “if you are positioned to meet the challenges [*Generation Y*] brings to the workplace...you will take a quantum leap ahead of your competition” (p. XVI). Espinoza, et al., (2010) also stated:

Simply put, failing to suspend the bias of one’s own experience excuses managerial leaders from the adaptive work that is required of them to manage in today’s world. Part of the adaptive process is getting outside of the orbit of your own experience and entering the world in which [*Generation Y*’s] live (p. 25).

Tulgan and Martin (2001) identified four positive truths about *Generation Y*, including describing *Generation Y* as “a generation of new confidence, upbeat and full of self-esteem, the most educated-minded generation in history, a generation paving the way to a more open, tolerant society” and as “a generation leading a new wave of volunteerism” (p. 4).

Instead of pigeonholing *Generation Y* into negative stereotypes that do not improve worker efficiency (Tapscott, 2009), this paper discusses how managers should manage *Generation Y* employees to increase productivity, because as the numbers indicate, *Generation Y* is a sizeable element in the workforce.

GENERATION Y

Although the exact years vary between sources, most research recognizes *Generation Y* to have been born between the years from 1980 to 2000 (Beekman, 2011; Cekada, 2012). *Generation Y* numbers between 50 and 80 million employees in the U.S. workplace (Bannon, et al., 2011). There are a couple monikers researchers use to describe *Generation Y*, including: the entitled generation, net generation (NetGen), screenagers, Google generation, and digital natives; but the most common nickname is millennials (Balda & Mora, 2011; Cekada, 2012; Evans, 2011).

There are many stereotyped characterizations of *Generation Y*, including tech savvy, multi-taskers, team players, autonomous, self-centered, ambitious, informal, and they like to enjoy their work that has meaning (Bannon, et al., 2011; Beekman, 2011; Balda & Mora, 2011). I use the word stereotyped

because, although not every single person fits the overall description of a *Generation Y* employee, these descriptors are frequently used in literature to describe the *Generation Y* employee base, as a whole.

According to Tulgan and Martin (2001), more *Generation Y* employees, with parents who value hard work and education and a workplace that embraces both, attain a higher education than previous generations. *Generation Y* recognizes that the livelihood of success lies in higher education. Tulgan and Martin (2001) stated,

Ninety percent of high school seniors expect to attend college. Seventy percent of them expect to work in professional jobs. Seventy percent of teens believe college is necessary to meet their goals. Forty percent of college freshmen expect to get their master's degree (p. 7).

As is evidenced, *Generation Y* believes education is the key to success. More recent statistics from Pew Research Center as of 2010 reveal that 74% of *Generation Y* are already college graduates or plan to graduate college (Jayson, 2006). The statistic is even higher among the latter cohort of *Generation Y* with 91% of 18-24 year olds either planning to graduate from college or have already (Jayson, 2006). Tulgan and Martin (2001) reported that students now expect to earn anywhere from a \$600 to a \$3,400 raise, which is common for the class of 2000 college graduates, evidencing the *Generation Y* thought process that the more education a person receives, the higher the salary that person expects.

One characteristic recognized by authors is that *Generation Y* is tech savvy (Bannon, et al., 2011; Beekman, 2011; Cekada, 2012), the first to experience a post-digital, globalized world; grew up with wireless devices, social networks, laptops, internet-based news, and texting. Not only did they grow up with this technology, they grew up untethered from it. A recent survey conducted among *Generation Y* revealed that 83% of them keep their cell phones close, or near 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Bannon, et al., 2011).

Generation Y is a connected generation, meaning they are able to connect at all times with family and friends across vast distances instantly (Cekada, 2012). While some generations may view this communication as a waste of a time, "Gen Y's relish technology and the social interaction they receive through activities such as instant messaging, blogging, texting, and e-mails" (Cekada, 2012, p. 42). Bannon, et al. (2011) stated, *Generation Y* is more liberal with sharing private information online and are comfortable building relationships online (p. 62).

This generation is adept to working with technology and they expect to do so in the workplace. Balda and Mora (2011), stated that *Generation Y* was "raised speaking fluently the language of computers, video games, information management and sharing, networks, and the Internet" (p. 14). Tapscott (2008) reported that *Generation Y* records 30,000 hours on the Internet or playing video games by the time they are in their 20's. Technology has allowed this generation to "develop hypertext minds, which allow them to gather information rapidly from multiple sources and make connections or links between the data" (Bannon, et al., 2011, p. 63). This ability to take in information from numerous sources all at once and analyze it leads to the next characteristic of *Generation Y*, multitasking.

According to Cekada (2012), while other generations view *Generation Y* as impatient and having ADD-like characteristics, this is a generation composed of proficient multitaskers who can move from one activity to the next seamlessly. *Generation Y* is used to multitasking, especially with communication media. They are able give instant feedback to others and expect it in return. Sometimes they place more importance on the speed of the response rather than the content in the response (Cekada, 2012).

Generation Y learns best by doing and through visual methods rather than by reading text (Cekada, 2012). They like to discover things on their own and do not like being told the minute details on how to perform a task. Because they are independent learners, they need to be "set in motion and they will find the information they need" (Cekada, 2012, p. 43) to accomplish the task.

Cekada (2012) stated, with a desire for constant social interaction, *Generation Y* employees are team players. In fact, they prefer team work to independent-type work. They believe in working together in a group in order to share ideas and feed off those ideas. While other generations scour at the idea of team

projects, *Generation Y* is accustomed to working with diverse people, as they are the most racially diverse workforce generation in history.

Although *Generation Y* employees value teamwork, they also place a high value on autonomy (Sheehan, 2005; Espinoza, et al., 2010). They detest micromanaging and often view it as a sign of distrust. *Generation Y* desires “to be coached, rather than directed” (Sheehan, 2005, p. 102). Heinz, an elementary principal in Huron, South Dakota, agrees. When asked what the difference between a manager and a leader was, Heinz (2012) stated, “A leader is like a coach.” (Personal communication, Sept, 26) She uses a mentoring approach to managing her *Generation Y* employees. As a *Generation X* manager, she finds it easiest to manage her *Generation Y* employees over other generations (Heinz, 2012). Heinz (2012) believes because she takes the mentor approach to managing rather than directing, her *Generation Y* employees follow her more willingly.

Generation Y is changing the status quo of the typical workplace environment (Hewlett, Sherbin & Sumberg, 2009). Many companies have created favorable environments that meet *Generation Y* employee needs and expectations by incorporating open workspaces and technology. They are less formal as a generation, so they prefer informal meetings and flexible work environments that include team workspaces (Bannon, et al., 2011). Because this generation is used to getting information in short snippets (Cekada, 2012), they should be given breaks up to every 10-15 minutes and allowed to switch between tasks. According to Beekman (2011), “Millennials find the ability to do work on their schedule very empowering” (p. 16).

Generation Y employees enjoy having fun at work. They realize the value of truly enjoying their jobs (Sheahan, 2005). Enjoyment and satisfaction in a job is important for an employee’s overall happiness (Sheahan, 2005). During a *60 Minutes* interview on CBS Television, correspondent Morley Safer (2007) reported:

More and more businesses are responding, offering free food, fun and flexibility to keep their employees happy. Online shoe retailer Zappos.com has found that the best way of keeping employees is giving them what they want. Actual work actually happens, despite goofy parades, snoozing in the nap room, and plenty of happy hours (p. 1).

Managers know and research (Sheahan, 2005) has demonstrated that happiness directly relates to productivity; to keep the best employees, managers must keep them happy which means making the *Generation Y* employee work environment fun. As the CEO of Zappos stated, creating a fun culture for employees boosts productivity and employee retention (Hsieh, 2010).

A commonality among researchers (Sheahan, 2005; Tulgan & Martin 2001) was the assessment that *Generation Y* employees are self-centered and place their personal lives much higher than their work life. Many *Generation Y* employees believe in the statement “work to live—not live to work” (Espinoza, et al., 2010, p. 50). *Generation Y* wants to be able to make time for their friends, families, and hobbies. They realize that life exists outside work.

Work also has to have meaning for *Generation Y* employees. They gravitate towards projects that they feel they can make a difference with (Cekada, 2012). Sheahan (2005) stated, “This new breed of talent does not work for the sake of working. [Work] has to have meaning or a result” (p. 94). *Generation Y* employees are often goal oriented. Thome (2012), a manager at an information solutions firm, states that, *Generation Y* employees are “eager to participate in the process” (Personal communication, February, 27). *Generation Y* employees want to be given a task that contributes to the bigger picture in some way and then be left alone to accomplish that task (Cekada, 2012).

According to Sheahan (2005), a common word used to describe *Generation Y* is informal. Their rejection of the “we-have-always-done-it-this-way approach” (Sheahan, 2005, p. 57) reflects this information. This is beneficial because they add creative and innovative value to a company. “They do not settle for the old way of doing things; but instead always try to find new and more efficient methods” (Sheahan, 2005, p. 57). This can be frustrating for managers. Kendall (2012) stated, “I find it most difficult to manage *Generation Y* because when I was their age I never questioned the supervisor’s

authority” (Personal communication, Sept, 25). Managers must realize that the “*Generation Y* employees are not questioning their authority, but rather questioning the effectiveness of the method” (Sheahan, 2005, p. 57).

The retirement of traditionalists and baby boomers coupled with the relatively small size of *Generation X* has resulted in increased competition and more demand for employees in the workforce. According to Bannon, et al. (2011), depending on birth year definitions, *Generation Y* numbers between 50 and 80 million. Generational differences can no longer be ignored (Bannon, et al., 2011; Putre, 2013; Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2009).

Some managers complain that *Generation Y* should learn how to assimilate into the workforce. Managers should not have to change their management techniques, but rather the *Generation Y* should change their attitudes. Safer (2007) reported, “If this generation knows anything, it’s that there are more jobs than young people to fill them” (p. 17). If a *Generation Y* doesn’t like his or her job, they will move on and go to another. They do not mind switching jobs until they find the one that suits them best. During the *60 Minutes* interview with Safer (2007), *Generation Y* Jason Dorsey stated:

We’re not going to settle. Because we saw our parents settle. And we have options. That we can keep hopping jobs. No longer is it bad to have four jobs on your resume in a year. Whereas for our parents or even Gen X, that was terrible. But that’s the new reality for us. And we’re going to keep adapting and switching and trying new things until we figure out what it is (p. 1).

Generation Y employees view themselves as valuable merchandise who are not afraid to put numerous positions on their resumes, because they see it as added experience (Safer, 2007). *Generation Ys* will be in high demand in the job market due to many factors, such as the retirement of baby boomers, and the relatively smaller size of *Generation X*. Therefore it becomes crucial for managers to retain their *Generation Y* employees and take advantage of their talents and skills (Bannon, et al., 2011).

SEVEN TIPS FOR MANAGING GENERATION Y

Tulgan (2009) promises that *Generation Y* will be “the most high-performing workforce in history for those who know how to manage them properly” (p. 4). The following are seven tips for managers to better manage *Generation Y* for more productive results based on their traits, which were discussed above. This is not a comprehensive list of all ideas to better manage *Generation Y*, but is based upon some of the literature written about *Generation Y*. Although there are multiple generations in the workplace, this list is for managers who manage *Generation Y* employees. It is possible that by implementing these ideas, it may conflict with managing other generations.

Create a Desirable Work Environment

One method to retain *Generation Y* employees is to create a desirable work environment. It just so happens that this new generation demands a new type of work environment, whereas generations before have accepted the archetypical work environment. *Generation Y* views a favorable work environment as one that allows them an opportunity for career development, includes access to technology, offer flexible work schedules, options for telecommuting, flexible work policies, a work-life balance, and trust (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012). Terrie Campbell from Ricoh, recommends that organizations “build [their] brand as a great place to work” (Kahn, 2013, p. 2) to attract and retain *Generation Y* employees.

Progressive companies have established a culture of work-life balance for their employees and have seen retention rates increase because of it. Companies, such as Google, offer benefits such as onsite daycare, scholarships for employee’s children, adequate vacation time, maternity and paternal leave, and adoption assistance to cater to *Generation Y* and the importance it places on parenthood and family.

Companies that offer flexible work schedules, flextime, or part-time telecommuting have also seen retention rates increase (Bannon, et al., 2011). Evans (2011) reported that work now occurs anywhere and

everywhere for *Generation Y* employees, due to advanced networking and mobile technologies. Because this generation is connected socially, they expect to be connected in their professions as well. They are accustomed to checking e-mail on their mobile devices during all of their waking hours; so even if they arrive at the office “late” or “leave early” they still have a jumpstart to their day by responding to e-mails (Evans, 2011).

Investing in employee happiness and satisfaction is directly related to employee productivity (Sheehan, 2005). Keeping your employees happy, including *Generation Y*, means making their work environment fun. “You may not need to have your job be fun, but don’t fault them if that’s their preference” (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 41). *Generation Y* wants to enjoy being at work, so creating a fun work environment is an essential key to retaining *Generation Y* employees. Suleman and Nelson (2011) report:

Millennials want and expect to be constantly excited about how they are spending their time at work. They are consummate multitaskers, very capable of managing a multitude of activities at once. Easily bored, they want and need to be challenged, which is a blessing for managers who want to take advantage of their energy, skills, and resourcefulness (p. 41).

Adopting flexible work policies, including allowing *Generation Y* employees to take short, but numerous breaks can help create a desirable work environment. “They are used to getting information in short snippets” (Cekada, 2012, p. 43), so by giving them these needed breaks they are able to stay focused and motivated on the task at hand. By segmenting their time into small batches, they are able to do more focused work for shorter periods of time. “Instead of working in four-hour continuous blocks, digital natives work in smaller chunks” (Evans, 2011, p.60). Dr. Brent Coker from the University of Melbourne reports that by allowing employees to take digital leisure breaks to surf the internet “leads to increased productivity because short breaks help us zone out for a while, so that we can return to our tasks with greater concentration afterward” (Evans, 2011, p. 61).

Building trust among *Generation Y* employees may be difficult when there are tensions between generations, but according to both Blake Mycoskie, Chief Shoe Giver for Tom’s Shoes, and Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos, building trust among all employees is essential in creating a desirable work environment. Hsieh says, “Trust is a fundamental part of a business” (Mycoskie, 2012, p. 124) and that “a brand succeeds or fails based on whether or not people trust the company with which they’re about to do business” (p. 124). Building trust among your employees encourages them to have the company’s best interest in mind rather than their own personal reasons (Mycoskie, 2012).

There are many ways you can build trust among employees, but encouraging employees to spend time together outside the workplace, open and honest communication, and implementing training programs to find the best fit for both employer and employee are ways Zappos builds trust among their employees (Mycoskie, 2012). Zappos even gives a new hire \$3,000 if they decide not to take the job after they complete training (Mycoskie, 2012). This ensures that the employee and company are a good fit for each other.

Managers should develop a work culture that allows *Generation Y* employees to achieve career success, live meaningfully, and nurture their family relationships in order to retain *Generation Y* employees (Bannon, et al., 2011). For more ideas on how to create a desirable work environment for *Generation Y*, managers can listen to their *Generation Y* employees and offer workplace benefits they are most interested in.

Enhance Award and Recognition Programs

Generation Y grew up getting trophies just for participation and had parents that adored them and constantly fed them confidence (Tulgan, 2009). Suleman and Nelson (2011) suggest giving this cohort feedback and praise to increase productivity and morale in the workplace:

Provide a context for how their contributions relate to team and organizational goals, the organization's customers, and even to society. This systematic framing of feedback and praise takes it from being unearned hype to a practical information stream that can help shape desired behaviors and enhance results (p. 42).

Constant feedback and performance readjustments are ways Millennials have learned to stay on track during times of change. "Feedback and praise serve as reinforcement as well as a corrective mechanism for this generation" (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 42).

Enhancing awards and recognition programs is a technique managers can use to motivate *Generation Y* employees. A small thank-you can go a long way with *Generation Y* employees. Not only do *Generation Y* workers crave gratitude and encouragement from their bosses and co-workers, but they also like to hear it from their family and friends. "Millennials want rewards that are meaningful and exciting to them when they have done good work or an outstanding job" (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 42).

"[*Generation Y*] increasingly expect rewards that are creative, varied, and personalized" (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 42). One way to personalize praise is to send the recognition to their home address, so their family is aware of the good work they do. Sending it to their home address also allows them to brag to someone and get that extra gratification and recognition from the people they care most about. This practice has worked well for Avera St. Luke's manager, Meyer (2013), who reports that by sending thank-you or congratulatory notes to *Generation Y* employees' homes, it has increased motivation and work pride (Personal communication, February 26).

Adjust Training Techniques to *Generation Y* Employees' Learning Styles

According to Cekada (2012) managers should adjust their training techniques to *Generation Y* employees' learning styles. Taking an untraditional approach to training *Generation Y* employees includes allowing them to learn by doing. Managers can try allowing them to explore and discover first, then teach them the proper techniques that have been proven to work for the company if they didn't learn through discovery first. By making training a three-step process including listening, seeing, and then doing, this allows managers to teach the basics, show the steps, and then allow *Generation Y* to try the steps on their own. They learn best by doing with a little direction (Cekada, 2012). Also by allowing *Generation Y* employees to grow and learn along the way, "they will be less likely to look to change jobs at the first sign of frustration or disappointment" (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 41).

Generation Y also prefers visual learning methods coupled with video and multimedia (Cekada, 2012). Cekada (2012) suggests providing *Generation Y* employees with the fundamentals, then letting them explore through simulation, role playing, or with the Internet. Using online tools such as blogs, texting, wikis, and social networking can appeal to their social tendencies (Cekada, 2012). Allowing them to work in teams to share ideas also gives them a chance to be social. Also, by adding nontraditional methods that incorporate entertainment can help keep *Generation Y*'s attention (Cekada, 2012).

According to Prensky (2008), education for *Generation Y* should reflect its digital upbringing. "Kids in developed countries grow up knowing about, or being able to find out about, pretty much anything from the past or present that interests them" (p.95). Prensky (2008) suggests that educators, or trainers, should act as an explainer rather than providers of information.

Managers should tap into their energy and skills to get the most productivity out of *Generation Y* employees. They want and need to be challenged, since they bore easily (Suleman & Nelson, 2011). "Encourage their desire to contribute, and reward them opportunities for advancement. Building a sense of loyalty with them now will ensure you hold onto your leaders of tomorrow" (Beekman, 2011, pp.16-17).

As mentioned before, Zappos offers an incentive to trainees to quit before they even start. By offering them \$3,000 after they complete their training courses, it allows the employee to decide if Zappos is truly the right fit for them without having wasted unpaid time training for a job they decide they don't want in the end. This results in only employing committed employees (Mycoskie, 2012).

Lastly, connecting *Generation Y*'s training to experiences they will come across on the job can help *Generation Y* understand the importance of the training topic. *Generation Y* likes their work to have meaning (Hewlett, et al., 2009), so relating what they are being taught to their actual job can also help them understand the importance of the task. "Show them the big picture as to how their jobs relate to the mission, strategic objectives, and core values of the organization" (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 41).

Stop, Collaborate and Listen

Generation Y is team orientated (Bannon, et al., 2011; Gavatorra, 2012) so they enjoy working in a collaborative, informal work environment. Gavatorra (2012) suggests managers make the first move towards collaboration to let *Generation Y* employees know they are willing to work as a team.

Since *Generation Y* employees are team players and they would rather work in teams than on their own, managers should compose teams to work on projects. *Generation Y* has the unique ability to work well in teams due to their constant need for social connections (Balda & Mora, 2011). They have a need to share their ideas; being able to bounce ideas off other team members can help perfect procedures and projects.

Each generation has skills and traits that the other generations do not possess and those skills can serve the group to increase productivity (Beekman, 2011). For example, Traditionalists are often knowledgeable about company policy. Baby Boomers have a team-oriented outlook that can be taught to individualistic generations. *Generation X* can demonstrate how to solve problems with little instruction, and *Generation Y* is well-versed in technology (Beekman, 2011). By utilizing each generation's skills, managers can implement cross-generational mentoring in order to bring generations together (Beekman, 2011) to be more productive with projects. Each generation has a strength that can be beneficial to other generational co-workers.

If at all possible, managers should try to match Baby Boomers and *Generation Y* employees together to collaborate and utilize cross-generational mentoring, because many Baby Boomer employees have *Generation Y* children, which means these two generations naturally seek each other out in the workplace (Hewlett, et al., 2009). Boomers enjoy acting as mentors to *Generation Y*. While 65% of Boomers report that *Generation Y* looks to them for advice, *Generation Y* trusts the Baby Boomer generation (Hewlett, et al., 2009). "Most [*Generation Y*'s] (58%) say they look to Boomers, rather than [*Generation X*'ers], for professional advice, and over three-quarters say they enjoy working with Boomers" (Hewlett, et al., 2009, p. 73).

Hewlett, et al. (2009) report that companies like Cisco are implementing intergenerational mentoring programs such as their Legacy Leaders Network for Baby Boomer aged executives who mentor the new hires. Cisco reports that both groups are learning from each other. Tulgan (2009) also suggests implementing a mentor program, in which managers can encourage older, more experienced leaders to seek out younger employees and vice versa for career advice. Although Tulgan (2009) suggests managers not label it *mentoring*. Rather, managers should label it career advising or organizational support, because of the negative connotation *Generation Y* associates with *mentoring*, as *Generation Y* doesn't think they need a mentor (Tulgan, 2009).

Do Not Micromanage

Romero (2012) offers an accepted definition of the construct of micromanagement,

Micromanaging is when a manager or leader assigns the work, tells capable employees exactly how to do it, monitors them excessively, and often takes over when work is not done exactly as the manager wanted (p. 8).

Micromanaging *Generation Y* employees results in disengagement and a loss of productivity (Bielaszka-DuVernay, 2007; Romero, 2012). Micromanagers who are controlling and try to manage every aspect of their employee's job will not be successful with managing this generation because "employees become discouraged and loose interest in the job since they have no sense of ownership in the process or

outcomes of their work; the manager does” (Romero, 2012, p. 8). Instead of micromanaging, managers should act as a coach or a mentor and “be willing to allow for a coaching approach that creates dialogues rather than monologues” (Gavatorta, 2012, p. 62). “Millennials are committed to constant learning and personal development and growth, and their manager can easily serve as a coach and mentor to meet that expectation (Suleman & Nelson, 2011, p. 41). Sheahan (2005) asserts *Generation Y* employees detest micromanaging and do not respond well to it.

Giving *Generation Y* employees the necessary tools and resources they need to get started with a project and the letting them take full control can defer managers from micromanaging. This allows them to make the project their own. “They are independent learners. Set them in motion and they will find the information they need to learn the rest” (Cekada, 2012, p. 43). If managers want to make sure the task is being done efficiently, they can check on progress and coach them along, but use the opportunity to offer help and to teach them (Romero, 2012).

Give *Generation Y* Employees Work that Has a Greater Purpose

One way to build loyalty among *Generation Y* employees is to give them work that makes a difference. *Generation Y* members like to do work that has a greater meaning of which they can see contributes the company in a real way (Hewlett, et al., 2009). Beekman (2011) stated that *Generation Y* employees to make a difference and by tapping into their desire to do so helps your company achieve its goals.

To help *Generation Y* employees make the connection to how the work they are doing contributes to the greater whole, managers should make sure employees are aware of the company’s mission, vision, and values. This allows *Generation Y* to align their work according to those values, mission, and vision. In doing so, it helps the company as a whole focus on the greater mission and accomplishes company-wide goals as well as helps *Generation Y* employees see how their work pertains to the company’s goals (Hewlett, et al., 2009).

86% of *Generation Y* employees state that it is important to them to involve giving back in their work and making a positive impact in the world (Hewlett, et al., 2009). Implementing opportunities for employees to volunteer is one way to give *Generation Y* work that has a greater purpose. Allowing employees to take one or two days out of the year to volunteer or to coordinate volunteer projects can boost morale and satisfy their desire to give back to the community and engage in work that has a greater purpose (Hewlett, et al., 2009).

Hewlett, et al. (2009), give an example of an Ernst and Young program called the Responsibility Fellows Program, which allows their accounting employees to teach accounting and managerial skills to entrepreneurs in parts of the world where management capabilities are scarce. Managers can implement similar programs that allow their employees to use their talents to give back. Programs like these provide good publicity for the company.

Utilize Sophisticated Communication

Cekada (2012) stated that after a *Generation Y* employee sends a message they expect an immediate response, but sometimes they place more value on the speed of the response rather than on its accuracy. One way to promote sophisticated communication is for managers to practice responding to communication as soon as possible, “within at least 24 hours and preferably the same working day” (Hardy, 2012, p. 30). In doing so, managers can satisfy both the need for *Generation Y*’s immediate response and also provide accuracy in the response, because it gives them time to respond appropriately or find the answer. At IBM (2012), their managers realize the importance of responding to co-workers in a timely manner; “in social spaces, responsiveness is visible” (p. 7). IBM (2012) uses “internal social network tools” (p. 7) to help employees respond to others. They use online tools that allow them to set their status as “do not disturb” or “out of the office” (IBM, 2012). When an employee sees the “away” status, they understand that person is unable to respond immediately, and therefore, do not expect an immediate response (IBM, 2012).

When managers are communicating with *Generation Y* employees, they should adjust their communication medium depending on the message content and length. When creating effective communication with *Generation Y*, the medium used can make all the difference when managers want to generate a quick, effective response. “Gen Y’s relish technology and the social interaction they receive through activities such as instant messaging, blogging, texting and e-mails” (Cekada, 2012, p. 42). *Generation Y* employees prefer electronic mediums, such as a text or instant message (Cekada, 2012). According to Gavatora (2012), “most relationships, regardless of generation, struggle due to a lack of effective communication” (p. 61). Gavatora (2012) suggested creating a common language in order to bridge generational gaps and cure ineffective communications. Creating a common language means focusing on the similarities between employees rather than on the dissimilarities. Gavatora (2012) explains:

Rather than immediately jumping to conclusions about your generational differences, focus on your similarities. That’s not to say that all generational differences will go away, but by taking the approach of looking for that common ground, you can lay the foundation for open communication and being to build trust (p. 62).

Gavatora (2012) also suggested using tools such as the Meyers-Briggs Personality Assessment to help co-workers discover each other’s personality traits, which can help them properly adjust their communication medium, pace, and tone based on the individual. Gavatora (2012) gives an example of how managers can use the Meyers-Briggs Personality Assessment to understand how to interact with others better:

Greg communicates in a methodical, thoughtful, slower-paced way, which is common for someone with ISTJ preferences, whereas she is more fast-paced, expressive, and imaginative—with ENFP preferences. Greg essentially adapted his approach to her by aligning his pace more closely with the pace with which she was more comfortable. He said they now communicate seamlessly (p. 62).

This is a good example of how managers can slightly adjust their communication based on the individual they are communicating with. By better understanding *Generation Y* and their communication preferences, managers should be able to successfully communicate with them.

LIMITATIONS

The timeliness of the literature used may misconstrue theories because not all of *Generation Y* has entered the workforce yet. It is also difficult to find definitive trends because *Generation Y* employees have only been in the workforce for about 15 years.

The seven tips are not a comprehensive list of all methods managers can use to better manage *Generation Y* employees. Rather they are suggestions based on the literature written about *Generation Y*. Also, the tips are for managers who manage *Generation Y* employees, so managers who manage a multi-generational workforce may find that the tips create conflict with other generations in the workplace.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Additional research in this area also includes researching differences among generations globally and geographically. Researchers should consider generational differences between cultures and countries and what causes worldwide differences in generations’ attitudes and behaviors, if any. Attitudes, beliefs, and work expectations may differ by country.

CONCLUSION

Managers should keep in mind that *Generation Y* sees the world differently. Managers should also understand how to deal with those differences to support a business' growth and success. By being aware of generational differences in the workplace and adjusting management techniques cross-generationally managers can hope to be more successful in achieving the results they desire for their *Generation Y* employees.

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